

Optics of Evaluation

Making Norwegian foreign aid an evaluable object, 1980-1992

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Summary

Does aid work? Do aid projects lead to development? Are the funds spent as intended? These have been recurring questions for four decades, and they continue to spark heated debates both internationally and in Norway, the main site of this PhD dissertation. In following debates about the effects of aid, one may get the impression that critique of aid always comes from the *outside*, while the aid agencies seek to defend and explain how aid is being done. Yet, as I show in this thesis, if we move *inside* the halls of the Norwegian aid administration, staff members already 35 years ago voiced a fundamental critique of aid and suggested new methods for how to plan, monitor, and evaluate aid projects. Since then, these new ways of doing and assessing aid have become established as distinct fields of expertise within the aid administration, with their own handbooks, routines, staff and departments.

The main concern of this thesis is how this process unfolded during the years 1980-1992. Through archival research and document analysis, I have investigated how evaluation staff tried to assess whether aid worked and what methods they developed to link individual aid projects to changes in society at large. According to the evaluation staff, a key problem with Norwegian aid at this point in time was the virtual impossibility of saying anything certain about the effects of aid projects. This was because they were being planned and implemented in a way that made it very difficult for future evaluators to assess what had been done and what effects this might have had. For this reason, the evaluation staff argued for a fundamental change in how aid was being done.

In analyzing these processes, this thesis combines historical research with theoretical and methodological resources from the field of Science and Technology Studies (STS), notably the strands of laboratory studies and material-semiotics. A key move has been to conceive of aid evaluation as a specific form of knowledge production and of the aid administration as the site in which this specific form of knowledge production took place. Where scientists have microscopes, what does evaluation staff have? In order to pursue this approach, I develop the concept of *optics of evaluation* as a means to describe the methods, tools, technologies, routines, and systems that the evaluation staff envisioned and employed.

In my study, I have pursued the following research question: *How was Norwegian foreign aid sought made an evaluable object, and how did the evaluation efforts contribute to transform the field of foreign aid?* In answering this question, I have investigated how the evaluation staff in 1980 envisioned aid to become evaluable; their suggested methods for how to undertake evaluations; and how these visions were realized during the ensuing decade. A key component in making aid an evaluable object, I show, was to change how aid staff was *writing*: Future evaluations depended on there being available documents from throughout the life of an aid project, as this was the only way in which the effects of the project could be retraced. Hence, *evaluability depended upon traceability*.

Yet concentrating my analysis solely on evaluation staff and their efforts would not suffice for answering my research question. I have therefore also investigated how the new tools and routines were employed in one specific aid project: Norwegian support for the building of an oil sector in Mozambique, which was initiated in 1980. This project, which was later expanded into a petroleum sector program, provides the opportunity of analyzing how an aid project came into being before the new evaluation efforts were realized. By following the project through the next 12 years, I show how the project staff's ways of writing and reporting shifted as the new categories of evaluability entered the project documents around 1990. Furthermore, my analysis shows how these categories were not the only new feature introduced during the 1980s; categories of accounting and audit also entered the documents. While coming from most highly different sites, the tools and routines of evaluation and accounting were combined in new ways within the Norwegian aid administration around 1990. Both had a concern for traceability; yet as I show, making aid an *evaluable object* and making it an *accountable object* entailed very different effects. This, I argue, in turn had the paradoxical implication that aid projects attained the very same characteristics that the evaluation staff one decade before had so strongly criticized.

By engaging in a detailed analysis of the multiple versions of evaluation that co-existed within the Norwegian aid administration during 1980-1992, this thesis intends to contribute on three different arenas. Empirically, it contributes to an expanded understanding of aid evaluation and to the major transformation of aid that was taking place in Norway during this period. Theoretically, it contributes to ongoing debates on the effects of evaluation and accounting within public administrations at large. Methodologically, by combining methods from History and STS, it contributes to expand the repertoire for how we may study *documents*. Rather than taking documents for granted as mere sources of information, I have made the documents and the archives from which they emerge the main sites of my investigation. In doing so, I aim to show that despite their reputation of being dusty and dull, they are indeed lively, engaging sites worthy of close reading and serious consideration.

Acknowledgements

Incidentally, today is Thanksgiving Day in the United States. What better moment could there be to finally write the pages of this thesis that are dedicated to all those who have assisted, explained, advised, read, commented, discussed, challenged, and supported me throughout the process of this PhD.

The thesis would not have been possible without the experienced archival staff on whom I have depended and whose company I very much enjoyed: Brit Romsaas and Evelyn Velez Exmundo in Norad and Andreas Nøttestad Buzzi in the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The thesis also owe much to my encounters with the many skilled and knowledgeable individuals who populate the field of foreign aid. Evaluation staff and aid staff in Oslo and Washington D.C. and petroleum staff in Stavanger took time off their busy schedules to engage in in-depth interviews and helped me navigate the worlds of aid and oil. I send a special thanks to Øyvind Eggen; while we first met as PhD students, both studying foreign aid, he has also been an invaluable field guide into contemporary Norwegian aid evaluation.

My academic supervisors have given me more than one could expect. Kristin Asdal and Gabrielle Hecht are not only brilliant, ambitious, and inspiring scholars; they are also generous and enthusiastic individuals who have pushed and pulled me and my thesis further than I would ever have been able to go alone. Kristin has followed the PhD project from beginning to end. Always available, concerned, and interested, she helped me get started, keep going, and see it through, always demanding empirical precision and analytical rigor. During the protracted final stage, she has persistently challenged me to pull myself up from the details and articulate my overarching argument. Meanwhile, during these years, Kristin has also included me in other aspects of the academic daily life which have provided much-needed escapes from the solitude of archives and documents, such as organizing seminars, PhD-courses, and workshops.

Gabrielle's excellent PhD course (with Paul Edwards) at the Oslo summer school in 2012 opened up a whole new field of STS research to me. She readily agreed to be co-supervisor for my thesis, and swiftly took care of all the formalities necessary for me to come work with her at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor during the fall of 2013. Important parts of the thesis' foundations came into place during that fall, and her comments on my final draft has helped me put all the different pieces into place. In Ann Arbor, she was also an excellent host, introducing me to the STS community at UMich and its many adjacent research groups, all with their distinct seminars, workshops, and graduate lunches. An early version of Chapter 5 was presented to the STS reading group, whose participants generously read and commented on my crude draft. And precisely two years ago today, Gabrielle and Paul opened their home for a Thanksgiving dinner where family, friends, and colleagues enjoyed (among the many dishes) Gabrielle's perfectly roasted duck (no turkey there!), Paul's classic, delicious pecan pai, Davide's enormous, out-of-this-world tiramisu, and (for us an exciting first taste) their friends' Southern-style savory bowl of grits.

I enjoyed interesting and fun conversations with several of the excellent STS graduate students in Ann Arbor, notably Nick Caverly, Kevin Donovan, Dan Hirschman, Adam Johnson, Emma Park, and Davide Orsini. Kevin Donovan deserves a special mention; our joint interest in aid evaluation led to engaging conversations throughout my months in Ann Arbor. These exchanges and Kevin's well-informed reading and precise comments on previous drafts have contributed in most substantial ways to the thesis.

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While Ann Arbor offered a fabulous academic experience, most of my PhD days have been spent at the TIK Centre for Technology, Innovation and Culture at the University of Oslo. During 2010-2015, TIK provided me with a research fellowship, a room of my own, and a most stimulating working environment. TIK's STS group has been my safe harbor since day one, with its combination of a supporting environment and vibrant academic discussions. Past and present members include Kristin Asdal, Tone Druglitrø, Mads Dahl Gjefsen, Knut Haukelid, Erlend Hermansen, Bård Hobæk, Ann-Sofie Kall, Stefanie Jenssen, Ásdís Jónsdóttir, Sylvia Lysegård, Linda Madsen, Sissel Myklebust, Helena Nynäs, Tina Talleraas, Irene Tvedten, Helge Ryggvik, Guro Skarstad, and Göran Sundqvist. Our group's summer dinners and Christmas lunches at Kristin's house remain among my finest TIK memories. I'm especially grateful to Ann-Sofie, Erlend, Sylvia, and Tone for our ongoing conversations about all aspects of PhD life and our readings and comments on each others' ideas and drafts.

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Yet research life, I've learned, is not only about the academic discussions, it is also about enduring the seemingly never-ending routine work of writing and rewriting. During the past year, I have spent considerable amounts of time in a meeting room with other PhD students, punching away in silence during our by now indispensable *pomodoro* sessions (also known as: *Shut Up and Write!*) – in which a good old tomato-shaped kitchen timer (or its digital substitute) has determined when to work and when to take a break. At the Centre for Development and Environment (SUM), I met up with Maren Aase, Maren Bjune, Hanne-Cecilie Geirbo, and Iselin Stensdal. Sharing the experience of the writing helped me both handle the seemingly voluminous task at hand and enjoy it while it lasted. Much of this thesis has also been written while sharing a tomato with one or more TIK colleagues Tone Druglitrø,

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Finally, I can answer him: Yes, today it is done.

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Abbreviations

ANT	Actor-network theory
BD	Board Document (for NORAD's board), in Norwegian: Styredokument (SD)
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CMI	Christian Michelsen Institute, (an independent research institute in Bergen, Norway)
DAC	Development Assistance Committee (under the OECD)
Danida	Danish International Development Assistance Agency
DI	Direktørinstruks, in English: Director General's Instruction (in Norad)
DUH	Departementet for utviklingshjelp (1984-1990), in English: Ministry of Development Cooperation (MDC)
Evalfo	Kontoret for evaluering og forskning (NORAD 1977-1984), in English: Office of Evaluation and Research
ENH	Empresa Nacional de Hidrocarbonetos de Moçambique, in English: Mozambique National Petroleum Company
Geco	Geophysical Company of Norway
GTZ	(Western) German agency of development cooperation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
LFA	Logical Framework Approach
LPA	Logisk prosjektanalyse, in English: Logical Project Analysis, renamed LFA ca.1989
MDC	Norwegian Ministry of Development Cooperation (1984-1990), in Norwegian: Departementet for utviklingshjelp (DUH)
MFA	Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in Norwegian: Utenriksdepartementet (UD)
MOE	Norwegian Ministry of Oil and Energy, in Norwegian: Olje- og energidepartementet (OED)
MOZ 032	NORAD's project code for the oil aid project in Mozambique, from 1983 expanded into a petroleum sector program
NORAD	Norwegian Directorate of Development Co-operation, in Norwegian: Direktoratet for utviklingssamarbeid
NPD	Norwegian Petroleum Directorate, in Norwegian: Oljedirektoratet (OD)
NPM	New Public Management
NUPI	Norsk Utenrikspolitisk Institutt, in English: Norwegian Institute of Foreign Policy (an independent research institute in Oslo, Norway)
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
OD	Oljedirektoratet, in English: Norwegian Petroleum Directorate (NPD)
OED	Olje- og energidepartementet, in English: Ministry of Oil and Energy
OfD	Oil for Development Programme (in Norwegian: Olje for Utvikling, OfU)
Petrad	International Programme in Petroleum Management and Administration
PRE	Mozambique's Economic Reconstruction Program (1987)
SECH	Secretario de Estado do Carvão e Hidrocarbonetos, in English: Mozambican Ministry for Coal and Hydrocarbons
SD	Styredokument, in English: Board Document (BD), for NORAD's board
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
STS	Science and Technology Studies
TAN 051	NORAD's project code for the petroleum sector program in Tanzania
ToR	Terms of Reference (mandate/assignment for a commissioned report)
TPDC	Tanzania Petroleum Development Corporation
USAID	United States' Agency of International Development

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In June 2012, the Evaluation Department of the Norwegian aid administration (Norad) presented their annual report in an open public seminar. The head of the department opened the event by stating that it was close to impossible to say anything certain about the effects of Norwegian aid. The evaluations performed during the past year all had difficulties with drawing any clear conclusions about the results of the aid activities they were commissioned to evaluate. «We still don't know enough about the effects of Norwegian aid», she stated. The problem, she explained, was a lack of proper data on which to base evaluations, which lead to weak analyses and subsequently an inability to conclude in any substantial way. For this reason, her office was currently planning to commission a string of evaluations of the very system of aid administration and evaluation itself: Were projects planned and managed in a way that made them possible to evaluate? And did the evaluations in fact lead to change and learning within the administration?

I was intrigued by this explicit discussion of evaluation data and methods, as it so directly echoed discussions from 30 years back which I had recently found in Norad's archives. In 1980, the small staff of the newly established Office of Evaluation and Research argued that if the aid administration and the public at large were to have any knowledge about Norwegian aid, Norad had to undertake more evaluations. Furthermore, these evaluations needed to be based on scientific criteria of validity and reliability and employ methods from the critical social sciences. But for this to even be possible, aid workers needed to start to produce data about the aid projects, from the planning stage and throughout the life of the project. For this reason, the 1980 evaluation staff called for a fundamental change in the way aid was being done.

In this thesis, I explore how these tools, routines, and systems of aid evaluation came into being within the Norwegian aid administration. I have concentrated the analysis on the first decade, 1980-1992, with some attention also to activities during the late 1970s. The research question for the thesis has been the following: *How was Norwegian foreign aid sought made an evaluable object, and how did the evaluation efforts contribute to transform the field of foreign aid?*

Given the potentially radical transformation of aid called for by evaluation staff in the early 1980s, as introduced above, a main concern has been to understand the relation between the expanding evaluation efforts and other tools for managing aid work, notably routines of planning, implementing, reporting, accounting, and auditing of specific aid projects. Such routines are often interpreted as measures of control and made examples of New Public Management and a turn to neoliberal policies. Yet as this thesis aims to show, evaluation cannot be conflated with measures of control or a turn to markets, at least not in the case of Norwegian foreign aid: There was much more going on.

In this introductory chapter, I will describe my empirical sources and the theoretical and methodological resources I have employed. First, I will position the thesis within the existing literature on foreign aid, notably historical research and the post-development tradition. These fields both serve as important parts of the thesis' foundation, yet in articulating and pursuing my research question, I have mobilized analytical resources from the field of Science and Technology Studies (STS). Building upon this field's rich tradition of historical, sociological, and ethnographic studies of knowledge production in science and society at large, I have developed the concept of *evaluation optics* to describe how evaluation tools and routines enabled staff to both see aid and do aid differently. I introduce the STS literature in the second and third parts of the introduction, where I also discuss how it has enabled my specific analytical approach to aid evaluation. In the last part of the introduction, I present my empirical material in combination with a discussion of how I operationalized my analytical approach through combining methods from History, STS, and Rhetoric. Finally, I introduce the thesis' structure and chapters.

Studying the history of foreign aid

Internationally, historical studies of foreign aid are organized mainly around investigations of international organizations,¹ nation states and their aid agencies,² large aid projects,³ or expert communities.⁴ Cooper, Pharo and Fraser, and Kohtari all demonstrate the continuities from imperial geopolitics and colonial administrations to post-war aid relations.⁵ A key feature of aid is the transnational mobility of aid workers, aid tools, and development ideas. Hecht et.al suggests the concept of *entangled geographies* to describe how travelling experts have connected separate sites in new ways.⁶

The number of historical studies specifically of aid evaluation and aid documents is sparse. A notable exception is Timothy Mitchell's study of World Bank reports as part of a longer history of foreign experts in Egypt.⁷ Contemporary analyses of aid work, notably by anthropologists, are increasing. Maia Green, David Mosse, Richard Rottenburg, and Anna

¹ For a comparative discussion of international organisations' role in development, see Frey et.al 2014. For contributions on the history of the World Bank, see Alacevich 2009 and Kapur et.al 1997. For the UN, see the book series published by the United Nations Intellectual History Project (1999-2010), among them Ward 2004; Jolly et al. 2008; and Stokke 2009. Several of these volumes were written and edited by former UN staff; for a discussion of this feature in the writing of the UN history, cf. Reinertsen and Wilhelmsen 2008. Other works by academic historians include Maul 2012 on the International Labour Organization 1940-1970 and Staples 2006 on the cooperation between the World Bank, FAO, and WHO 1945-1965. For a review article on recent works in the field, cf. Frey and Kunkelo 2011.

² For studies of Norway, see the three-volume *History of Norwegian Development Aid 1952-2002 (Norsk utviklingshjelps historie)*, which includes Simensen 2003; Ruud and Kjerland 2003; Liland and Kjerland 2003. For Sweden, cf. Odén 2006 and Brodén Gyberg 2014. For comparisons of policies and priorities among European donor countries, see Pharo and Fraser 2008; Pharo and Schmidt 2003; Olesen et.al 2013.

³ Notable examples are Isaacman and Isaacman 2013; Öhman 2007; Pharo 1986.

⁴ Cooper and Packard 1997; Hecht 2012; Kothari 2005; Öhman 2007; Redfield 2012.

⁵ Cooper 2002, 2005; Kothari 2005; Pharo and Fraser 2008.

⁶ Hecht 2012.

⁷ The volume on the statistical department of the UN does touch upon these issues, but do not analyze them as such. Cf. Ward 2004.

Tsing have all analyzed the work of aid staff.⁸ Karlsson has articulated the importance of understanding the role of documents in development work.⁹ Some have undertaken more detailed analyses of aid documents and aid evaluation: Annelise Riles has followed the making of a UN statement; Rottenburg has followed the monitoring work of an aid project funded by the Asian Development Bank; and Jensen and Winthereik have followed intertwined monitoring processes, including the internal review and external audit, of Danish aid projects.¹⁰ I will expand on these works in later sections of this introduction.

Finally, one strand of literature, influential within both the aid field and public discourse, emerges at the meeting point between research and practice: books and articles written by aid staff, think-tanks, and practice-oriented research centres. The question of *whether aid works* has been a recurring concern during the past 40 years.¹¹ Among these contributions, Roger Riddell explicitly discusses the difficulty of establishing clear links between aid, development and economic growth, and how a lack of data and precise indicators complicates evaluation even further.¹² William Easterly argues that evaluation is both difficult and inherently biased; yet in a few sectors, notably education and health, it is possible to distinguish clear effects of aid upon development.¹³ Others have analyzed specific tools of aid evaluation as tools of governance, such as indicators for monitoring whether international development goals are being achieved.¹⁴ Finally, there are arenas where aid evaluation professionals and researchers meet to discuss evaluation methods and systems, such as the journal *Journal of Aid Effectiveness*.¹⁵

Historical studies of Norwegian aid evaluation

The empirical field of Norwegian foreign aid is vast, with aid projects spanning 60 years and 116 countries across all continents. The political goal of devoting 1% of the Norwegian national budget to aid, articulated in 1960, has with some exceptions been met since 1978. Given the rapid expansion of Norway's GDP due to revenues from oil production, this principle has caused considerable annual increases in the aid budget, especially during the past 10 years. In 2014, the total aid budget amounted to 0,99 percent of GDP, or 31,7 billion Norwegian kroner.¹⁶ As a part of this expansion, and as I will show in this thesis, demands for documenting the results of aid through project monitoring and evaluation have become

⁸ Green 2009, 2012; Mosse 2005, 2013; Mosse (ed.) 2011; Mosse and Louis 2005; Rottenburg 2000, 2009; Tsing 2005.

⁹ Karlsson 2013.

¹⁰ Riles 2000, 2006; Rottenburg 2000, 2009; Jensen and Winthereik 2013.

¹¹ Examples are Cassen 1985; Hirschman 1967; Riddell 1987, 2007; Easterly 2006.

¹² Riddell 2007.

¹³ Easterly 2006.

¹⁴ Davis et.al 2012.

¹⁵ In 2014, the *Journal of Aid Effectiveness* published the special issue "Measuring agency performance" in which several papers concerned the evaluation process initiated by Norad's Evaluation Department in 2012, to which I referred in the opening of this introductory chapter (cf. Norad 2014): The former head of Norad's Evaluation Department who was instrumental in defining the evaluation assignment (Gaarder and Bartsch 2014); the evaluation staff who were responsible for following up the evaluation team (Lindkvist and Dixon 2014); and the evaluation team members (Lloyd, Poate and Villanger 2014).

¹⁶ Norwegian aid (2014) in numbers: <http://www.norad.no/aktuelt/nyheter/2015/slik-var-norsk-bistand-i-2014/>

distinct fields of expertise. In November 2015, Norad's present Evaluation Department and Department for Methods and Results, whose historical relatives I investigate in this thesis, employs 12 and 34 people, respectively.¹⁷

The early decades of Norwegian aid have been studied by Norwegian historians¹⁸ and anthropologists¹⁹. This research has brought rich investigations of aid abroad and at home: there are detailed studies of a number of Norwegian-funded aid projects, of shifting aid policies, and of the Norwegian public debates between 1950-2000. But these studies only to a certain extent help us understand how aid was sought made an evaluable object. A major research project on the history of Norwegian aid, published in three volumes in 2003, brought forward much insightful analysis of aid at both the policy level, the management level, and of numerous aid projects abroad.²⁰ Only to a certain extent did the volumes deal with the specific efforts at making aid evaluable.

To address this question, we have to enter into the routine work of the aid administration, into the sites where the work of planning, monitoring and evaluation was done in practice. The lack of attention to these sites in the overall literature attests to the distributed character of aid, with its vast number of relevant arenas, actors, and processes. In contrast to this expansive approach, I have looked for the specific means and tools by which aid was sought made evaluable within the everyday life of the offices of the Norwegian aid administration.

To understand how aid was made an evaluable object, it is thus necessary to move further into the aid administration's way of working, the details of how specific kinds of evaluation and management routines and systems came into being and were established and expanded. In the second volume of the Norwegian aid history, Ruud and Kjerland note that Norad started undertaking evaluations in the early 1980s and link this to an increase in the use of social scientists, and especially anthropologists, in planning and evaluation work. This change is explained as Norad's response to an intensifying external critique of aid and a subsequent stronger political attention to the effect of aid.²¹ The number of evaluations grew during the 1980s, but was then reduced somewhat during the early 1990s, before they again increased toward the end of the 1990s.²² The questions of how and why this happened

¹⁷ The Evaluation Department: <http://www.norad.no/en/about-norad/employees/evaluationdept/>; the Department of Methods and Results: <http://www.norad.no/om-norad/ansatte/avdeling-for-metode-og-resultater/>

¹⁸ Engh 2006; Ibsen 2000; Krøvel and Orgeret 2013; Liland and Kjerland 2003, Pharo 1986; Pharo and Schmidt 2003, Pharo and Fraser 2008; Reinertsen 2008, 2010; Ruud and Kjerland 2003; Selbervik 2003; Simensen 2003, 2007; Tvedt 1989, 2003; Tønnessen 2007.

¹⁹ Henriksen 1974; Eriksen (ed.) 1989; Klausen 1968; Jansen 2002. For historical analyses of the anthropologists' role in Norwegian aid, see Kjerland 1999; Reinertsen 2008, 2010; Ruud and Kjerland 2003; Simensen 2003.

²⁰ *Norsk Utviklingshjelps Historie* [History of Norwegian development aid], in three volumes (vol. 1: Simensen 2003 (1952-1975); vol. 2: Ruud and Kjerland 2003 (1975-1989); vol 3: Liland and Kjerland 2003 (1989-2992). The work was commissioned by Norad on the occasion of the 50th anniversary in 2002 of the first Norwegian aid project. The work was undertaken by academic historians predominantly from the University of Oslo. The book committee was led by professor Helge Pharo from the Institute of History at UiO, with a secretariat based at the Centre for Development and Environment (SUM) at the same university.

²¹ Ruud and Kjerland 2003, pp. 60-62.

²² Liland and Kjerland 2003, pp. 175-176.

remains unanswered, however; compared to other parts of the aid history project, the topic is not discussed in much detail.

Another aspect of how aid was sought made an evaluable object, is discussed in a section about increasing demands around 1990 from the Norad management for more comprehensive internal reporting schemes. Liland and Kjerland explains this shift as being stimulated by the general turn to markets and neoliberal policies in Norwegian government during the 1980s. The authors point to Norad staff as being frustrated with these new demands, and show how they created tensions between the Oslo headquarters and the field offices. They quote a staff member at one of Norad's field offices, complaining that Norad's headquarters in Oslo was too much of a «command central», and that the demands for documentation were time-consuming and inefficient.²³

These contradicting views and experiences of aid work are intriguing, and lead to questions about the role of documents in aid work. Why were these tools considered crucial by some and redundant by others? How did aid staff work with or against the emerging systems? How did the efforts at promoting external evaluations and internal reporting relate to one another? Were these the same or different ways of making aid an evaluable object?

To answer these questions, a historical approach is necessary, but not sufficient. A problem with the historical studies of Norwegian aid is the small extent of explicit inclusion of analytical perspectives from outside the discipline. Some make note of possible methodological moves or theoretical fields, but rarely makes this a part of the analysis. In his introduction to the first aid history volume, Simensen suggests that aid is a field well suited for discourse analysis.²⁴ In a separate article, he explicates the methodological challenges and choices of the aid history project at large. He explains that they chose a broad approach to avoid letting the aid actors' own definitions, concepts, and self-conceptions dominate the narrative. Furthermore, Simensen points to the vast amount of potential empirical material and the challenge of delineating the study and organizing the narrative.²⁵ In employing a new approach to the study of Norwegian foreign aid, this dissertation is also an exploration into the methods of aid history and an effort to expand its methodological repertoire.

From post-development critique towards Science and Technology Studies (STS)

During the 1990s, a number of academic studies voiced a strong critique of what they considered the colonizing effects of foreign aid and development interventions. Employing approaches from Michel Foucault, Edward Said, and postcolonial scholars,²⁶ these studies investigated the relation between expertise, discourse, and power within aid. In his influential book from 1995, *Encountering Development: the Making and Unmaking of the Third World*, Arturo Escobar deconstructed the concepts of «development» and «Third World» to show

²³ Liland and Kjerland 2003, pp. 134-136.

²⁴ Simensen 2003, p. 19.

²⁵ Simensen 2007.

²⁶ Foucault 1991 [1978] and Said 1979. In postcolonial theory, notable contributions are Chakrabarty 2000; Gandhi 1998; Spivak 1988.

how these were not pre-given objects, but indeed political constructs, and had come into being through specific knowledge making processes within aid agencies, political institutions, and academic communities in the the First World capitals.²⁷ By putting the very term «development» in brackets, Escobar abstained from taking the fields' own terms and self-conceptions for granted. To that end, the post-development approach to aid shared ambitions with aid historians to remain on the outside of the practice field and maintain a critical distance.

The vibrant string of scholarship around and after Escobar paid special attention to the disciplining and colonializing effect of development expertise. Ferguson and Mitchell had some years earlier both turned the policy documents of the World Bank into objects of critical analysis, and juxtaposed them with, respectively, ethnographic fieldwork in Lesotho and historical analysis of Egypt to show how aid agencies' descriptions of these countries' current situation were far from neutral, objective renderings, but rather situated within a particular knowledge tradition and embedded with political considerations.²⁸ Following this, a common concern within post-development studies have been to deconstruct development discourse to unveil the political features of perceived non-political objects, and argue that a key effect of aid was in fact depoliticization; that aid, with Ferguson's famous phrase, served as an «anti-politics machine». During the 1990s, a number of textbooks and anthologies contributed to the establishment of post-development as a distinct field.²⁹

Two influential scholars much cited in post-development literature, Johannes Fabian and James Scott, elaborate on the effects of academic disciplinary knowledge and its relation to power, politics, and the state.³⁰ Fabian, in his *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* from 1983, followed Said's in his deconstruction of European academic knowledge production, and showed how the field of anthropology was founded on and reproduced a distinction between the European «us» and its «other»: By travelling from European capitals to study primitive societies elsewhere, they projected a temporal scale onto spatial distance. Moving from here to there, from us to the other, one also moved back in time. In this way, Fabian argues, anthropology helped sustain a conception of societies living in different times; some in the present, some in the past. Fabian called this effect the *denial of coevalness*. In this way, Fabian showed how the figure of «the other», a notable analytical tool in postcolonial literature after Said and Fanon, was produced by the «I» of the travelling European academic, and that the denial of coevalness furthermore contributed to enabling and legitimizing European colonization. Escobar picks up Fabian's concept to show that aid documents maintain a divide between modernity and tradition, and argue that development is a continuation of colonization by other means.³¹

²⁷ Escobar 1995.

²⁸ Ferguson 1990.

²⁹ Notably Cowen and Shenton 1996; Crush 1995; Rahnema and Bawtree 1997; Sachs 1992.

³⁰ Fabian 1983.

³¹ Escobar 1995, p. 78.

The effort at destabilizing the universality and objectivity of academic knowledge extended also to the study of the state, with James Scott's much-cited *Seeing Like a State* from 1988 as a core reference. Employing a Foucauldian governmentality approach, he analyses how different state systems have mobilized scientific knowledge in an effort to map the world in order to rule it; with Scott's term, «making the world legible». Legibility, whether of forests, populations, or cities, also enabled governing them, which in turn fostered domination by the state upon nature and citizens. Hence, legibility remade nature and humans into subjects of state rule.³² The governmentality approach to the study of aid indeed pushed open a whole new field of inquiry and posed important and legitimate questions to the practices and effects of aid and development. However, the post-development position promoted an even more forceful distance vis-à-vis the aid field than do the historians.

Post-development scholarship has contributed insightful analyses of the critical and critique-worthy role of knowledge in development, shown the importance of investigating how aid and development produces knowledge, and identified the potentially disciplining effects of aid work. But in their analyses, aid is often taken for granted as always powerful, dominating, disciplining, and problematic. This position fosters a nearly automatic critique and suspicion of aid, and especially of technical expertise. Historical studies of global development and historical change challenge this strong position.³³ For example, Cooper, in his analyses of African history, emphasizes the importance of development as a concept embraced by labor movements and national elites in the colonies both before and after independence. Rather than a concept or vision pushed upon them from outside, development was claimed by African actors and used to mobilize against the colonial rulers.³⁴

In a review of the history of the relations between the concept of development, the social sciences, and aid administration, Cooper and Packard described the post-development position as a postmodern critique of development that «locates the knowledge-power regime in a vaguely defined 'West' or in the alleged claims of European social science to have found universal categories for understanding and manipulating social life everywhere. (...) Locating power does not show that it is determinant or that a particular discourse is not appropriable for other purposes».³⁵ In recent years, the field of post-development studies has experienced a declining interest.³⁶ The approach continues to spur relevant and valuable analyses,³⁷ but key scholars in the field have questioned the early strong assumptions of post-development and

³² Scott 1998.

³³ Aerni-Flessner (2014), in a study of the history of development policies in Lesotho, both confirms and challenges Ferguson's analysis.

³⁴ Cooper 2005.

³⁵ Cooper and Packard 1997, p. 3.

³⁶ For discussions of the decline of post-development theory, see Jensen and Winthereik 2013; Cooper and Packard 1997; Nustad 2011.

³⁷ For studies of governmentality in aid, see e.g.: Lie 2015; Murray Li 2007; Nustad 2003. Lie employs the term «developmentality» to describe the work of the World Bank, thus directly connecting Foucault's concept to the field of aid.

adopted concepts from STS to enable a more open-ended approach and get beyond the mode of deconstruction and critique.³⁸

Similarly, STS scholars are increasingly turning towards foreign aid as a field of empirical analysis.³⁹ This dissertation project maintains the same position vis-à-vis its empirical object: rather than approaching aid with a sense of suspicion towards the actors, I have privileged curiosity: Instead of asking «what are they *really* doing», I have tried asking «what are they *actually* doing».⁴⁰ In the following, I will explicate the theoretical and methodological position of the thesis that underpins this position.

Analyzing aid work as lab work: Technologies of seeing

As stated in the opening paragraphs of this chapter, my guiding research questions has been the following: How was Norwegian foreign aid sought made an evaluable object, and how did these evaluation efforts transform the field of foreign aid? In this section of the chapter, I will attend to theoretical resources that underpin the first part of this question. I here draw upon the tradition of laboratory studies within STS and its historical and ethnographic investigations of scientific knowledge production. In these accounts, scientific work emerges as precisely work – consisting of protocols and routines, practical arrangements, and technological equipment, which in combination with the research materials, physical infrastructures, scientific communities, and the mobilization of political and economic support produced and sustained a scientific result.

The early works within laboratory studies emphasized *construction* of scientific facts. Most have in recent years moved from a constructivist position towards a post-constructivist position, in which the main interest lies in the *enactment* and *performativity* of scientific knowledge and social arrangements.⁴¹ In this view, the combinations of people and artifacts become networks of human and non-human actors, or heterogenous assemblages; hence the widely used term actor-network theory (ANT).⁴² This shift within science studies has been coupled by a move towards politics as a site of study. Asdal shows how attention to the performativity of the «little tools» of politics in the widest sense – including the offices, routines, and documents of various kinds – enables a more detailed understanding of how politics is done and how technical features and practical work are indispensable parts of

³⁸ See e.g. Green 2009, 2012. Mitchell and Ferguson have also moved from their earlier positions; cf. Ferguson 2006 and Mitchell 2013. Donovan 2015 makes the case for employing STS approaches in the study of development; what he terms “Latourian development studies”.

³⁹ Cf. Shrum 2015.

⁴⁰ In Norway, the History discipline engaged in a similar discussion of suspicion as a methodological position. Historian Jens Arup Seip (1905–1992), a notable contributor to writing the foundation of Norwegian national history, was critiqued in 1992 by philosopher Hans Skjervheim for employing «the hermeneutics of suspicion» in the tradition from Paul Ricoeur in his interpretation of Norwegian history. Skjervheim was especially critical of how Seip claimed to have disclosed the actor’s hidden motives and used these findings to explain their choices and actions. Cf. Seip 1963, 1983; Skjervheim 1992, pp. 25-36.

⁴¹ For a discussion of this shift, cf. Law 2009.

⁴² Akrich 1992; Latour and Woolgar 1986; Knorr Cetina 1981; Latour 1987; Pasveer 1992.

political and bureaucratic action.⁴³ To that end, the technologies of politics, such as evaluation documents, may be considered *material-semiotic artifacts*. The concept of material semiotics enables an analysis of, simultaneously, a document's physical form and the meaning it produces, and furthermore, how the specific combinations of material and semiotic features produce a specific version of reality, which in turn may intervene into this same reality in perhaps surprising ways.⁴⁴

This approach also enables a more well-calibrated investigation of aid. Empirically, it leads to a study of the tools of aid – the practical means of aid administration and the tools by which the aid bureaucracy worked. As has been noted by many, aid is a field in which management tools in the form of *documents* proliferate: Handbooks, guidelines, strategies, reports, and evaluations abound, as do systems for both producing, systematizing, and using them.⁴⁵ When starting to investigate how aid was being made evaluable, I encountered voluminous amounts of such documents. What to make of them? An historical analysis would perhaps employ them as sources of understanding the changing concerns of aid politicians and administrators; a Foucauldian analysis would perhaps presuppose and conclude that they were carriers of expertise and authority. In contrast to this, a common position within the aid field itself is that the massive text production produces a vast amount of documents which no-one reads or uses.⁴⁶ The lab studies approach invites a different take on aid documents, in that they neither take for granted that they are powerful and dominant *nor* does it discard them as powerless and ephemeral. Indeed, they might even be empowering.

Technologies of seeing and inscription devices

A key contribution from the field of Science and Technology Studies (STS) to the understanding of science has been its attention to how specific technologies enable scientific work and by extension the emergence of new scientific descriptions of the world and claims to truth. Bernike Pasveer, in her analysis of the first use of x-ray images, uses the term *technologies of seeing* to describe how these new tools made scientists and lay people able to see the interior of the body with their own eyes. What had before been unavailable for the human eye became visible, specific, and real.⁴⁷ Similarly, Shapin and Schaffer argue that a key feature of modern science is the scientists' efforts to convince others by means of demonstrations. Without making visible one's findings or reproducing lab experiments for wider audiences, scientists will be left with far less support for their claims.⁴⁸

While the concept of technologies of seeing may cover all sorts of laboratory equipment, it may also serve a more analytical function. If we concentrate on Shapin and Schaffer's concept of writing devices, documents of all sorts may also be included in the definition. Latour and Woolgar also highlighted the critical importance of devices for writing

⁴³ Asdal, Brenna and Moser 2007; Asdal 2008b, 2014.

⁴⁴ Asdal 2004; Law 2009.

⁴⁵ Jensen and Winthereik 2013, Karlsson 2013, Mosse 2013.

⁴⁶ Karlsson 2013.

⁴⁷ Pasveer 1992.

⁴⁸ Shapin and Schaffer 1985.

in science. They suggested the concept of *inscription devices* to describe these various documents and writing routines.

Inscription devices, according to Latour and Woolgar, are what “transforms pieces of matter into written documents”: “More exactly, an inscription device is any item of apparatus or particular configuration of such items which can transform material substance into a figure or diagram which is directly usable for other members of the office space.”⁴⁹ Latour and Woolgar developed this concept when employing ethnographic methods to study scientists working in a laboratory. They noted that the scientists’ main concern was to produce written materials – diagrams, curves, or tables of figures – which in turn would count as evidence and be used to build arguments.⁵⁰ Hence, the whole strength and authority of the scientists’ claims rested upon the work of the inscription devices, which were what enabled the transformation from a pool of samples into convincing evidence. Simply using inscription devices were however not sufficient; of importance was also *the method* by which they were employed. The inscription devices had to be used in specific ways for them to be of value. Indeed, Latour and Woolgar argues with respect to science that “writing was not so much a method of transferring information as a material operation of creating order”.⁵¹

In this way, Latour & Woolgar highlights how the routine practices of writing is crucial for understanding how science works and how knowledge is built. Importantly, it is the way in which the different inscription devices are made to build upon each other that enables strong results of scientific work.

Chains of translations: reduction, amplification, and circular reference

A key feature of inscription devices is how they build directly upon each other in order to enable the transformation of matter into words. In later works, Latour has developed this point by highlighting how the moves and shifts enabled by such devices is a form of *translation*.⁵² In Latour’s version of the term, it signifies the process within science through which scientists transform nature into data, data into analyses, and analyses into scientific literature. Hence, translation processes are made up of multiple small translations connecting the field in which data were collected to the laboratory where they were analyzed. These multiple translations all build upon each other, to the extent that they in combination make up a *chain of translations*. The strength of this chain thus determines the strength of the scientific analysis.

In an ethnographic study of a research team investigating the changing borders of the Amazon forest, Latour details the many small steps which the researchers undertook to build their analysis. Latour argues that this process is critical to establish something as *real*; in this case, the precise characteristics of the border of the Amazon rainforest:

⁴⁹ Latour and Woolgar 1986.

⁵⁰ Latour and Woolgar 1986, p. 50.

⁵¹ Latour and Woolgar 1986, p. 245.

⁵² Cf. Callon 1986, Latour 1999, and Law 2006 [1997] for different versions of what is commonly referred to as «the sociology of translations» within actor-network theory (ANT).

Stage by stage, we lost particularity, materiality, multiplicity, and continuity, such that, in the end, there was scarcely anything left but a few leaves of paper. (...) But at each stage, we have not only reduced, we have also gained or regained, since, within the same world of re-representation, we have been able to obtain much greater compatibility, standardization, text, calculation, circulation, and relative universality.⁵³

The chain of translations produces this transformation, in which the researchers move from the field and into the lab. But the chain also remains significant after the work is done, because in order to sustain the reality of a given scientific claim, others must be able to retrace all the little steps of the research team, from the publication and back to the data collection in the Amazon. This principle is what Latour has termed *circulating reference*.

In this dissertation, I suggest that this concept, and the meticulous practices of documentation which it demands, a useful tool for analyzing the role of documents in aid. When evaluation staff in Norad worried that «we still don't know enough» about the results of Norwegian aid projects, this may be seen as attesting to the difficulty of establishing and upholding a complicated translation chain. The texts are what establishes the connection between the aid projects «out there» with the aid administration «here at home». It is through and with these texts that one may draw conclusions about aid and its results. A crucial point is therefore not only the quality of the specific document, but of the entire process, or procedure, with which the document was produced and circulated. The attention to the materiality and mobility of texts, and to what happens within and between texts, is a main concern of Latour's in his book *The Making of Law* from 2010.⁵⁴ Here, he analyzes a legal court house with the same methods as he analyzed the Amazon research project. By following the specific files of court cases, he shows that although the law is indeed the object of legal theory, law is also material – it is made up of individual court cases, which again materializes in the form of files. It is necessary, argues Latour, to:

(...) substitute the grand talk about Law, Justice and Norms with a meticulous inquiry about files – grey, beige or yellow, thin or thick, easy or complex, old or new – and see where they lead him [the ethnographer].⁵⁵

In addition to their materiality, Latour pays attention to how the files move through the courthouse. As they circulate, they also move closer to the actual court procedures, and in the process the files change slightly for each step. In a process resembling the Amazon translation chain, individual complaints and grievances are connected by legal staff to the formal protocols and statements into what Latour describes as a «fragile bridge». Through his detailed analysis, Latour shows how the production of such a chain of texts is key to understanding how law works in practice:

The progressive articulation of the case, from the lawyer's office up to the display of the final judgement, consists of making a case speak more and more like the law just by having the arguments or the grounds at every stage better arrayed and regrouped. (...) The bridge has now been established by fitting the elements of the claim into the texts and by weaving the

⁵³ Latour 1999, p. 70.

⁵⁴ Latour 2010 [2002].

⁵⁵ Latour 2010 [2002], p. 71.

means by bringing them closer and closer to laws and decrees. (...) To proceed step by step, that is what Law is, namely *procedure*! The power of the Law, like that of a chain, is exactly as strong as its weakest link and we can only detect this link by following the chain link after link, without omitting a single one.⁵⁶

This way of analyzing documents within public administration is a novel approach to discussions of bureaucracies, and has been influential for how I (and indeed also others, as I will explain below) have engaged with the empirical field.

By analyzing science as chains of translations, Latour argues, a key feature emerges: The dual process of reduction and amplification. First, *reduction* describes the process of moving the object of inquiry from its environment into the confined space of the laboratory, thereby transforming it to something the researcher may investigate in detail. Then, *amplification* describes the transformation of the findings of this investigation into scientific facts that may be moved out of the laboratory and back into the world to convince others about its validity.⁵⁷ These twin concepts help illuminate how scientific practice builds upon isolating an object from its surroundings to remove all other features and move it to the laboratory for close inspection through scientific instruments and methods. Inscription devices are crucial tools in the process of transforming the object from specimen to data and onwards to evidence supporting a scientific argument. These steps all involve multiple small translations, which means that doing science amounts to building a solid chain of translations from the field via the lab to the scientific conclusion.

This ability to retrace is a key feature of science, argues Latour: For scientists' claims about their object to be found valid and trustworthy, they must also take care to maintain what Latour describes as *circulating reference*.⁵⁸ This means that other scientists should be able to retrace the research process backwards from the scientific text through the lab to the field – that is, to rewind the chain of translations. The concept of circulating reference thus describes the process of constantly moving back and forth between *the object described* and *the description* of the object, between the reference and what it refers to. For this circular move to be possible, the translation chain must be complete; all minor steps between field and text must be documented. If the chain is broken, the circulating reference is weakened, which in turn weakens the validity of the scientists' claims. For this reason, convincingly establishing new facts relies on the circulating reference always being intact.

Analyzing aid work as paperwork: Technologies of politics

Historian Ben Kafka alerts us to the origins of the word *bureacracy* and its literal meaning “rule by writing desk”.⁵⁹ This alerts us to the combination of mundane writing practices and potential power assertion which take place in bureaucratic sites, such as the offices of aid

⁵⁶ Latour 2010 [2002], p. 88-90.

⁵⁷ Latour 1999.

⁵⁸ In the chapter, Latour uses the concept of *circulating reference* to oppose the binary of language/nature, or words/world, which he argues dominates the philosophy of science. In contrast, he suggests this concept as a means to connect the two and disregard the philosophical divide between them.

⁵⁹ Kafka 2009.

administration. Indeed, *paperwork* is precisely this – to do work by means of paper (or its digital equivalents) for the purpose of achieving something specific.⁶⁰ Offices of public administration are often expected to be powerful and calculating spaces from which states are able to control and dominate large areas and populations. At the same time, notions of bureaucracy also spurs associations of unnecessary protocol, dusty file cabinets, and inability to act. These two narratives of bureaucracies reflect the conflicting conceptions of aid documents I described above, which attests to how documents and bureaucracy are closely connected.

In analytical traditions following Max Weber and Michel Foucault, the question of how bureaucracies gain authority is explained by the concepts of the rational organization, the panopticon, and governmentality.⁶¹ The offices of public administration gather information, organize it, and act upon it. According to Scott, state power both mobilized and was enabled by scientific mapping endeavors which made the world legible, and thereby governable.⁶² As discussed above, such power and its repressive effects are often assumed in analyses of aid. Indeed, post-development scholarship has shown both disruptive and destructive consequences of aid interventions and the discontents of the very concept of development.⁶³

While the critical accounts of aid coming out of this scholarship is important and pertinent, one should not accept as a given that aid by necessity is repressive or that aid administrations are by necessity powerful. Indeed, Scott, while arguing that making the world legible also made it governable, was also concerned with how state endeavors might *fail*. Similarly, while Foucault's concept of *governmentality* has spurred strong critiques of aid, the concept itself is broader than its use may suggest. As Lemke argues, second-generation readings of Foucault has in several respects departed from Foucault's own work.⁶⁴ Similarly, Kristin Asdal argues that there are multiple instances in Foucault's writing which indeed do point to the productive effects of power.

Asdal employs Foucault's concept of *technologies of politics* to describe the numerous material tools and administrative procedures of offices of public administration.⁶⁵ While acknowledging the contributions of the governmentality approach to the study of the state and its workings, Asdal argues for a re-combination of the governmentality approach with the material-semiotic and actor-network approaches. This, Asdal argues, allows for more *open-ended* analyses, as they are «seeing technologies as something that *enables* action rather than something that disciplines and governs». ⁶⁶ Furthermore, following from this, one might find that public offices are not necessarily powerful as such; they might also produce what Asdal suggests to call «non-authority». ⁶⁷

⁶⁰ Kafka 2012.

⁶¹ Foucault 1975, 1991 [1978]; Weber 1968.

⁶² Scott 1998.

⁶³ For example Ferguson 1994 [1990] and Mitchell 1991.

⁶⁴ Asdal 2014; Lemke 2014.

⁶⁵ Asdal et.al 2008; Asdal 2008a; Asdal 2008b.

⁶⁶ Asdal 2014, p. 2112.

⁶⁷ Asdal 2011a.

Indeed, STS scholars have long been interested in what enables authority. In his analysis of the Portuguese empire, John Law argues that a state's ability to control and govern vast areas far from the capital was enabled by effective naval vessels, which were again dependent on three aspects: «documents, devices, and drilled people». ⁶⁸ In combination, these features enabled the state to establish itself as a *center of calculation*. Here, the role of documents was decisive, but not sufficient. In parallel, in an STS analysis, demonstrating the presence of these three features is not sufficient: *how* states or offices gain authority, if at all, and with what effects, is never a given. Calling for a re-combination of Foucauldian and Latourian approaches, Asdal argues that conclusions about how technologies, actors, or offices gain authority or non-authority must be based in detailed empirical investigations. ⁶⁹

Archives as infrastructures

The analytical concern, then, should be to acknowledge also the difficulties of *becoming* a powerful center of calculation, and the potential of *failing* to do so. As the laboratory studies have shown, collecting, systematizing and making use of information is hard work which does not necessarily succeed. Ben Kafka's work, which introduced this section, explores the role of documents in the French state administration following the 1789 revolution. Matthew Hull employs the same approach, albeit with ethnographic methods, in his analysis of an urban planning process in a Pakistani governmental office. ⁷⁰ These works provide rich empirical investigations into the interrelations between documents and offices – in a word, the paperwork – and how office staff produce, categorize, circulate, and archive their documents.

Archives as infrastructures for knowing and remembering have been the object of fascinating studies also within history, literature, and science studies. Here, scholars have made similar moves as have Hull, explicitly analyzing genres, infrastructures, and archives. ⁷¹ Within these works, we find discussions of the relations between knowledge and power similar to the debates referred to above. Thomas Richards argues that one should not take for granted that the archives of the British empire, although vast and detailed, necessarily enabled imperial policies to be put to action. Compiling information was not enough; the archives might be disorderly, documents might disappear or simply not be categorized in a productive way. ⁷² Similarly, Steedman argues that Foucault's explicit equation between archives and power is unsatisfying, and demonstrates the many ways in which an archive and archival practices may demonstrate an outright inability to govern and control. ⁷³

These novel histories of archives corroborate Asdal's argument above that offices of public administration may produce *non*-authority as much as authority. In related arguments, both Hull and Stoler note that the archives may also have other effects for other actors than originally intended or expected; although the documents were made by Pakistani urban

⁶⁸ Law 1986.

⁶⁹ Asdal 2014.

⁷⁰ Hull 2012a, 2012b. Cf. Riles 2006 for a key contribution to integrating documents in ethnographic analysis.

⁷¹ Cf. Bowker 2005; Gitelman 2014; Kafka 2012; Yates 1989.

⁷² Cf. Richards 1993.

⁷³ Burton 2005; Steedman 2002; Stoler 2009.

planners or Dutch colonial officers for the purposes of state power, the subjects of their rule might also benefit from or themselves employ the potential power of documents and archives.⁷⁴ This point may seem trivial, but remains an important methodological position in that it alerts us to the potential surprises and unpredictability of both state rule and archival research. As Jensen and Winthereik show in their ethnographic study of present aid information infrastructures, even in the contemporary situation where aid information abounds, the making and maintenance of systems to make use of the information remains a fundamental challenge. Hence, accumulating information might not necessarily mean enhanced legibility and governability.⁷⁵

So what precisely do the technologies of aid enable? What do the documents do? Does evaluation serve to increase the control of donors at the expense of the autonomy of recipients? Does evaluation switch staff attention from the worlds-out-there to the words-in-here? Is evaluation yet another example of New Public Management? These questions are relevant not only to the study of aid, but of politics and administration at large. In the following section, I will extend the scope of the discussion to include literature on accounting and audit as such, and consider how it has informed other investigations of documents in aid.

Enabling auditable accounting

What is the purpose of all the document writing within the field of aid? Anthropologist Richard Rottenburg, in his analysis of the Asian Development Bank's tools for planning and monitoring of aid projects as of the mid-1990s, modifies Latour's concept of *translation chain* and suggests the term *accountability chain* to describe how the making of project documents transforms the project and produces the separation between the documents and the reality to which they refer. He identifies an inherent tension between ensuring accountability to the donors (the aid agency, domestic political leadership, tax payers, the public) and to the recipients (the community, region, or government receiving the aid). With reference to Michael Power's influential concept of the *audit explosion*,⁷⁶ Rottenburg coins the term of *project explosion* to describe how aid agencies design aid projects in ways that make them responsible for the process of executing the project, not for the project's actual results.⁷⁷ The effect of this situation is that following a project plan becomes more important than enabling change in a specific community. Rottenburg concludes that aid documents and accounting practices produce a separation between text and reality, which privileges the representation over reality.⁷⁸ Hence, while his analysis builds upon the Latourian concept of the translation chain, Rottenburg concludes that the accountability chain involves a breaching of the continuum between text and reality that Latour so strongly asserted.

⁷⁴ Hull 2012a, Stoler 2009.

⁷⁵ Jensen and Winthereik 2013.

⁷⁶ Cf. Power 1997.

⁷⁷ Rottenburg 2000.

⁷⁸ Rottenburg 2000, 2009.

The proliferation of documents and documentation that makes up the audit explosion is, in Michael Power's analysis, a manifestation of a turn to a new form of government: that of *the audit society*.⁷⁹ Using empirics from the history of auditing in the UK, Power first identifies how this field emerged as a profession during the late 1890s and into the first decades of the 20th century, before he traces how the methods and principles of auditable accounting have ventured into new fields, notably health and education. A key argument of Power's is how the demands for producing and verifying auditable accounts has changed the very relation between the state and its constituents, and in doing so, also the role of public servants, who have shifted from providing welfare services to verifying that these services are delivered as expected. The audit society that emerged in the UK during the 1980s, Power asserts, is characterized by an "indirect relation between auditing and its object" which enables "control of control", i.e. audit institutions checking the internal quality assurance systems of governmental agencies.⁸⁰

How to interpret this major transformation in public administration? Power notes that the changes may well be described with the term New Public Management: indirect governing methods, intensified monitoring systems, increased importance of auditing institutions, and the creation of markets for auditing services, thus dismantling the public-private divide.⁸¹ This argument resembles Majone's thesis of how Western democracies since the 1980s have undergone a shift from being welfare states to becoming *regulatory states*.⁸² Power does assert that ideology is indeed one element of NPM, but not the most important. NPM, he argues, consists of a cluster of ideas borrowed from private sector administrative practice. The reason NPM has become prominent, is that it speaks to a set of pressing concerns: the call for fiscal restraint to curb public spending; ideological commitments to reducing the state's commitments; and demands for improved accountability of state services, in which tax payers, similar to shareholders, have "rights to know that their money is being spent economically, efficiently, and effectively – the three E's".⁸³ Here, Rottenburg's findings corroborates Power's argument, in that accountability towards aid donors trumps accountability towards aid recipients. Yet Power hesitates to equate this shift with neoliberalism and Thatcherian politics, since several governments of different ideological stance had contributed to implementing the new systems.⁸⁴ Rose and Miller, in their studies of state accounting systems, have more strongly argued the point that the expansion of such systems must be understood as neoliberal.⁸⁵

In the recent contribution *Governance by Indicators*, the editors, citing historian Theodore Porter, argue that the aid field is increasingly governed in indirect ways by means

⁷⁹ Power 1997.

⁸⁰ Power 1997, p. 12.

⁸¹ Power 1997, p. 10, 42-44.

⁸² Majone 1994.

⁸³ Power 1997, pp. 42-43. Cf. also Christensen and Lægveid 2011; Boston 2011.

⁸⁴ Power 1997, p. 43.

⁸⁵ Miller 1990, 1994; Miller and Rose 1990; Rose 1991; Rose and Miller 1992.

of numerical indicators.⁸⁶ Porter, in his historical analysis of methods of calculation, argues that quantification is a “technology of distance”, and discusses what such a technology does to the object being quantified. He argues that quantification enables governmental action, since “reliance on numbers and quantitative manipulation minimizes the need for intimate knowledge and personal trust”.⁸⁷ Power makes a similar point when he summarizes his audit society thesis in the imperative “never trust, always check”.⁸⁸ Indeed, perhaps the dynamics of the audit society, notably indirect governing styles and systems for control of control, are drawn to an extreme in aid, given that the aid recipients and the tax payers are not even constituents of the same state. The distance between donors and project sites is drastically expanded, both geographically, demographically, politically, and epistemologically. Does this make both the demands for control and the expectations of change increasingly higher – and the possible disillusionings accordingly deeper?

During the course of the discussion above, the line of argument drifted from the role of documents through auditable accounting to quantification and calculation. This moved us away from evaluation, which clearly amounts to more than quantification in Porter’s sense. While Power does not distinguish clearly between audit, evaluation, and other forms of review, my analysis shows that there are indeed important *differences* between evaluation and audit. In the next section, I will discuss other conceptions of accountability which may expand the way we may use this concept.

Accountability and responsibility

While the thesis of the audit society is appealing in analyses of aid, it is necessary to also look for instances where the thesis does not necessarily apply. Indeed, Michael Power has himself reassessed his own concepts several times, and has suggested that more than an *audit explosion*, the situation now more resembles an *audit implosion*, where the cost of audits is increasingly becoming a burden. Furthermore, he asserts that while he suggests that the term has wider applicability, his investigations are based on the UK experience; thus, further empirical investigations are needed.⁸⁹ Asdal’s argument that offices of public administration may produce *non*-authority as much as authority is an example of how new empirics may produce different analyses.⁹⁰ Her intervention into the accounting literature is similar to the recent contributions of Jensen and Winthereik. Whereas Asdal argues that numbers may also be weak, Jensen and Winthereik argue that that accounting and audit may also be empowering.⁹¹

Jensen and Winthereik, in their ethnographic study of emerging information infrastructures in aid, combine Paul Edwards’ concept of *enabling infrastructures* with Latour’s concept of *translation* to analyze how different actors build and use infrastructures

⁸⁶ Davis et.al 2012.

⁸⁷ Porter 1994, p. ix. Quoted in Rosga and Satterthwaite 2012, p. 303.

⁸⁸ Power 1997, pp. 1-2.

⁸⁹ Power 1997, pp. xivi-xix. Cf. also Power 2000a, 2003a, 2003b, 2004.

⁹⁰ Asdal 2011.

⁹¹ Jensen and Winthereik 2013.

for collecting, systematizing, and disseminating aid information.⁹² Their analysis shows that the efforts to map and monitor aid projects do not necessarily promote discipline and control; rather, new actors emerge who employ new digital technologies and infrastructures to enhance accountability and transparency within aid. Suggesting the term *monitoring movements*, they show how not only states but also social movements, exemplified by a Danish environmental NGO, are engaged in monitoring aid projects. Furthermore, actors who might be expected to function as control agencies in Power's terms, such as the Danish state audit office, are engaged both in conventional audit work and in building *partnerships* with the same actors they are auditing, in order to help them improve their monitoring work.⁹³

This analysis alerts us to the potential presence of different versions of audit, and that the effects of practices of planning, monitoring, review, evaluation, and audit might be multiple and contradicting. They might both discipline *and* empower actors, and the distribution of these effects upon the state and its subjects is not a given. Furthermore, there might be multiple state actors and different kinds of subjects acting upon each other, which means the distinction between the governing and the governed is itself far from clear.

Vicky Singleton makes a similar argument in her analysis of how different versions of accountability may be at play in the same case.⁹⁴ Rather than connecting accountability solely to accounting she considers accountability as responsibility. This enables a shift in attention from *being accountable* towards an external actor to *being responsible for* something or someone. In her study of cattle farming in the UK, she shows how that the state's monitoring systems differ in important ways from the embodied practices of farmers: While the state demands detailed documentation of cattle's health, farmers know their individual cattle's condition from being present and caring for the animals. While the documentation made the farmers accountable to the state, their own caring practices were based in them being responsible for the cattle. Singleton in this way illustrates Porter's point about the contradiction between distance and intimacy. But more than this, she shows how the different versions of accountability may coexist; they are not necessarily points at a linear spectrum.

The relation between accountability and responsibility may be conceived in yet another way. Ben Kafka, in his investigation into the role of audit, accounting, and governmental documents in post-revolutionary France, suggests that it was precisely the demands from Parliament to be shown the records and receipts of the state that made the state accountable to its citizens and responsible for how funds were spent. While the critical accounting literature rightly points out the problematic effects of making yet new objects matter of accounting, it runs the risk of bypassing this fundamental role of documents in a democracy which Kafka's historical analysis serves to highlight. The opposite would be to withhold information or uphold uncertainties. Michelle Murphy has suggested the term

⁹² Cf. Edwards 2010.

⁹³ Jensen and Winthereik 2012, 2013; Winthereik and Jensen 2014.

⁹⁴ Singleton 2012.

regimes of perceptibility to describe governance systems designed to obstruct transparency.⁹⁵ As Kafka alerts us to, trust is not in opposition to documentation; rather, trust builds upon the availability of documents.

This insight also prompts an adjustment of the strong conclusions coming out of the works of Ferguson, Mitchell, and Rottenburg. Rather than taking their influential works for granted, I suggest reading them as empirical examples of how aid was made evaluable by specific actors at specific moments in time. Such a reading also highlights the differences between them more clearly: For example, whereas Rottenburg shows how planning matrixes deny flexibility, Ferguson shows how plans may produce unexpected results to the extent that aid staff did not recognize the project they had themselves designed.⁹⁶ Furthermore, their studies were all based on document analyses and field work undertaken in the 1980s within USAID, the World Bank, and the African Development Bank respectively. The policies and practices of these institutions diverged at the time quite substantially from the Norwegian aid policies and administrative practices.⁹⁷ Hence, rather than taking for granted that their findings also hold for my material, this is something that in itself needs be investigated.

Doing historical STS: empirics, methods, and analytical approach

This PhD project has been driven by an interest in understanding aid evaluation as a field of practice: where it came from, what it became, and what it enabled. This interest has been both empirical and analytical: I have wanted to explore the empirical field of Norwegian aid evaluation while simultaneously exploring theoretical and methodological resources that might help me analyze this material. To that end, the process of gathering and analyzing the empirical material has involved a hermeneutic process where the moving between empirical material and analytical resources has served to constantly recalibrate the research question.⁹⁸ A key methodological concern throughout this process has been to explore ways to analyze the documents of aid, both those in archives and those publicly available, in a way that both makes room for their many details and nuances while also building a historical narrative. As I now turn to explicate this in more detail, I will describe both my empirical sources and how I have analyzed these by means of methods and concepts from the fields of History, Rhetoric, and Science and Technology Studies (STS).

Delineating my research object

I have assembled my object of research by pursuing two strands of empirical material: sources to the history of aid evaluation and sources to the efforts at making the Norwegian oil experience into projects of foreign aid (so-called *oil aid*). Norwegian aid to the oil sector has

⁹⁵ Murphy 2006.

⁹⁶ Ferguson 1990; Rottenburg 2000. See also Jensen and Winthereik 2013 for a re-reading of Ferguson's book and a discussion of this specific point.

⁹⁷ Liland and Kjerland 2003; Ruud and Kjerland 2003; Selbervik 2003.

⁹⁸ Lægveid and Skorgen 2001.

only to a small extent been studied, and the few existing studies deal with recent affairs.⁹⁹ In this material, I have looked specifically for moments in which the two strands of material engage each other: evaluations, reviews, annual reports, planning documents, legal agreements, and internal communication that in different ways articulate how aid staff and evaluation staff were trying to make oil aid an evaluable object and what these efforts in turn did with the object itself. In order to grasp the everyday practices of aid work and evaluation work, I chose to concentrate the analysis on one particular aid project: Norway's oil aid project in Mozambique, which is among the longest-running projects in Norway's portfolio,¹⁰⁰ and which remains one of the main recipients of aid under what is now called the Oil for Development Program.¹⁰¹

The current temporal delimitation of the analysis, 1980-1992, is the result of my concern for how aid evaluation emerged as a distinct field. That is, I wanted to understand how the notion of evaluation was brought into Norwegian foreign aid in the first place, and what happened as a result. The 1980s is a most interesting moment, with major structural shifts both in aid as such, in Norwegian political life, and in world politics at large. What happened to the aid field in this period? How did these shifts manifest themselves in the daily routines of the aid administration? Furthermore, Norwegian aid to public oil administrations, a most interesting field in itself, was established during the same decade. This makes for an interesting investigation of what aid became during the 1980s and early 1990s and serves to accentuate the new ways of doing aid.

The delineation process may indeed be described by the two analytical concepts I am myself employing in this thesis: Latour's twin concepts of *reduction and amplification*. While the choices described above involves a reduction of empirical scope, they also enabled amplification of the objects and issues which I have chosen to analyze. These amplifications allow for a level of detail that makes it possible to better understand what evaluation work entailed; the many different ways of doing evaluation both within and beyond aid; and the implications of these differences for how aid was seen and done. The amplifications makes it possible to see in detail how specific tools for evaluation and project administration came into being, how they were used, and with what effects.

Employing the same method to a different aid project than the one I chose to investigate might of course have enabled a quite different analysis, perhaps even with

⁹⁹ Cf. Ruud and Kjerland 2003, p. 35. For contemporary analyses of the Norwegian Oil for Development Programme, cf. Dypedokk 2010; Kolstad et.al 2008; Solli 2011;

¹⁰⁰ Mozambique was designated a "main cooperation country" (hovedsamarbeidsland) in 1977 and has remained one of the main recipients of Norwegian aid. In 2014, the country was announced one of eight "focus countries" (press release from Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 8.10.2014). Only in Vietnam and Tanzania had oil-related aid started as early as or earlier than 1980; these were however both categorized as countries with "limited cooperation" as of 2010, while Mozambique was a "core country". The Vietnam project were in a process of being finalized and terminated. Furthermore, in terms of research, Tanzania is the country (aside India) which has been most thoroughly investigated by Norwegian aid historians. I therefore chose to study Mozambique, as it has been far less investigated yet has received a consistently high proportion of Norwegian aid funds.

¹⁰¹ The Oil for Development Programme was established in 2005 and celebrated its 10 year anniversary in November 2015 (<http://www.norad.no/en/front/thematic-areas/oil-for-development/oil-for-development-programme/>).

different consequences for the main argument of the thesis. I choose to consider this an empirical point rather than a methodological problem: the field of foreign aid is inherently sprawled, with numerous activities across all continents and sectors, of which most, if not all, are part of some kind of documentation system. Hence, it remains impossible for practitioners and researchers alike to gain an overview or to identify representative projects. Still, I will argue that it is most likely that other processes of project planning, implementation, and evaluation unfold in similar ways as the one I have here studied. I expect that the dynamics of documents and documentation work I have analyzed have significance also beyond its own specificity.

Choices of reduction and amplification serve to highlight a key methodological feature of historical analysis: That of investigating the past on its own terms. There is always a potential divergence between the historians' analysis and the actors' own conceptions of the significance of past events. Africanist and colonial historian Frederick Cooper accentuates the methodological imperative of not doing retrospective analysis, but rather striving to position oneself analytically at the point in time when the sources were themselves produced, in this way making the future open analytically and making the specific unfolding of events something that needs to be explained, given that other trajectories might also have been likely and possible.¹⁰² This methodological imperative in History resonates with a key insight also in STS: *it could have been otherwise*.¹⁰³ It is the job of researchers to show how other futures could indeed have been possible than the one trajectory that eventually unfolded.

Collecting empirical materials

In collecting my empirical material, I maintained a broad scope before circling in on selected material to analyze in depth. Much of the collected materials are therefore left unexplored in the present thesis, yet they served as important tools for articulating and rearticulating the research question, identifying interesting issues, and moving the analytical and empirical concerns forward. The material may be sorted into three main categories: publicly available documents (online or from libraries); archival sources; interviews; and observations in the field. Following my increasing attention to documents combined with a delineation of the temporal scope, I draw upon interviews only to a very small extent. In contrast, the archival materials have come to attain a far more active role in the analysis than I first anticipated; I have therefore granted this a section of its own. In the following I will briefly describe the publicly available documents, interviews, and field observations I have collected.

Public documents

Starting the research process with compiling publicly available documents, I combined online searches of the main actors' websites with searches in the databases of the aid administration,

¹⁰² Cooper 2005.

¹⁰³ Cf. Asdal 2012a on the relation between History and STS; cf. Mol and Law 2012, p. 12 on the STS principle of "it could have been otherwise".

and the Norwegian university libraries.¹⁰⁴ In this way, I built a comprehensive archive of annual reports, evaluation reports, handbooks of evaluation and project management, and audit reports. The documents I have chosen to include may be roughly divided into four groups: reports from evaluation teams and researchers; reports and handbooks by ministries and governmental agencies; governmental reports to Parliament, including the following parliamentary proceedings; and web articles.

Given my delineation of the period 1980-1992, all recent documents (1992-2015) have been left unexplored, with the exception of my pointing to a select few in this introductory chapter. This means that all the empirical sources which I have analyzed are in paper form; retrieved from a time when electronic and digital tools for handling information were only beginning to be employed. During the recent decade, the aid administration have strived to make their reports available online; several are only now published in digital form (i.e. as PDF files).¹⁰⁵ In contrast, in my analysis, I conceive of documents as printed, published, material objects, and have not taken their digital properties into consideration. Even then, this distinction between material and digital might easily be obscured; one of the documents which has become a main object of analysis were sent me by email in scanned form, as a PDF file.¹⁰⁶ While my historical material only to a small extent calls for digital methods, an analysis of the *current* field of foreign aid would clearly need such tools, given present actors's strong concern for documentation practices, data collection, database building, and communication of aid results.

Interviews and field visits

During the course of my PhD (2010-2015), I have followed the ongoing work within Norwegian oil aid and aid evaluation by attending public meetings, seminars, and publication launches and by keeping in touch with staff in Norad's Evaluation Office and the Oil for Development program. In addition to attending their public events, I interviewed several of these staff members, some multiple times. To all interviewees, I sent a one-page letter in advance outlining my research project and the main issues I was interested in. This semi-

¹⁰⁴ These main actors were Norad's Evaluation Office and the Oil for Development program; the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs; the Norwegian Petroleum Directorate; the Norwegian Petroleum Authority; the Norwegian Energy Agency (NVE), Petrad (Norwegian training program in petroleum administration); the Office of the Auditor General; the OECD-DAC; and the World Bank.

¹⁰⁵ Norad has also increased its attention to making their data available online; they have built a publicly available database with historical data on distribution of aid funds across countries, sectors and donors (<http://www.norad.no/en/front/toolspublications/norwegian-aid-statistics/>) and a database of aid results (in Norwegian only: <http://www.norad.no/resultater/resultatportal/#&sort=date>). This move reflects a general efforts among donors at making aid information publicly available through online databases: cf. World Bank Open Data (<http://data.worldbank.org/>); Sida's Open Aid database (<http://www.openaid.se/aid/2013/>); and the independent organization AidData, which is supported by university centres, notably in the US, and USAID's Development Lab (<http://aiddata.org/>).

¹⁰⁶ For a state-of-the-art discussion of digital methods, see Marres 2015. See also Waterton 2010 for examples of methods for studying digital research objects, such as infrastructures and databases, and Gitelman 2014 for analysis of the PDF format. For digital methods in the study of aid, see especially Jensen and Winthereik 2013, whose innovative study of digital information infrastructures in aid combines the traditions of infrastructure, informatics, STS and Anthropology, and also Marres 2004 for an earlier example of digital methods employed to study a web portal for development information under the World Bank.

structured interviewguide served as a starting point for the conversation, while I always let the conversation take its own course by following the associations and memories of the interviewee. Although this material has remained mostly unused in the thesis, being well acquainted with the present field has served to highlight issues of analytical interest and served to accentuate temporal changes.¹⁰⁷

More than a method of gaining specific answers to specific questions, I conceived of the interviews as a tool for gaining sources of oral history: I wanted to retrieve their own personal narrative and their retrospective accounts of how they worked with specific projects, offices, and tools in the past, as well as their thoughts on how the field had changed over time. By opening up this temporal horizon and inviting them to recall and reflect upon their own path into the field, most of the interviewees relaxed and spoke freely; they seemed content to take time off their busy schedule to think about the bigger picture and of past efforts. Similarly, questions about their specific tools, routines, and daily work was explicitly welcomed by many; partly, they found our conversation interesting in itself, partly, they could air their frustrations or satisfaction with how things were being done. Moreover, by being concerned with their work methods, I avoided the more general, abstract discussions often dominating the public debate on foreign aid: whether aid works, whether the funds are well spent, and whether the aid staff does a good enough job.

One most relevant empirical source which I decided not to include, is archival and ethnographic material from Norad's field office in Mozambique and the Mozambican government offices. As I realized what voluminous amount of material was available in Oslo alone, I started questioning the necessity for including even more – even if these would no doubt provide material of high relevance and interest. When I also shortened the temporal scope, the relevant archival sources were all available in Oslo; only newer material was located at the Norwegian embassy in Maputo. Having made this choice, I also pondered how this situation might be used productively analytically, considering how this mirrored the situation of Norad and Ministry staff in Oslo who would only have access to the aid-out-there through the documents received from the field offices and evaluation teams. In the headquarters, any aid project was but one of a multitude of projects circulating through the offices. Furthermore, making the Oslo headquarters my main research site also enabled conceiving the Norwegian aid offices as a *local* site, as much as one would consider any aid project to be situated in a local, specific setting. This move, I will argue, in itself serves to

¹⁰⁷ I made one round of five interviews early in the project period and one more comprehensive round (12 interviews) after I had finished the archival research. In the first round, I interviewed individuals who are presently working within aid evaluation or energy aid, in Norad and other agencies, for the purpose of identifying possible issues and areas which I could investigate in more detail. In the second round, I concentrated on senior staff who had started their careers during or before the 1980s, and in several different locations: In Oslo, I interviewed staff from several Norad offices (evaluation, project management, oil, hydropower, energy planning) and independent consultants on evaluation and oil. In Stavanger, I interviewed staff who had partaken in starting Norwegian oil aid, notably in the Norwegian Petroleum Directorate and Petrad (a Norad-funded training program in petroleum management). In addition, I interviewed staff within the World Bank's Evaluation Department, of which one is a the former head of the Norad's evaluation department. Cf. list of interviews.

break open the notion of aid as something universal and rather make us attend to how the synchronization of numerous local aid practices in itself needs to be studied.¹⁰⁸

Archives as field sites

Above, I argued that the Norwegian aid agency in Oslo was my main site. Yet the version I have studied no longer exists: How to study a site of the past? As most historians, I turned to the archives. A main source of empirical material has been the archival material from Norad and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In this section, I will describe this material, but also discuss the process of archival research as such. In historical writing, descriptions of archives is a standard feature, while the practices and concerns of *archival work* are often taken for granted and seldom explicitly discussed; this in contrast to Anthropology, where the ethnographic descriptions of the field and the *field work* arguably are inseparable. In order to make my historical methods less implicit, I will in the following describe my archival materials and archival work in combination, and show how I have come to conceive of the *archive as a field site* in itself. Following Asdal, the archive may be conceived as “the historian’s version of field work”: “The archive, or more broadly the textual materials that historians work with, can be approached as a form of field from where we as historians seek to tease out the practices of the past.”¹⁰⁹ I will return to these discussions below, after first having introduced my specific site – the archives of Norwegian aid.

One of the first tasks I took on as I commenced my PhD work, was to apply for admission to the archives of Norad and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.¹¹⁰ While waiting for the archives to process my applications (this took several months), I continued to collect publicly available documents, expanded my analytical scope, and specified my main areas of interest. Upon gaining access to the Norad and Ministry archives, I took on the routines of historical archival work: I met with archivists; signed declarations of discretion and research ethics; met with the Ministry senior advisor responsible for the energy field for his formal approval of the project (this was not needed in Norad); investigated the archival catalogues for relevant entries; and started retrieving boxes, folders, and files.

The retrieval of archival files happened in rather different ways in Norad and the Ministry. Upon my first visit to Norad’s archive, I discussed my interests with my designated archivist, Brit Romsaas (upon Brit’s retirement in 2013, Evelyn Velez Exmundo became “my” archivist). Since my main interest was material from before the archive was digitized (in 2005), the archivists had no tools for finding out how much material existed and where it was located. We together investigated Norad’s archival index, but this was too general to be of much help. I was therefore invited to join Brit down to the physical archive to have a look myself. This became a routine task during my visits: Brit, and later Evelyn, would meet me in

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Tsing 2005 for the argument that the global and local are not stable, pre-given; how something *becomes* global and local in itself needs to be explained. Building on Tsing, Madsen 2015 makes the same argument.

¹⁰⁹ Asdal 2012b, p. 311.

¹¹⁰ I also considered applying for access to the archives of the Ministry of Oil and Energy, the Norwegian Petroleum Directorate, and the Directorate of Hydropower and Energy, but refrained from doing so after having gained an overview of the vast amounts of available material in Norad and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs alone.

the Norad lobby in the morning, take me to their office wing and find an empty desk I could use for the day, then bring me and an empty trolley with her down the elevator to the archive three floors beneath ground level, then through a parking garage, and into a set of chilly locked-off rooms. While she would have to open all doors with her key card, I was free to roam the stacks of the archive and retrieve whichever boxes I liked while she waited. For every box removed, I left a red cardboard plate in its place with my name and date on it to ensure that the box was accounted for and could be retraced. We put the boxes on the trolley, maneuvered back across the parking lot and through the numerous doors, up the elevator, and back into the archive staff's office wing. Finally, before I opened the boxes and started going through files, Brit and Evelyn would make sure I had got myself a cup of coffee from their coffee machine.

In contrast, in the Ministry, I was never allowed into the actual stacks. Even entering the building was more difficult; I would have to register with the security staff, obtain a visitor's pass, and wait for the archivist to come down to pick me up. In Norad, I could enter the building and take the elevator to the reception, where I would sign into a visitor's log while the receptionist called the archival staff. During my first meetings with my designated Ministry archivist, Andreas Nøttestad Buzzi, we met in his office to go through the digital databases of archived files. His dog was resting in its basket, colleagues stopped by to chat about recent travels and pet the dog (clearly the office maskot). When we had compiled a list of interesting files, he would take me through a labyrinth of corridors, stairways, and locked doors to the rooms available to visiting researchers, located in a quiet, secluded wing of the Ministry with no regular staff and a separate entry (yet also with its own security guard). He would then leave to retrieve the files from the physical archives, some of which were located in the cellars of that same building, while others (the older ones) were located several blocks away (in the so-called storage archive, in Norwegian: *bortleggingsarkivet*). Upon retrieving my folders, he would stop by me with the new material. He would then continue to retrieve files also during days I was not there and leave them a little locked cabinet in the researchers' wing. When this routine was established, he would notify me when he had placed fresh material in my cabinet, and I would meet up at the research wing entrance in the mornings. In order to enter, I would have to register at the security desk and he would have to either meet me or have called in advance. Once inside, I opened the cabinet with my key and brought a new stack of files to a desk in an office down the hall. I made a pot of coffee in the adjacent lunch room and got to work: browsing files, taking notes on my laptop, and photocopying or taking photographs of the most relevant documents. Occasionally, Andreas might stop by for a little chat and obtain an updated list of materials I was interested in,

Navigating the archives were complicated both in Norad and the Ministry. While I in Norad could browse the stacks directly and thus found much of the key material myself, the Norad archive posed another challenge: At the time of my visits, all material up until 1980 was in the process of being submitted to the National Archives. This meant that external archivists were transforming the original Norad archival code into that of the National

Archives', box by box. Hence, boxes were being removed, relabeled and eventually transported to the National Archives' depositories. There may therefore likely be boxes of direct relevance which I have not been able to investigate. Furthermore, navigating the Ministry's archive was complicated by it having changed archival systems several times: The original non-digital archive with material up until 1995 has a physical archival index (the oldest material, now held by the National Archives, follows its own index). The whole archiving system was changed in 1995, when an electronic database was introduced, enabling computer searches for specific folders and documents. Then, in 2004, yet a new system was introduced in which whole documents were being digitized and made searchable in a major database. The same electronic archive was also implemented in Norad during 2006 (while I was doing archival work for my Master's degree).

In addition, the many reorganizations of the aid administration between 1983-1990 entailed that as the responsibility for handling different fields and sectors shifted among Norad's headquarters, Norad's field offices, Ministry headquarters, and Ministry embassies. The physical project archives moved along in the process. Furthermore, during the years of 1984-1990, aid issues were handled by a special Ministry of Development Cooperation (MDC, in Norwegian: Departementet for Utviklingshjelp, DUH). Archival material from this Ministry remained difficult to retrieve. This situation had direct effects for my analysis, as the evaluation staff moved from Norad into the new Ministry in 1984. Tracing their work through the archives therefore turned out to be far more difficult than anticipated.

The archives' infrastructural changes and the many missing folders and files were initially a source of great frustration. The situation testified to the use of archives, the imperfect circulation of bureaucratic documents where circuits may suddenly be cut for unknown reasons. A file landing in the wrong place, leaving the loop, and disappearing from view meant that someone had held it in their hand, brought it with them, and not left the designated archival sign post on the correct shelf. Clearly, such limitations of archives pose challenges to researchers, evaluators, and aid staff alike. Numerous times I've wondered, no doubt echoing past researchers, evaluators, and archivists: What happened to the missing file? Where is it now? What was it used for? And of course: *What's in it?* Would its contents corroborate, challenge or simply confuse my analysis? For the archivists, seeking to maintain the aid archives' systems and routines, such omissions were frustrating displays of the institutional incapability of maintaining order and control.

Yet, as I was working through the many files and folders that indeed did emerge from the archives, I became increasingly aware of how the archive was also an integrated part of my object of study. Going through a comprehensive file of a major evaluation undertaken in 2000-2001 (which I later decided not to analyze), I came across a letter from an external evaluator, who, in summing up the evaluation process, made sure to thank the archivists of the aid administration for their kind and efficient help in accommodating his requests for all sorts of documents. This expression of gratitude highlighted that the life of aid documents did not *end* in the archives; their circulation had potentially only begun, and could continue through

their retrieval by evaluators and researchers like myself. In my archival notes I wrote: “Must make the archive itself part of my study.” In this way, the archive shifted from being the institution from which I *retrieved* my empirical material, of unquestioned status yet also frustratingly flawed, to a *field site* in its own right. The question of *how* documents made it into the archives and what happened to them there became empirical questions in themselves. Subsequently, the gaps in the material that had first caused me methodological frustrations, became empirically relevant: What might the aid archives’ gaps and omissions tell us about the object of aid – how it was constituted, how it was handled, and how it was evaluated?

These questions were spurred not by the empirical material alone, but by its combination with a reading of recent scholarship combining historical and ethnographic methods in innovative ways.¹¹¹ Within both STS and History, scholars are beginning to analyze archives in themselves as specific sites with specific histories, politics, and institutional arrangements, rather than taking them for granted as neutral repositories of research material.¹¹² Following Waterton, the latter may be considered a conventional view of archives, while she identifies a current move towards “exposing the guts of archives”.¹¹³ Similarly, rather than “exploring the archive for the purpose of disclosing ‘what’ happened,” Asdal calls for “redirecting the focus more towards ‘how’ objects are enacted – and with what effects for the practices in question.”¹¹⁴ In my analysis, I have explicitly discussed the omissions of the aid archives and turned these into empirical findings with analytical value in and of themselves. Hence, instead of critiquing such omissions as flaws, I have pondered what they might tell us about the routines, systems, and visions of foreign aid.

This analytical move served to shift my experience and comprehension of the archive completely: from a dead, quiet place with varying degrees of smooth/difficult navigation and good/poor availability of relevant documents, to a lively, dynamic field site in its own right which was a key part of the very aid projects, evaluations, and offices I was investigating. This notion of the archive as a field site in the ethnographic sense also changed my own relation to the archive: Rather than being an external person visiting to retrieve stored information, I became part of its administrative routines and of the documents’ circulation circuits.

In retrospect, I could have taken this shift more directly into the analysis: Firstly, by making my archival notes more like ethnographic field notes: As of now, they include my visiting date; numbers and titles of boxes, folders, and files; and varying descriptions of the specific documents depending on their properties, relevance, and interest. Several key insights, such as the one quoted above and the paragraph on my visits down into the Norad basements, were drafted in the archival notes. Yet, I did not refine these notes for the purpose of

¹¹¹ To grasp this combination, Hecht and Hull have suggested the term *Anthro-History*, while Asdal and Druglitrø has suggested the term *historical ethnography*. Cf. Asdal 2012a, 2012b; Druglitrø 2012, 2014; Hecht 2009, 2011, 2012; Hull 2012a, 2012b.

¹¹² Stoler 2009; Richards 1993; Hull 2012a; Bowker 2005.

¹¹³ Waterton 2010.

¹¹⁴ Asdal 2012b, p. 311.

employing them as research material in themselves; they remained a “backstage” tool used to help me remember and review the empirics I had found and to keep track of boxes, folders, files and documents, thus enabling proper referencing while writing.

Had I conceived of archival notes more as ethnographic field notes, I would have rewritten them in order to make them fit for other readers. I would also have included more descriptions and reflections: of the sites, the archivists, the daily routines, the intricacies of search and navigation, the waiting time, and the meticulous browsing of thousands of pages of documents, and the patient, slow, and at times lonely days in the archive. Furthermore, and as described in the section on public documents above, explicitly analyzing the archival infrastructures of the aid administration by combining the infrastructure literature with digital methods (see above), would have proved a most intriguing analysis. Indeed, and as discussed in the previous section, archival infrastructures are the foundation of state rule, both democratic and repressive. The question of accountability is also, in most practical ways, a question of access: Who are admitted, on what terms, to see which documents? What may be copied and quoted, what is withdrawn from public scrutiny? What a nation preserves and stores, and the ways in which storage infrastructures are built and maintained, also reflects this nation’s self-understanding: What it wishes to remember and who are granted access to the traces of its past.

Documents as field sites

While I above argued for conceiving of the *archives* as field sites, I will in the present section take this point one step further and discuss how I have approached the specific *documents* also as field sites. I will begin by introducing a document which, although ultimately left out of the analysis, was important for pointing me in the direction of what would eventually become my analytical approach. During my first inquiries into Norwegian oil aid in general and the Mozambican portfolio specifically, the annual reports from the Oil for Development program served as a main point of reference. Reading the Mozambican section of the program’s annual report from 2010, which was released right after I commenced my PhD project, I was intrigued by how the history of the program was presented (cf. illustrations 1.1 and 1.2).

Being trained as an historian, the limited information granted about the program’s history made me curious: The short paragraph listed the years in which cooperation was institutionalized within Mozambican agencies; in effect, a chronology of formal requests and agreements. Where were the decade-long civil war, the possible conflicts of interest, and the potential problems in how the project was unfolding? It all seemed so straight-forward, yet 25 years were effectively eclipsed: what happened between 1980 and 2005?



Illustration 1.1: Front matter of the *Oil for Development Initiative Annual Report 2010*.¹¹⁵

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE PROJECT

The petroleum related development cooperation between Norway and Mozambique started in 1983 after a request forwarded by the State Secretariat for Coal and Hydrocarbons (SECH) in 1980. When the National Petroleum Institute (Instituto Nacional do Petroleo, INP) was formed in 2005, it became the main partner on the Mozambican side for the Norwegian cooperation. The cooperation involves personnel from the NPD and other Norwegian institutions, as well as international and local consultants. In 2009, the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry for Coordination of Environmental Affairs (MICOA) entered into an agreement concerning capacity building in MICOA.

Illustration 1.2: Excerpt from the Mozambique two-page entry.

Drawing upon Asdal's material-semiotic approach to historical documents (see previous section), I started considering the report not only as an historical source representing the recent past by means of text, but as a *technology of politics* – a tool with the potential of making something happen.¹¹⁶ More than as an objective source to information about the oil aid projects as such, I started looking more closely at the report itself: its front matter, preface, layout, maps, photographs, tables, graphs, text boxes, and appendices. Conceptualizing the report as a tool, I started asking not merely what the report *said*, but what it *did*, that is, what its effects were and what further actions it could enable. This approach to the study of text was fuelled by the work of several other scholars, who all had in common that they analyzed texts *in relation to* their context: Taking cues from the works of Carolyn Miller and Jo-Anne Yates, I started pondering how the specific *genre* of the annual report enabled specific narratives; furthermore, how the choice of genre might have effects upon the situation into which the documents were intervening.¹¹⁷ Foucault suggests the analytical distinction between a text's author and *author function*, which was useful for thinking about documents from public agencies, characterized as they are by deliberately omitting any individual author contributing to its realization – except, as in the case of the Oil for Development report introduced above, the current Minister of Development signing the preface.¹¹⁸

These approaches all served to pull the documents out of the realm of development discourse and policy and make them research objects in their own right, similar to any other piece of literature analyzed within the humanities.¹¹⁹ Yet, for all their literary features, aid texts are not fiction; they do seek to describe and intervene in the world. The material-

¹¹⁵ Norad 2011. *Oil For Development Initiative Annual Report 2010*, front matter and p. 27.

¹¹⁶ Asdal 2008b; Asdal et.al 2008; Asdal 2014; Law 2008.

¹¹⁷ Miller 1984; Yates 1989.

¹¹⁸ Foucault, Michel 1979 [1969].

¹¹⁹ Cf. Czarniawska 1999 and Ferraris 2013 for similar analytical moves within the fields of management studies and philosophy, respectively.

semiotic approach offered a way of analyzing how this link between text and reality, between words and worlds, was made and sustained. Notably, from Latour and Woolgar I gained the concepts of *inscription devices*, *chains of translation*, *reduction and amplification*, and *circulating reference* (see previous section), which enabled me to consider both how different aid documents were related to each other and how documents could manage to establish something as true and real. The same issue is analyzed by Stephen Hilgartner, who suggests the distinction of *frontstage/backstage* in the writing of expert reports: that is, the interplay between the difficult “behind the scenes” work of a writing group, in my case an evaluation team, and the public display of authoritative conclusions and recommendations.¹²⁰

This combination of analytical resources made me especially alert to how aid documents, such as the 2010 Annual Report of the Oil for Development Program, had a key role in articulating and establishing the real-world results of Norwegian aid projects. Indeed, this was a key purpose of the annual report. The Mozambique entry included the following textbox of “Key Achievements in 2010” (illustration 1.3.):



Illustration 1.3: Text box of “key achievements” of Norway’s oil aid to Mozambique in 2010.¹²¹

The text box raised numerous questions: What did the “improved management systems and routines” and “enhanced ability” amount to in practice? How could a Norwegian aid program conclude that one of its key achievements were another national government adopting a final draft of environmental regulations? What were the political and democratic implications of activities that here emerged as straight-forward technical work? The many questions prompted by this textbox pointed me towards aid reporting, monitoring, and evaluation as issues of empirical interest in and of themselves.

Historian Ben Kafka, in his review of how the field of book history has handled documents, notes that historians have “discovered all sorts of interesting and important things by looking *through* paperwork, but seldom paused to look *at* it”.¹²² In his review, he shows how STS approaches, notably Latour’s 2010 work *The Making of Law* discussed in a previous section, has served to renew the field of book history. Interestingly, Matthew Hull, in a parallel review of the role of documents in ethnographic research, refers to Kafka’s point and argues that the same may be said about anthropology. Quoting Latour, he notes that

¹²⁰ Hilgartner 2000.

¹²¹ Norad 2011. Oil For Development Initiative Annual Report 2010, p. 29.

¹²² Kafka 2009, p. 341.

documents have been “the most despised of all ethnographic objects”.¹²³ Similarly, Asdal argues for close and careful readings of historical documents as a means to see what she suggests to call the *modifying work* and *transformative capacity* of documents.¹²⁴

For historical STS research, this also means that the historical context should not be taken for granted; rather, one should analyze how documents actively intervenes and builds its context, or contexts in the plural. In this way, one escapes the risk of explanation by means of a pre-established context. Rather, one is taking seriously both the specific document and the historical moment which it produced.¹²⁵ This move is what constitutes my conception of documents as field sites: it means to look for what happens in the text itself, look for how it establishes its own context, and how it potentially transforms both the issue at hand and its own context.

Description and narration: analysis through writing

My analytical approach of close and careful reading of aid documents is reflected also in the dissertation itself: I have granted much space to discussing the details and subtle nuances of the documents, the documents’ relation to each other, and their relation to their contexts. Much space and analytical concern is devoted to document quotes: I pay close attention to the many steps of the processes investigated and the many small changes from one document to the next. My aim has been to take the documents seriously as objects of analysis, even the most mundane, seemingly insignificant ones, like a succession of draft versions of a terms of reference document for a project review (see Chapter 5). In doing so, I have become aware of both how significant the many choices made for each document may be – their styles, genres, speed, writers, readers, and itineraries – and how these supposedly routine documents are often far from routine, trying to reconcile pressing conflicting concerns. Hence, I have aimed at making visible and significant what other readers might find both unimportant, unimpressive, and insignificant. A change of words in a terms of reference document; so what? The same report is referred to as both a project review, an evaluation, a program document; so what? Precisely because of their routine character, the quotes are not necessarily dramatic or decisive formulations of high temperature. Some surely are, and as shown in all chapters, both public reports and internal memos may be both sharp and confrontational. However, more often, the documents are at first glance far less conspicuous.

The writing process, with its meticulous work of quoting and commenting, has been integral to the analysis. In short, a key feature of the analysis is *description of descriptions*: As I have spelled out my analysis in writing, the nuances emerge: what constitutes a strong position, what counts as an argument, what calls for immediate action, what counts as critique. Also, I have become aware of the flexibility of supposedly strict genres, whether memos, agreements, reviews, evaluation reports, or terms of reference documents. Even within an organization possessing a multitude of genres and forms, there were possibilities for slippages,

¹²³ Latour 1990, p.54, quoted in Hull 2012b, p. 252. Cf. also Latour 2010 [2002]; Riles 2000.

¹²⁴ Asdal 2015.

¹²⁵ Asdal 2012a; Asdal and Moser 2012.

misunderstandings, and ambiguities. While the administrative systems were designed for producing clarity, efficiency, and overview, such features were not necessarily there in practice.

In describing the writing and circulation of documents, I have been inspired by ethnographers of office life and document writing, notably Latour's analysis of legal clerks, Hull's analysis of a planning office in Islamabad, and Jensen and Winthereik's analysis of information infrastructures in Danish foreign aid.¹²⁶ All of the above dwell on moments of document writing and circulation, recreating moments they observed in the field of documents in-the-making. In doing so, I have conceptualized myself as an ethnographer, peaking over the shoulder of the person writing or reading: What were they doing? How? Why? Where? What were they taking for granted, what were they disregarding, and what were they making into the main issue? In doing so, I have tried to get closer to their tools and routines, more than the organizational structures, individual concerns, and political landscapes of aid.

Employing description as a key methodological tool also poses the challenge of *how* to describe. What words to choose in order to prove an analytical point or highlight an empirical finding? Should I accentuate differences, conflicts, and ruptures, or emphasize continuities and commonalities? Pondering these questions also reflects a critical empirical concern: How do the documents solve these issues? How do they describe, summarize, conclude? Do they highlight or tone down a conflict? Precisely because writing is the way through which the aid projects are brought into the administrative circuits, language and choice of words are of fundamental importance. As I show in Chapter 5, a document's shifting designation has direct effects upon how it is read and the purposes it may serve – even though its content remained identical.

Organizing the chapters

Throughout the process of writing, I have tried different ways of organizing this manuscript. As is a common experience in analyses of historical material, a main concern has been the relation between chronology and more thematic or analytical concerns. The choice of narrative is not simply a matter of structural organization, but also a core analytical matter, determining the kind of argument I would be able to make. It is *through* the very narrative – the descriptions, word choices, emphases, explicit and implicit links, and the internal structure between the multiple elements – that historians build their arguments and make their explanations. The order in which the details of their empirical sources are presented is therefore of utmost importance. This concern echoes the concept of “rich descriptions” as a methodological tool in ethnography: Indeed, the discussion of chronological and thematic organization might also be considered a tradeoff between diachronic and synchronic analysis. How important are temporal changes versus the multiple things happening at the same time? In short, how important is *time* for the analysis and how important were the changes that

¹²⁶ Hull 2012a; Jensen and Winthereik 2013; Latour 2010 [2002].

demonstrably took place? These are questions which I have grappled with throughout the analysis.

In this way, the organizing concept of the thesis has been a set of key documents. This choice has obvious weaknesses, in that the investigation of the broader context remains less explored than what would normally be done in both historical, ethnographic and sociological studies of aid. The time and pages spent analyzing documents comes at the cost of an overview often strived for in scholarly accounts of temporal changes of a field. I have to a lesser extent tried to map the field symmetrically or to present an overview. The documents which I have chosen to investigate in depth are not necessarily representative. Nevertheless, they remain critical for answering my research question of how Norwegian aid was made an evaluable object: This happened neither in the overarching aid strategies nor in an outside context, but precisely in the routine writing of documents (or lack thereof) done by project staff and evaluation staff. For this reason, I cannot say whether the project which I have chosen to investigate is representative or not; but I will maintain that most aid projects are likely to experience the same dilemmas, uncertainties, and opacities as did this one.

Chapter 2 begins in 1980, when the Evaluation Office of the Norwegian aid administration published a so-called *Handbook of evaluation questions*. The chapter analyses this Handbook in depth in order to show how the evaluation staff at this point in time sought to transform aid into something that could be evaluated: by means of new administrative tools, I argue, they sought to enable *traceability* which in turn would enable *evaluability* of aid. In doing this analysis, I employ the concepts introduced above, notably technologies of seeing, inscription devices, chains of translation, and circular reference to bring out the ramifications of the Handbook's proposals. I suggest the term *evaluation optics* to describe the tools introduced for doing evaluations. While the Handbook is given most space in the chapter, and I will maintain that we may read all the main features of the evaluation staff's visions out of this document, I also employ archival sources from the evaluation office to analyze the Handbook's context, arguing that it must be seen as an operationalization of a fundamental critique of aid coming out of the social sciences of the late 1970s.

Chapter 3 too begins in the year of 1980, but with a whole different set of sites, offices, and documents. While Chapter 2 analyzed the visions of the evaluation staff, I in Chapter 3 analyze how one specific project came into being: one of the first projects of so-called *oil aid*, that is, foreign aid dedicated to strengthening the public administration of petroleum resources, in Mozambique, which had recently become one of Norway's main aid recipients. The chapter mobilizes archival material to show what aid work amounted to at the point in time which the evaluation staff articulated its visions; thus, it shows the practices that they were reacting against. In doing so, I specifically explore the role of documents and writing in the making of aid projects in the early 1980s. Sticking with the concept of *translation chains* from Chapter 2, I investigate how the project emerges through the writing and circulation of a string of documents. I suggest that while evaluation staff demanded documents which could enable evaluation, the main concern of the project staff was to

accommodate requests for aid from recipient countries and realize these as efficiently and swiftly as possible. Finally, a key concern of the chapter is the specific challenges of translating the Norwegian oil experience into an aid project – and the critical role of documents and documentation in this respect.

Chapter 4 makes a jump forward in time from the early 1980s to the early 1990s, and analyzes two key documents: A so-called *Country Study and Norwegian Aid Review* of Mozambique written by external researchers and published in 1990 and an *Annual Report on Norad Projects* prepared by the staff of the Norwegian Petroleum Directorate in 1991/92. In both documents, the oil aid project introduced in Chapter 3 is addressed, but from different angles and for different purposes: The Country Study was commissioned by the evaluation staff for the purpose of assessing the whole Norwegian aid portfolio to a specific country, and may be seen as a realization of the evaluation staff's visions a decade before; the Annual Report was requested by the Norad management after Norad adopted a new strategy and new accounting routines. In juxtaposing these two documents, I intend to bring the discussion of auditable accounting and accountability into the discussion of aid evaluation and documentation for the purpose of teasing out the differences and contradictions between evaluation and accounting. I argue that the new accounting routines constitute a shift in Norad's role *from accommodating requests to requesting auditable accounts*. Evaluation work contributed to this shift by demanding traceability, but as shown in this chapter, evaluation staff also remained critical of a too strong emphasis on controlling how aid funds were spent. Hence, the chapter also serves to show that while aid evaluation and auditable accounting of aid developed simultaneously in different corners of the the aid administration, they maintained internal contradictions. While the two documents remain the analytical concern and empirical foundation, I bring in archival sources and research literature to situate the documents more clearly within their context of a shifting aid administration.

Chapter 5, which is the last of the empirical chapters, returns to the project archives of the oil aid project in Mozambique. Here, I analyze how the project was handled from within, that is, by the Norwegian aid staff in Maputo, technical staff in Norad's Oslo headquarters, and petroleum experts in the Petroleum Directorate in Stavanger. A main concern will be to investigate how staff were handling the oil aid project through writing: I analyze what I suggest to call *moments of articulation*, that is, the instances when the project emerges in writing in the archives. What did the staff find relevant to write down, what did they write, and how? In addition to their own internal reporting, project staff initiated a so-called project review. Furthermore, during the time of the review, Norad's management changed the categories and templates of project management, which had practical implications for the further planning of the oil aid project. In analyzing how the staff's tried to grapple with the project's opacity and decide whether it was worth while continuing it, I question the stability of documents and documentation work and highlight instead their slippery and flexible qualities. In doing so, I suggest that despite deliberate efforts at grasping

specific aid projects through both evaluation optics and planning tools, the ability to firmly establish aid projects' effects remain elusive.

Chapter 6 is the thesis' conclusion, in which I bring together the main lines of argument of the four empirical chapters and discuss the wider implications of these arguments. Discussing my arguments in direct relation to the literature on audit and accountability in aid, I seek to determine to what degree what I have observed within the field of Norwegian aid during the years of 1980-92 is a turn to what Michael Power has termed the *audit society*. In spelling out the differences between evaluation and auditable accounting in aid, I argue that there was indeed an observable shift within the Norwegian aid administration towards more concern for control with aid funds. However, and importantly, the efforts at making aid an evaluable object also contained other ways of grasping aid which did not promote auditable accounts for the benefit of Norwegian auditors. Rather, I argue, the evaluation efforts operationalized a fundamental critique of aid coming out of the social sciences, in which the concern for the recipient, the context, and for making explicit aid staff's own assumptions was sought built into the very tools of aid work.

Chapter 2: Envisioning aid evaluability

Introduction

In 1981, the Norwegian agency for development aid (Norad) published a handbook on aid evaluation. It had been prepared by the staff of the recently established Office of Evaluation and Research (from here on: The Evaluation Office)¹²⁷ and amounted to 32 pages plus four appendices. On the front page, the title read «Handbook of Evaluation Questions». The photograph of an oversized human hand, orange in color, dominated the page (illustration 1):

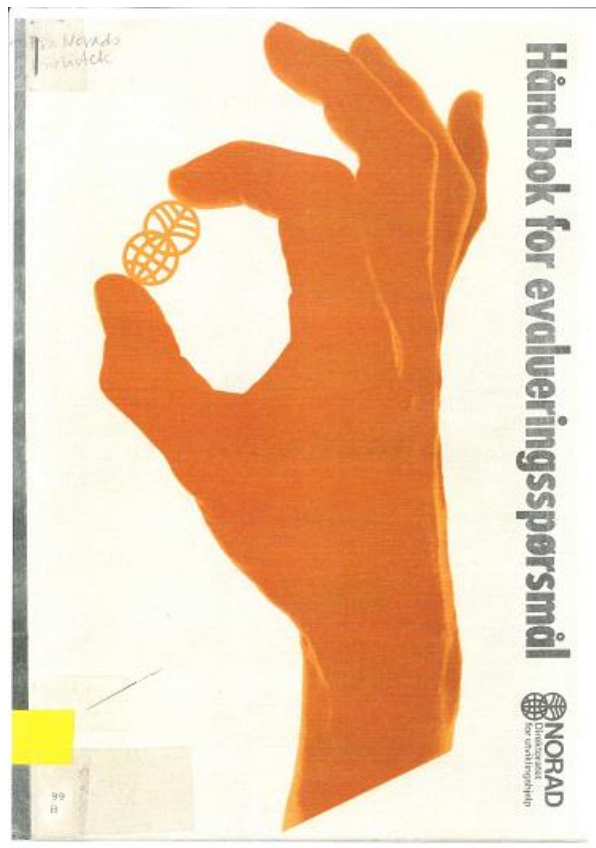


Illustration 2.1: Front page of Norad's Handbook of Evaluation Questions (1981)

The hand on the Handbook cover was gently pinching the Norad logo, imitating the way a scientist would hold up an unknown specimen to better study its characteristics. The graphic element of the hand and its specific position, combined with the word «handbook», indicated that the task of evaluation involved grasping aid in order to see it properly: Finding it, holding it, keeping it still, investigating it, categorizing it, moving it, and, through this process, managing it. In this way, evaluation was in itself envisioned to be a specific tool, what I with Bernike Pasveer will suggest to call a *technology of seeing*.¹²⁸

¹²⁷ In Norwegian: Kontoret for evaluering og forskning (Evalfo).

¹²⁸ Pasveer 1992.

Historical and social studies of science have shown how the many technologies of seeing that have been developed by scientists, engineers, and technicians have enabled the expansion of the human eye's ability to see more objects and other objects than would otherwise be possible, whether minuscule objects (through the microscope), far-away objects (through the telescope), or the interior of the human body (through the x-ray machine).¹²⁹ Building on this, I will in this chapter develop the term *evaluation optics* to describe the tools and techniques developed by the evaluation staff to better grasp aid. Technologies of seeing are a key part of scientific laboratories, where they are connected with a whole range of other technologies and practices. Take microbiology: In the laboratory, the microscope is combined with petri dishes, cooling facilities, protocols and standards, archives, reference works, journals, and routine inspections. The daily work of scientists involves linking these different devices and monitoring their transformation of biological matter into data, data into analysis, and analysis into convincing arguments. To do this, they employ what we with Latour and Woolgar may call *inscription devices*, such as research logs, spreadsheets, and data bases, through which data are produced and analyzed.¹³⁰

In this chapter, I will employ the same approach to analyze how the *Handbook of Evaluation Questions* introduced a whole new approach to aid that would make it possible to use the new optics of aid evaluation. My main concern will be how the handbook materialized the visions of the new and ambitious Evaluation Office for a radical transformation of how Norwegian aid was currently being done. In the following, I will first present what the Evaluation Office's new approach involved; then, I will describe how the Evaluation Office was established and worked to bring both external critique, support, and practical tools into the aid administration; before I analyze in more detail the specifics of what the new approach entailed. Here, I first analyze the proposed changes to how aid in general would best be planned and implemented, then the proposed changes to how evaluation work would best be prepared, undertaken, and followed up. I begin by turning over the Handbook's cover and reading its first page: the Preface.

The novel approach: Systematic aid assessment

In the opening paragraph of the Handbook's preface, the head of the Evaluation Office, Helge Kjekshus, stated the following:

During the past years there has been a standing wish to get a handbook of methodological and practical matters in relation to the evaluation work in Norad. The Office for Evaluation and Research (Evalfo) took the initiative to such a work in 1978/79 (...) [and] prepared the first sketches for a methods handbook.¹³¹

¹²⁹ Pasveer 1992.

¹³⁰ Latour and Woolgar 1986; Knorr Cetina 1981.

¹³¹ Norad 1981. *Handbook of evaluation questions*, Preface (first page, unpaginated). Norwegian quote: «Gjennom de siste årene har det vært et stående ønske om å få en håndbok om metodologiske og praktiske forhold i forbindelse med evalueringsarbeidet i Norad. Kontoret for evaluering og forskning (Evalfo) tok initiativet til et slik arbeide i 1978/79 da Anders Wirak laget de første skisser til en metodehåndbok. Senere ble manuskriptet utvidet og omarbeidet av Vegard Bye.»

Starting from the goal of strengthening evaluation work in Norad, the Handbook soon identified matters outside the realm of evaluation which needed to be addressed if evaluation was going to be possible in the first place:

In the handbook, connections between the planning of an aid intervention and the subsequent evaluation of the intervention are emphasized. It argues in favor of implementing more precision in the planning work to identify a goal hierarchy and to clarify target groups for the intervention. Clearer concepts and better understanding of the relation between intervention and goal seems to be a first step in order to bring forth a kind of evaluations which may tell us something more definite about the development effect of Norwegian aid to the developing countries.¹³²

In this subtle way, Kjekshus in effect argued that evaluations of Norwegian aid were unable to say anything «definite» because the aid projects were planned and run in a way that defied retrospective analysis. Aid staff therefore needed to attain «more precision», «clearer concepts», and «better understanding» of their work. Only if this new relation between planning and evaluation was built could «a new kind of evaluations» be produced that might be able to «tell us something more definite about the development effect» of Norwegian aid. Hence, to enable evaluation, aid staff needed to change the way they were currently working.

Kjekshus' claims were strong: Aid work had to change in fundamental ways or evaluation would not be possible. To add authority to this potentially controversial position, the Handbook noted that its analysis was shared by key actors outside the aid administration:

From the recipient countries, Norwegian authorities and the Norwegian public there have been expressed wishes for more precise knowledge about the effects and usefulness of aid. Such knowledge may be gained through systematic aid assessment. A systematic assessment of aid projects should therefore be seen as an important and integrated part of the total work load in NORAD.¹³³

The Handbook suggested “systematic aid assessment” as the adequate response both to external actors' wishes and the Evaluation Office's needs. Although the Handbook's front cover stated that its topic was «evaluation questions», it emphasized in the quote above that systematic aid assessment should be made «an important and integrated part of the total work load». Hence, evaluation was not only the concern of the evaluation staff; it should be considered a crucial part of aid at large and be made a common concern for aid staff across all offices. “Evaluation questions” were in this way not confined to evaluation work as such, but covered the entire organization and all kinds of aid work. Indeed, the Handbook explained that within systematic aid assessment, evaluation was but one of three components: First,

¹³² Norad 1981 *Handbook*, Preface (second page, unpaginated). Norwegian quote: «I håndboka understrekes sammenhenger mellom planlegging av en bistandsinnsats og den etterfølgende evaluering av innsatsen. Det argumenteres for å innføre større presisjon i planleggingsarbeidet, for å identifisere et målhierarki og for å klarlegge målgrupper for innsatsen. Klarere begreper og bedre forståelse av sammenhengen mellom innsats og målsetting synes å være et første steg videre for å få fram en type evalueringer som kan si oss noe mer bestemt om utviklingseffekten av norsk bistand til utviklingslandene.»

¹³³ Norad 1981 *Handbook*, p. 1. Norwegian quote: «Fra mottakerlandene, norske myndigheter og norsk opinion er det satt fram ønsker om mer nøyaktig kunnskap om virkninger og nytten av bistand. Slik kunnskap kan skaffes fram gjennom systematisk bistandsvurdering. En systematisk vurdering av bistandsprosjekter bør derfor ses som en viktig og integrert del av de totale arbeidsoppgavene i NORAD.»

project appraisals was to be undertaken during the planning stage, then *monitoring* work was to be done as part of the routine project administration, and finally *evaluations* were to be done by external evaluators during or at the end of the project period. The Evaluation Office had no role in the first two components of systematic aid assessment; thus, unless other staff did their part, evaluators would be able to say little about the effects of Norwegian aid. Indeed, the Handbook spent only 7 out of 32 pages on describing evaluation work; the major part dealt with how to enhance planning and monitoring.¹³⁴

This expansive definition of evaluation is critical to consider. In effect, the Handbook argued that if Norad were to make evaluation possible, it would demand a transformation of how aid was being done. I will suggest to analyze this as an effort to make aid an *evaluable object*. In this way, designing more precise evaluation optics for the Evaluation Office were not enough; the whole aid field would have to employ a new set of tools to make the evaluation optics possible to use. All staff had to contribute in enabling what I will suggest to call *evaluability*.

Does the Handbook's argument mean that there was a lack of tools and routines for planning, reporting, or evaluation as of 1981? No; such systems did indeed exist, but on a far less comprehensive scale than the Handbook envisioned.¹³⁵ Indeed, when introducing systematic aid assessment, the Handbook took as its point of departure the existing routines articulated in the document «Instruction for internal distribution of responsibilities and work regarding planning and implementation of aid interventions».¹³⁶ The Handbook explicitly grounded its proposals for change in these existing systems, which made it possible to argue that the new system was merely an expansion of, not a radical departure from, what aid staff were already doing. The new routines were however not expected to be an easy task. The Handbook acknowledged that the proposed expansion of planning and monitoring work would amount to substantial changes in the current aid work undertaken across Norad:

Systematic aid assessment is a labor-demanding task. It nevertheless seems to be a precondition for clearer precision in the aid work. Hence it may in the long run also be a means to simplification of the work tasks.¹³⁷

Acknowledging that the proposed new methods were «labor-demanding» and «ambitious», the Handbook also asserted that they were a «precondition for clearer precision» and therefore potentially also a «means to simplification» in the future. In other words, the Handbook

¹³⁴ The Handbook's table of contents illuminates this: After a 2-page preface came *Chapter 1: Systematic aid assessment* (pp. 1-3); *Chapter 2: Goal and method* (pp. 4-14); *Chapter 3: Information and data* (pp. 15-21); *Chapter 4: Doing evaluations* (pp. 22-29); *Chapter 5: Follow-up* (pp. 30-32). In Norwegian: *Kap.1 Systematisk bistandsvurdering. Kap.2 Mål og metode. Kap.3 Informasjon og data. Kap 4. Gjennomføring av evalueringer. Kap 5. Oppfølging..*

¹³⁵ For an analysis of existing planning routines, see chapter 3; for reporting routines, see chapter 5.

¹³⁶ «Instruks for intern ansvars- og arbeidsdeling vedrørende planlegging og gjennomføring av bistandstiltak».

¹³⁷ Norad 1981 *Handbook*, p. 3. Norwegian quote: «Systematisk bistandsvurdering er en arbeidskrevende oppgave. Like fullt synes det å være en forutsetning for klarere presisjon i bistandsarbeidet. Dermed kan det i lengden også være et middel til forenkling av arbeidsoppgavene. Det opplegg som her blir presentert kan virke ambisiøst og vil kreve sterk medvirkning fra berørte kontorer. Det må understrekes at opplegget må tilpasses den enkelte evaluering og den kapasitet NORAD har til disposisjon for evalueringen.»

suggested that if aid staff contributed to enabling aid evaluability, they might in turn benefit from the increased precision in their daily work. This point may be seen as a means to mitigate potential protests from aid staff: although initially involving more work, enabling evaluability might in the long run simplify their daily tasks.

What, more precisely, would the new approach of systematic aid assessment entail in practice? How should we understand the use of the term “systematic”? In the following, I will investigate the Handbook’s three steps of systematic aid assessment – appraisals, monitoring, and evaluation – and summarize the characteristics of this proposed new approach.

Advance assessments (appraisals)

For each of the three components of systematic aid assessment – appraisals, monitoring, and evaluation – the Handbook specified what the current Instruction demanded Norad staff to do and outlined how this work could be expanded. First, it explained the concept of «appraisals»:

Advance assessments (appraisals) are those investigations the recipient country and the aid agency undertake before an aid intervention is put in place. The recipient country normally undertakes an appraisal before the formal request is sent to Norway. Guidelines for appraisals of new projects are stated in [the Instruction]. In the instruction document, the office in NORAD which first receives new requests is obligated to undertake the first assessment of the request in a so-called project sketch. More expansive assessments will be voiced in project assessments.¹³⁸

The Handbook here asserted that the new routines were in practice merely an expansion of what the aid staff already should be doing if they indeed followed the existing Instruction. In both the Instruction and the Handbook, planning was operationalized through the making of a specific set of documents, which should build on each other in a specific sequence: First an *appraisal* written by the recipient country; upon which to build a *formal request* to Norway; then a *project sketch* written by the Norad office in Oslo where the appraisal and request were assessed; then, if the request was approved, a more substantial *project assessment* was to be written by the same staff. These four documents were all described in the Instruction, but would gain a more important role in systematic aid assessment:

Already in the appraisal one should build the basis for later systematic aid assessments. The instruction opens for this and points to among other things that project sketches and project assessments should specify target groups and contain information about main goal and partial goals for the aid.¹³⁹

¹³⁸ Norad 1981 *Handbook*, p. 1. Norwegian quote: «Forhåndsvurderinger (appraisals) er de undersøkelser mottakerlandet og bistandsorganet foretar før bistandsinnsats settes inn. Mottakerlandet gjennomfører normalt en forhåndsvurdering før den formelle søknad sendes til Norge. Retningslinjer for forhåndsvurderinger av nye prosjekter er fastslått i [instruksen]. I instruksen er den instans i NORAD som i første hånd mottar nyanmodninger, pålagt å foreta de første vurderinger av anmodningen i en såkalt prosjektskisse. Mer utdypende vurderinger kommer til uttrykk i prosjektvurderinger.» The English term «appraisals» was included in brackets in the Norwegian text.

¹³⁹ Norad 1981 *Handbook*, p. 1. Norwegian quote: «Allerede i forhåndsvurderingen bør man legge grunnlaget for senere systematiske bistandsvurderinger. Instruksen åpner for dette og påpeker blant annet at prosjektskisser og prosjektvurderinger skal presisere målgrupper og inneholde opplysninger om hovedmål og delmål for bistanden.»

By pointing to the existing Instruction, the Handbook made their concern for evaluability less new. At the same time, the Handbook emphasized that even when the present Instruction was indeed followed, it only contributed to a limited degree of evaluability. All the documents listed above, from appraisal to project assessment, would have to be prepared in *a different way* in order to «build the basis for later systematic aid assessments». If evaluation was to be possible, one needed to employ more sophisticated optics with a greater resolution. Such resolution was however not possible to obtain unless all project staff (and indeed also the recipient governments) from the very first document included new, and more, information about a proposed project. Evaluability was thus founded on the preparation and preservation of documents.

The appraisal sequence specified which documents should be written when, where, and by whom. It also specified what should be *read* when, where, and by whom. The relation between reading and writing is important to notice: The aid recipient should write an appraisal and then a formal request, while the Oslo staff should read the request and then write their assessment in the form of a project sketch. The act of assessment took place through a combination of reading and writing. If the sketch was approved, the same staff wrote a more substantial project assessment. In this way, the closer a project moved towards realization, the more writing the Oslo staff took on. The site of writing, then, shifted from the project site to the Headquarter. With the Handbook's proposal for systematic aid assessment this shift would be further strengthened.

Continuous reporting (monitoring)

After explaining the expanded concept of appraisals, the handbook moved to monitoring. As with the former, Evalfo grounded monitoring work in the existing Instruction. Evalfo pointed to a special Appendix III to the Instruction, in which «reporting routines» was further described. The concept of *monitoring*, on the other hand, was new. The Handbook argued for the importance of making this kind of work an integral part of the aid intervention:

Continuous reporting (monitoring) means the ongoing assessment of a project's input factors and activities (...). Continuous reporting is a part of the implementation of the project or program itself, and the reporting procedures may therefore be seen as an integrated part of the aid intervention. Administratively this is a part of the work domain of technical offices and resident representations [i.e. field offices]. The aim with continuous reporting is among other things to give the project management, the recipient country's authorities, and the aid agency the necessary basis for being able to follow the project and make decisions regarding the progress.¹⁴⁰

¹⁴⁰ Norad 1981 *Handbook*, p. 2. Norwegian quote: «Fortløpende vurdering (monitorering) vil si den løpende vurderingen av et prosjekts innsatsfaktorer og aktiviteter. (Begrepene «innsats» og «aktiviteter» er definert på s.5). Fortløpende rapportering er en del av gjennomføringen av selve prosjektet eller programmet, og rapporteringsprosedyrene kan derfor sees som en integrert del av bistandstiltaket. Administrativt er dette en del av arbeidsfeltet til fagkontor og uterepresentasjon. Siktemålet med fortløpende rapportering er blant annet å gi prosjektledelse, mottakerlandets myndigheter og bistandsorganisasjonen det nødvendige grunnlag til å kunne følge prosjektet og fatte avgjørelser som angår framdriften.» The English term «monitoring» was included in brackets in the Norwegian text.

Here, the Handbook takes its argument one step further: Not only should the preparation and preservation of documents be made a part of general aid work, it was to be understood “as an integrated part of the aid intervention”, that it is, as a part of the project or program *itself*. A project was not complete without a steady stream of documents that built upon and enabled both each other and the project as such. This steady stream of documents, which the technical offices and resident representatives should routinely prepare, established «the necessary basis» on which to build decisions. «Being able to follow the project» meant an ability to see the project more clearly, both for the project staff and for actors outside. Without such clarity, it might be harder to make decisions «regarding the progress» of the project. In this way, the Handbook asserted that writing more documents would enable progress, that is, a firmer time management and faster realization of the project. In effect, the Handbook argued that the presence of documents was a precondition for reaching the project’s development goal in time.

What the Handbook thus envisioned, both in the planning stage and implementation stage of an aid project, was aid workers who meticulously wrote texts and who continued to do so for the duration of an aid project’s life. The concept of *inscription devices* may help us better understand why the Handbook considered this to be of such crucial importance. Following Latour and Woolgar, inscription devices are what “transforms pieces of matter into written documents”.¹⁴¹ The strength and authority of the scientists’ claims rested upon the work of the inscription devices, which were what enabled the transformation from a pool of samples into convincing evidence.

I will argue that the Handbook sought to instill this emphasis on meticulous writing among the Norwegian aid staff. Making aid an evaluable object rested upon the dutiful employment of specific inscription devices, first for planning, then for monitoring. The Handbook defined the work of continuous report writing as the main way of assessing a project as it was unfolding. Hence, in both planning and monitoring work, assessments were done through writing. The texts would then be submitted to numerous readers to provide them with «the necessary basis to follow the project and make decisions». Following Latour and Woolgar’s analysis, the use of inscription devices was indispensable because they were what laid the basis for scientists’ ability to substantiate claims about their object of study. Similarly, the Handbook argued that the act of writing had to be made a key part of aid work, both in the technical offices in Oslo and the field offices abroad, precisely because the documents were integral to the project itself.

Simply using inscription devices were however not sufficient; of importance was also *the method* by which they were employed. The inscription devices had to be used in specific ways for them to be of value. Indeed, Latour and Woolgar argues with respect to science that

¹⁴¹ Latour and Woolgar 1986, p. 51. “More exactly, an inscription device is any item of apparatus or particular configuration of such items which can transform material substance into a figure of diagram which is directly usable for other members of the office space.” (See chapter 1 for a more detailed presentation of the concept.)

“writing was not so much a method of transferring information as a material operation of creating order”.¹⁴² According to the Handbook,

What characterizes systematic aid assessment is that the insight which is acquired may be verified by others. It is therefore presupposed that one follows certain rules or methods which others may control and possibly undertake themselves.¹⁴³

In this quote, the Handbook asserts that aid staff should follow “certain rules or methods” for the purpose of enabling others to not only read, but also *use* the documents. Hence, the purpose of writing was not merely to transfer information from project staff to evaluation staff and other actors, but that this information might also be verified, controlled, and even replicated. Aid staff should expect their writing to be the source of retrospective reading by external evaluators. Documents were thus not just practical tools for day-to-day project management, produced to build and run a project through the relations between recipient countries and Norad. Rather, a new dimension of aid work was introduced which all staff should bear in mind: The external, post-hoc reader, who should be able to see the project from a physical and temporal distance. Documents were not just to the service of the actors involved in a specific project, but also to unknown actors not yet involved.

In this way, the Handbook introduced a meta-level of seeing; a potential second gaze upon aid. I will argue that this particular feature was a core function of the Handbook’s visions of systematic aid assessment: That actors who had not taken part in preparations or daily life of a project should nevertheless be able to see it and assess it – in other words, to grasp it, like the hand on the Handbook’s cover grasped the Norad logo. This point was briefly introduced in the section on appraisals and spelled out in full in the section on monitoring. The documents were not to be written only for the aid staff themselves, but also for other potential readers. Furthermore, the documents needed to be written in a way that enabled them to travel through both space and time, with the possibility of being picked up by other readers at any point. This feature was critical for the third component of systematic aid assessment, evaluation, to which I will now turn.

Evaluation

The Handbook introduced evaluation as the third and last component of systematic aid assessment, following the sections on appraisals and monitoring. The distinction between monitoring and evaluation «might often be difficult to draw precisely»,¹⁴⁴ the Handbook acknowledged. It offered the following distinction:

One important difference is that evaluation should be a more neutral assessment of the aid interventions. This is expressed administratively by the overarching responsibility for evaluations being located within the Office of Evaluation and Research. Evaluation is as a rule

¹⁴² Latour and Woolgar 1986, p. 245.

¹⁴³ Norad 1981 *Handbook*, p. 1. Norwegian quote: «Det som karakteriserer systematisk bistandsvurdering er at den innsikten som erverves kan etterprøves av andre. Det forutsettes derfor at en følger visse regler eller metoder som andre kan kontrollere og eventuelt gjennomføre selv.»

¹⁴⁴ Norad 1981 *Handbook*, p. 2. Norwegian quote: «Skillet mellom fortløpende rapportering og evaluering kan ofte være vanskelig å trekke presist.»

more comprehensive and of a more overarching character than monitoring. Evaluation should therefore be based on valid data and accepted methods.¹⁴⁵

Compared to appraisals and monitoring, evaluations were thus supposed to be more «comprehensive», «overarching» and «based on valid data and accepted methods». Furthermore, a core distinguishing feature of evaluation was *neutrality*, which was to be achieved by maintaining a distance between the evaluation staff and the general aid work, both organizationally and in terms of work tasks. Evaluation was to be done in different offices, by different staff, with different mandates, and with different methods than the rest of the organization. Although the Handbook insisted on the importance of neutrality and distance, evaluation work was also directly connected to the project staff's previous planning and monitoring work:

Evaluation means to assess an actual situation in relation to a given standard, e.g. a set goal or a plan. This involves both specification of goals, collection of data, and assessment of whether the goals are reached. An evaluation should explain courses of action and circumstances which have had an influence upon the results of the project. The practical value lies in recommendations for managing activities/inputs towards an original goal or in suggestions to changes in the goal itself.¹⁴⁶

The interdependence between planning and evaluation is here made explicit. Evaluations were to assess whether plans and goals had been reached and whether the results were as expected, and to see these in combination: “to assess an actual situation in relation to a given standard”. This required that a standard could be established in the first place, which again demanded available documentation from planning and monitoring.

A key aspect here is the important of connecting actions to goals: Evaluations were expected to recommend changes not only in how a pre-set goal might be reached, but also changes to the goal *itself*. In this way, the Handbook suggested that previously set goals might be changed during the course of a project's life, and that evaluation work was a key tool in identifying how this might be done. This means that although the Handbook separated evaluation both methodologically and organizationally from the rest of the aid administration, it simultaneously argued that evaluation both depended upon and should actively connect back to aid work at large.

The concept of systematic aid assessment rested on this tension between the internal and the external – between the project staff's close familiarity with the details of a project after having lived with it in real time, and an outsiders' ability to both recreate the project based on the insiders' written documents, to formulate assessments of the past, and to give

¹⁴⁵ Norad 1981 *Handbook*, p. 2. Norwegian quote: «En viktig forskjell er at evaluering skal være en mer nøytral vurdering av bistandstiltakene. Administrativt kommer dette til uttrykk ved at det overordnede ansvar for evalueringer er lagt til kontoret for evaluering og forskning. Evaluering er i regelen mer omfattende og av mer overordnet karakter enn fortløpende rapportering. Evaluering bør derfor være basert på holdbare data og aksepterte metoder.»

¹⁴⁶ Norad 1981 *Handbook*, p. 2. Norwegian quote: «Evaluering vil si å vurdere en faktisk situasjon i forhold til en gitt standard, f.eks. en målsetting eller en plan. Dette innebærer både spesifisering av målsettinger, innsamling av data, og vurdering av hvorvidt målsettingene er nådd. En evaluering bør kunne forklare handlingsforløp og forhold som har hatt innvirkning på resultatene av prosjektet. Den praktiske verdien ligger i anbefalinger for å styre aktiviteter/innsatser mot en opprinnelig målsetting eller i forslag til endringer i selve målsettingen.»

recommendations for the future. In order to enable systematic aid assessment, Norad needed to both *integrate* a concern for evaluation in all projects and simultaneously *separate* evaluation work from the overall aid work. All offices should engage in enabling evaluability – but only the Evaluation Office could do evaluations.

The Evaluation Office's responsibilities did not stop at doing evaluations, however. As shown in the quote above, evaluations were expected to be useful for the aid staff – to inform and support them in making decisions about possible changes in their project work or even in the project goals. Indeed, «the practical value» of the evaluations rested in the recommendations the evaluators produced. Project staff should do their part in enabling evaluability; in return, evaluators should produce evaluations with practical value for the project staff. In this way, evaluators were not allowed to be too distanced from the overall aid administration; their analytical work was indeed at the core of any evaluation, but they also had to keep in mind throughout the process that the document they produced was to be read and used by the project staff. Hence, enabling what I above called “the second gaze” was also expected of the evaluators, with one key difference: The evaluators would have specific future readers in mind – the individuals of the project staff and other involved aid staff – while aid staff doing appraisals and monitoring were supposed to write for unspecified potential future evaluators.

Writing as a part of aid itself

In this section, I have analyzed how the *Handbook of Evaluation Questions* from 1981 introduced so-called systematic aid assessment as a means to make Norwegian aid an evaluable object. While the Handbook's title suggested that it was concerned with evaluation work as such, my analysis has shown that its main concern was in fact aid work in general, which the Handbook argued would have to be transformed in order to make evaluation possible at all. The Handbook grounded this new approach in Norad's existing administrative routines for planning and implementation of projects, but drastically expanded the scope and purpose of such work. It introduced the concept of monitoring, which involved the writing of continuous reports about the aid project, and argued for the importance of making such writing work an integral part of the aid intervention *itself*: A project was not complete without a steady stream of documents that built upon and enabled both each other and the project as such. The handbook called for a different way of conceptualizing writing – it was not only a part of daily routine administration, but an indispensable tool enabling future evaluations.

I have employed Latour and Woolgar's concept of *inscription devices* to conceptualize why this enhanced attention to continuous writing should become a core part of aid work. The project documents should be written in a specific way that ensured their practical value for potential readers across time and space; and they should be able to bridge the temporal and spatial distance between the unfolding project work and retrospective evaluation work. Finally, in this section I have shown how the Handbook's conception of systematic aid assessment rested on a tension between the internal and the external, between the inside and outside of an aid project. Aid staff should write their documents with potential future users in

mind; likewise, evaluators should write their reports with the aid staff in mind. Evaluation work should be simultaneously separated from and integrated into the overall aid organization.

What did the new inscription devices and evaluation optics amount to? How, precisely, were the staff to do their writing? Before turning to answer these questions, I will briefly pause my analysis of the Handbook and ask how the Handbook itself came about. In the next section, I will discuss how the Evaluation Office was established, from where it might have retrieved its new approach to aid, and argue that this office actively brought in both a strong external social science critique of aid, practical tools for aid administration, and marshalled public support for enhancing evaluation.

The Evaluation Office

Why did the Evaluation Office promote such comprehensive changes to how aid was to be done? The Handbook itself offers limited answers, but does provide a few pointers. In the Handbook's preface, Helge Kjekshus, head of the Evaluation Office, wrote:

From the recipient countries, Norwegian authorities and the Norwegian public there have been expressed wishes for more precise knowledge about the effects and usefulness of aid.¹⁴⁷

In stating this, Kjekshus pointed to a world beyond the aid administration in which the workings of aid was being actively discussed. More precisely, both governments within the countries receiving aid as well as the government and public in Norway were asking to know more about "the effects and usefulness" of aid. In this way, Kjekshus presented the Handbook as a response to external demands for more insight into the aid field, and evaluation as a practical solution to how knowledge of effects and usefulness might be produced.

Kjekshus' statement illustrates the argument I will make in this section: That the Evaluation Office was actively bringing the external world into the halls of the aid administration. They did not shy away from external critique; on the contrary, as I will show, their very work was built upon a fundamental critique of aid. Furthermore, in operationalizing this critique, the evaluation staff went beyond Norway to other aid agencies and public programs to find practical tools, routines, and systems and translate these into the Norwegian setting. Finally, the Evaluation Office was paying close attention to Norwegian parliamentary debates and actively bringing in statements and arguments supporting their own work.

Taking in a social science critique of aid

Norad established a new Office of Evaluation and Research (Evalfo) in 1977. The first three staff members of the Evaluation Office were all social scientists from different disciplines educated at the University of Oslo, sharing an interest in aid and development: the political scientist Helge Kjekshus had done fieldwork in East Africa and then worked as an expert on a

¹⁴⁷ Norad 1981 *Handbook*, p. 1. Norwegian quote: «Fra mottakerlandene, norske myndigheter og norsk opinion er det satt fram ønsker om mer nøyaktig kunnskap om virkninger og nytten av bistand. Slik kunnskap kan skaffes fram gjennom systematisk bistandsvurdering. En systematisk vurdering av bistandsprosjekter bør derfor ses som en viktig og integrert del av de totale arbeidsoppgavene i NORAD.»

Norad project in Tanzania; the development sociologist Ingrid Eide had long experience with both academic and applied development research and public research administration; and the development geographer Jarle Haarstad had studied regional income distribution in Kenya as part of his thesis in 1974 after having joined the Norwegian Peace Corps in Uganda in 1968.¹⁴⁸ In this way, the Evaluation Office was established as a site which brought approaches from the social sciences directly into Norwegian aid. Its staff was trained in a range of qualitative research methods and had applied these methods directly to the study of aid and development. Although trained at the University of Oslo, they had not stayed within the academy, but worked at different intersections between theory and practice. Hence, they had seen aid both as practitioners and analysts.

This training made them very different from the overall Norad staff, who at the time were predominantly professionals with experience within health, education, agriculture, forestry, fishery, industry, or energy production.¹⁴⁹ These staff members worked within so-called technical offices (in Norwegian: fagkontorer) organized by field, all reporting through their heads of office to Norad's Executive Director. In addition came the Country Unit, which coordinated the field offices; Office of Plan and Program (from here on: the Planning Office), engaged in overall planning and implementation of projects; and the Information Office, which had recently been established to provide information about aid to the general Norwegian public.¹⁵⁰

In the new office, aid evaluation was institutionalized in direct relation to the coordination of Norad's funding and commissioning of research. The new Evaluation Office was given the responsibility to administer and improve Norad's existing routines and systems for dealing with Norwegian research communities.¹⁵¹ Norad had for some time been struggling to handle the issue of research. Recurring questions were what projects to fund, what to expect from the funded research, and how to use the results: What was useful research, and how to enable it? During the first half of the 1970s, before the Evaluation Office was established, internal frustrations had been growing that Norad-funded research and researchers were not being useful enough for the aid administration. Two of the new office's main tasks therefore became to clarify how Norad could best use research and researchers,

¹⁴⁸ Interview, Jarle Haarstad, January 2012. For further details on these processes, cf. Reinertsen 2008, 2010 (my master's thesis and published article respectively, both in Norwegian). In this work, I briefly attended to the establishment of the Evaluation Office, while concentrating on how the office commissioned research on aid and development during the years 1977-1980. This analysis constituted a small part of a study of the relations between development researchers and the aid administration in Norway in the period 1960-1980.

¹⁴⁹ Reinertsen 2008; Simensen 2003.

¹⁵⁰ The Information Office was established in 1966. Cf. Simensen 2003, pp. 259-262.

¹⁵¹ In practice, this involved administering Norad's research budget, which was distributed annually to Norwegian researchers engaged in development research; meet as an observer to the board of two research institutions receiving annual funding from Norad; coordinate Norad's advisory board for science and research; and to serve as the point of contact between the aid system and Norwegian research communities. See Reinertsen 2008, 2010 and Simensen 2003.

and at the same time to improve Norad's relations with relevant research communities; notably academic social scientists studying issues of development and aid.¹⁵²

Norad had commissioned external researchers to undertake evaluations also before the Evaluation Office was established. The first took place in 1965/66; during the coming decade, 1-2 evaluations were done annually.¹⁵³ In 1974, one of Norad's team of directors, Eskild Jensen, presented Norad's evaluation work in the opening issue of a new Norwegian journal, *Forum for Development Studies (Forum for Utviklingsstudier)*.¹⁵⁴ Jensen noted that Norway like most other aid agencies had no distinct evaluation unit.¹⁵⁵ Yet, there existed an already established standardized terminology of aid evaluation which he urged Norway to adopt on a larger scale: The key concepts were the same three-part administration system as the Evaluation Office presented in the Handbook six years later: *appraisals, monitoring and evaluation*.¹⁵⁶ Appraisals should clarify the overarching goals, direct purpose, and measurable results that could be expected.¹⁵⁷ Thorough and systematic monitoring would enable "a stream of data which gives an equally good foundation for assessing the project's results as does a post-hoc evaluation".¹⁵⁸ Evaluation had two objectives: "first, to assess the result of the resources which have been employed, second, to pull out experiences from the activity with a view to utilizing them in the future for other aid activities".¹⁵⁹ Hence, the system outlined by the Evaluation Office in the 1980 Handbook was already being discussed both among Norad's top leadership and publicly prior to the office's establishment.

In 1976, the year before Evalfo was established, Norad experienced a change in leadership. The new head of Norad, Arne Arnesen, a former journalist, diplomat, and most recently a top executive within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was a strong proponent of the

¹⁵² See Reinertsen 2008, 2010 and Simensen 2003.

¹⁵³ Jensen 1974, appendix "Evalueringsrapporter".

¹⁵⁴ The journal was based at the independent research institute NUPI (Norwegian Institute of Foreign Policy), with researcher Olav Stokke as editor-in-chief. The journal was intended to serve as an arena for policy makers, researchers, and aid staff to discuss issues of aid and development. During the first volumes, the journal came in small booklets 10-12 issues a year; later, the size of each issue expanded, the number of issues a year shrank, and the articles' genre increasingly resembled academic journal articles. The journal was later made Nordic in scope, shifted publication languages from Nordic to English, publishers from NUPI to Routledge. Hence, what started out as a hybrid forum of Norwegian policy makers, practitioners and academics gradually turned into a pure academic journal with international reach.

¹⁵⁵ According to Jensen, the United States, the World Bank, UNDP, Canada and Sweden had evaluation units; the UK, France, Western Germany, Japan, Italy, the Netherlands, and Denmark had no distinct unit. Cf. Jensen 1974, p. 19.

¹⁵⁶ Jensen 1974, p. 7. Norwegian quote: "I forbindelse med evaluering av bistandsprosjekter er det behov for å klarlegge noen begreper som ofte brukes ved drøftinger av utviklingshjelp. Det gjelder forhåndsvurdering, oppfølging og evaluering. I internasjonal ordbruk er det etterhvert innarbeidet en viss standardisering av disse».

¹⁵⁷ Jensen 1974, p. 7-8: Full Norwegian quote: "Det gjelder klarleggingen av den *bakenforliggende målsetting* med prosjektet; klarlegging av det *direkte formål* med prosjektet som skal tjene for å arbeide mot den bakenforliggende målsetting, samt klarlegging av de *målbare resultater* som kan ventes av prosjektet." (Italics in original.)

¹⁵⁸ Jensen 1974, p. 10. Norwegian quote: «Men en grundig og systematisk oppfølging vil ofte kunne gi en strøm av data som gir et like godt grunnlag for å vurdere prosjektets resultater, som en etterfølgende evalueringsrapport.»

¹⁵⁹ Jensen 1974, p. 11-12. Norwegian quote: «Evaluering kan ha to formål: For det første å vurdere *resultatet* av de ressurser som har vært satt inn, for det annet å trekke fram *erfaringer* fra innsatsen med sikte på å nyttiggjøre dem i fremtiden ved andre bistandstiltak.»

so-called New International Economic Order, which at the time was pushed forward by leading developing nations within the United Nations, and which sought to alter the terms of international trade more in favor of the developing countries.¹⁶⁰ Arnesen's approach to development was a clear shift from his predecessor and Norad's first director, the former navy officer R.K. Andresen (appointed in 1962), who was an outspoken proponent of large-scale industrialization projects and transfer of professional expertise as the main methods of Norwegian aid.¹⁶¹ Upon replacing R.K. Andresen, Arne Arnesen brought with him to Norad a concern for political economy and analysis. While efforts to include social scientists had begun also before his appointment, they gained far more leverage under Arnesen's leadership.

For example, during the fall of 1976, while the preparations for Evalfo was most likely being made, Arnesen initiated a mapping of Norad's so-called "knowledge needs". All Norad's technical offices were asked to report issues and questions they would like external researchers to investigate. Very few reported any pressing need; one noted that they felt «at the time no need for such research activities». The Office of Fisheries and Naval Transport reported a certain research need, in the form of engineering tasks to be solved in specific projects.¹⁶² The year after, the same document contained notable additions. In addition to the short lists of field-specific assignments, all the technical offices reported a need to identify the «socio-economic effects» of their aid projects and to undertake studies of their political, economic and social context.¹⁶³ Had all Norad's technical offices during the year changed their conception of what they needed to know in order to manage their aid projects well?

The analyses of "socio-economic pre-conditions" and effects of aid projects were all listed as bullet points at the end of each office's section and were all articulated in the same way. They emerge as add-ons to the technical offices' reports. In this way, the socio-economic dimension of aid emerges as a new, extra layer of analysis in addition to the various technical questions of the individual offices. This might indicate that the socio-economic concern was an post-hoc addition to the offices' own lists, a result of a round of editing after the lists had been collected. Moreover, the 1977 memo included a new introduction which stated that Norad needed social science research for several reasons: as a basis for strategic management decisions; investigations into whether the aid worked as intended; whether new

¹⁶⁰ For more on Arne Arnesen, cf. Reinertsen 2008; for more on Norway's promotion of NIEO, cf. Ruud and Kjerland 2003.

¹⁶¹ During a so-called «contact conference» between Norad and Norwegian social scientists in 1967, Andresen stated that Norad was looking for regions in East Africa where «one needed to build societies from scratch», and envisaged comprehensive interdisciplinary development projects sponsored by Norad to enabled such change. He asserted the need for social scientists to ensure proper planning of such projects. For social anthropologists at the universities who were quite hopeful of such a cooperation, few assignments materialized, while a group of development economists at the Chr. Michelsen Institute in Bergen entered into a long-term contract with Norad. See Kjerland 2002; Reinertsen 2008; Simensen 2003.

¹⁶² Memo, Office for fisheries and naval transport to the Country Unit, 8.10.1976. Norad A-0766, 100.20-2. Referred in Reinertsen 2008, p. 100.

¹⁶³ Memo, Norad to Norad's research committee, 19.10.1976: «Forskningsvirksomhet og forskningsbehov ved NORAD-prosjekter/programmer.» CMI archives, DERAP, N/NORAD Diverse, NORADs forskningsutvalg – Mappe 2, 1976. Referred in Reinertsen 2008, p. 100.

political guidelines were implemented; appraisals of potential new countries for aid cooperation; and evaluations of ongoing projects.¹⁶⁴

This concern for taking the social science questions and methods into the Norwegian aid administration must have been important for the decision to establish a distinct office of evaluation and research, and also informed the process of hiring its staff. Indeed, not only did the new office bring in social sciences in general; they also brought with them a fundamental critique of aid. For Evalfo's youngest staff member, development geographer Jarle Haarstad, the combination of training in development geography and practical experience from aid projects had made him disillusioned with many aid projects. Being interested in regional economic and social development, he found that aid projects to a large degree reestablished colonial trade patterns and exploitative economic relations between the rich countries and East Africa. Looking back, Haarstad recounts how he found a fundamental lack of analysis of the assumed effects of aid projects upon local economies and societies. Major projects had the inherent assumption of beneficial trickle-down effects to the surrounding community, which were scarcely confirmed.¹⁶⁵

Such critical reflection of aid was by far unique among young social scientists of Haarstad's generation; many, both academic social scientists and former aid staff had published critical accounts of Norwegian aid projects since the late 1960s.¹⁶⁶ But while these critics all remained external to Norad, delivering their critique from afar, the staff of the new Evaluation Office brought the approaches of the critical social sciences *into* aid administration. I will therefore suggest to understand the Evaluation Office as a site established to internalize this external critique of aid. Instead of trying to keep the critique at a distance and protect itself from it, Norad established a space *within* its own organization which could operationalize the social science critique through enhancing evaluation work and connecting more closely to the research community.

Taking in the international aid field

During 1978, the year after the Evaluation Office was established, the staff started preparing the handbook. The office had already during its first years commissioned and published 14 evaluation reports.¹⁶⁷ In reviewing these evaluations, the evaluation staff articulated their frustration over how little was possible to know about Norwegian aid: "the reports contained

¹⁶⁴ Memo, Norad to Norad's research committee. Referred in Reinertsen 2008, p. 100.

¹⁶⁵ Interview, Jarle Haarstad, June 2014.

¹⁶⁶ Sociologist Johan Galtung started a critical aid research unit at the newly established Peace Research Institute in Oslo in 1961, with Evalfo's Ingrid Eide as one of its team members; Galtung and social anthropologist Arne-Martin Klausen started a study of the first Norwegian aid project, a transfer of fishery technologies to two villages in Kerala, India. Klausen's dissertation, published in 1968, brought a critical analysis of the Norwegian aid's lack of understanding of the «local values» and of the direct and indirect effects for the population which the Norwegian intervention produced. Peace Corps volunteer Egil Ulateig in 1973 published a strong critique of how Norwegian aid workers reproduced colonial relations between foreign experts and local communities.

¹⁶⁷ "Short assessment of evaluation of NORAD-projects 1976-79", attachment to memo, Evaluation Office to Director General, «A strengthened evaluation of NORAD's aid activities», 1.10.1981. Norad A-4429, 840.

little about the *effects* of the evaluated projects”.¹⁶⁸ This served to strengthen the evaluation staff’s understanding of the need for a comprehensive effort for enabling evaluation. In doing so, they searched the international aid community for methods and systems for evaluation, and used these as a basis to design their own. In the process, taking in experiences from other sites and organizations and adapting these to the Norwegian setting was a main task:

The handbook draws to a great extent on experiences from other aid organizations and of course on NORAD’s own. An advantage of building on the work of others is that we acquire and make use of a conceptual apparatus which is already shared among a range of aid organizations. Hence we open for a larger understanding and cooperation on results assessments between aid organizations and vis à vis the recipient countries.¹⁶⁹

Hence, synchronizing Norwegian aid with that of the aid community at large was a concern in an of itself. Around 1980, the OECD’s aid agency, the Development Assistance Committee (DAC), was beginning to discuss whether aid caused the expected effects. Individual aid agencies, notably USAID in the US; Cida in Canada; and Sida in Sweden, were expanding their evaluation activities.¹⁷⁰ So did the World Bank and several agencies within the United Nations, notably the UNDP.¹⁷¹ DAC took on a coordinating role and started mapping the ongoing evaluation work among its members. In May 1981, DAC organized a meeting of so-called «Evaluation Correspondents», gathering evaluation staff from the member states’ aid agencies. Staff from Norad’s Evaluation Office, who were among the meeting’s participants, reported back to Norad’s director that the meeting was a response to «a demand voiced at successive High-Level Meetings for an answer to the question whether there was substantial evidence that aid was proving effective in the promotion of development.»¹⁷² Furthermore, the memo asserted that «[t]he conference indeed must be said to have confirmed that the knowledge about this [evaluation work] is completely insufficient in most Western countries – and by all accounts also in the developing countries.»¹⁷³

The evaluation staff read and travelled extensively to gain an overview of the state of the evaluation field at the end of the 1970s. Yet when asked about their specific sources of inspiration, former Evaluation Office member Jarle Haarstad points not to the work of aid agencies, but to the United States’ public administration. More specifically, he recounts how

¹⁶⁸ «A strengthened evaluation of NORAD’s aid activities», p. 5.

¹⁶⁹ Norad 1981. *Handbook*, Preface (second page, unpaginated). Norwegian quote: «Håndboka trekker i stor utstrekning på erfaringer fra andre bistandsorganisasjoner og selvsagt på NORAD’s egne. En fordel ved å bygge på andre er at vi tilegner oss og tar i bruk et begrepsapparat som allerede er blitt felles for en rekke bistandsorganisasjoner. Derved åpner vi for større forståelse og samarbeide om resultatvurderinger mellom bistandsorganisasjoner og vis à vis mottakerlandene.»

¹⁷⁰ Jensen 1974 refers to guidelines and evaluations published by SIDA, starting in 1971. Cf. Forss 1985 for an analysis of SIDA’s planning and evaluation work during 1976-1984. Norad’s archive includes copies of bibliographies of Swedish and Danish aid evaluations (issued in 1973 and 1974 respectively). Norad Da-L0632.

¹⁷¹ Evaluation was institutionalized in the World Bank in 1975; cf. Grasso et.al 2003 for an internal account of this history. The Evaluation Office’s memo of 1.10.81 refers to a report by the United Nations’ Joint Inspection Unit titled «Evaluation in the organizations of the United Nation system».

¹⁷² Summary of Discussion, Meeting of DAC Evaluation Correspondents, 6-8 May, 1981. Quoted in «A strengthened evaluation of NORAD’s aid activities», p. 3.

¹⁷³ «A strengthened evaluation of NORAD’s aid activities», p. 3. Full Norwegian quote: «Konferansen må vel sies å ha bekreftet kunnskapene om dette er helt utilstrekkelige i de fleste vestlige land – og etter alt å dømme også i utviklingslandene.»

the office “witnessed the main breakthrough in evaluation” in the United States’ public administration, linked to a major domestic program implemented by President Lyndon B. Johnson, the «War on Poverty», which had been initiated in the mid-1960s.¹⁷⁴ This comprehensive program systematically mapped America’s poor population and designed interventions to increase their standard of living and reduce unemployment. Evaluations were integrated in the program from the start, and played an important part in legitimating and building support for the program.¹⁷⁵ For the Evaluation Office, this served as a strong argument of the importance and usefulness of evaluation.¹⁷⁶

I will suggest that the “War on Poverty” program exemplified how a successful aid project was also an evaluable object, and that this was precisely the kind of example the Evaluation Office needed to support their case. Following this logic, for a project to be accepted as a success, it had to be made evaluable from the very start. Evaluability was what enabled both a projects’ success and its popular support.¹⁷⁷ In the Handbook, this integrated approach to evaluation became a core point: In order to produce solid evaluations, Evalfo needed an aid agency fully committed to producing evaluability.

Curiously, there are no traces of planning tools from contemporary Norwegian public administration, neither in the Handbook, the aid archives, nor my interviews. Considering the strong weight the Handbook placed upon project planning, it is puzzling that it contains no reference to the existing routines of planning within other parts of the Norwegian public sector. Both within the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Regional Planning, and the Ministry of Environment, planning was a well-established activity.¹⁷⁸ One publication from 1976 with which one might expect Norad’s Evaluation Office to engage was the Ministry of Finance’s «Program Analysis», which outlined a planning routine for major public projects.¹⁷⁹ I have not found reference to this nor any other documents from the Ministry of Finance from the early 1980s.

The specific version of planning undertaken in the Norwegian Ministry of Finance built on a particular Norwegian version of macroeconomic planning developed by economist Ragnar Frisch and his colleagues at the University of Oslo in the 1930s named *Social Economics*.¹⁸⁰ As it happened, this work indirectly took hold within Norwegian development research through the work of a group of development economists at the Christian Michelsen Institute (an independent research centre located in the city of Bergen on the Norwegian

¹⁷⁴ Interview Jarle Haarstad, June 2014.

¹⁷⁵ The policy was a response to the many «pockets of poverty» across the U.S. which had been identified by U.S. social scientists. The widespread presence of poverty within the U.S. which the researchers documented, demonstrated that, contrary to popular belief, post-war prosperity had not trickled down to all U.S. citizens. Cf. O’Connor 2001.

¹⁷⁶ Interview Jarle Haarstad, June 2014.

¹⁷⁷ Integrating evaluation in U.S. public sector programs was not unique to the «War on poverty». During the 1970s, integrating evaluability became common also within the U.S. government’s management of the education sector. Here, planning, monitoring and evaluation were undertaken internally by the organization, and evaluations were constantly fed back into the ongoing programs. Interview, Linda Imas Marres, November 2013.

¹⁷⁸ Asdal 1998, 2014.

¹⁷⁹ Det norske finansdepartement [Ministry of Finance] 1976. *Programanalyse*. [Program analysis].

¹⁸⁰ Thue 2006; Thue and Helsvig 2011.

Western coast). This group entered into a long-term contract with Norad in 1964, functioning as experts both for the Norwegian aid administration and for the planning departments of the national ministries in countries receiving Norwegian aid (notably Kenya, Uganda, Malaysia, and Bangladesh).¹⁸¹ Still, there seems not to have been made any links between the Norwegian experiences of national planning and the emerging field of aid evaluation in the early 1980s. On the contrary, what seemed to take shape was a form of planning that was particular to the aid field. Despite inspiration from large-scale U.S. public sector programs, the frame of reference remained the process of *development*; the Norwegian public sector was not made a relevant context. In this way, aid work remained an outsider in the Norwegian public administration. Norad seems to have been oriented towards the international aid field rather than the Norwegian public sector at large. Still, there was one part of the domestic Norwegian scene to which the Evaluation Office turned: public and parliamentary debates in which their work was explicitly endorsed.

While taking in already established methods was a key aspect of preparing the Handbook, translating these into the specific Norwegian setting was equally important:

It has been an important aim that the evaluation work must be adapted to NORAD's work style and capacity. Therefore, the work of creating the handbook has at different phases been done in close contact with the different technical offices. Evaluation literature (system description and methods handbooks) from other aid organizations have been a great help to the review work where one has tried to adjust international practice to the situation in NORAD.¹⁸²

Here, the Handbook referred to a prolonged process of discussing successive handbook drafts with representatives from other Norad offices. Hence, the process of making the handbook was itself an important part of its work: through multiple discussions of handbook drafts, Evalfo sought to enroll the other actors and firmly ground the new evaluation optic within the organization. In this way, they made a local version of an international practice. Framing Norwegian aid practices as in need of an update perhaps served as a way of making the proposed changes seem less radical. By establishing Evalfo's proposal as already integral to the field of aid evaluation, it was possibly made less threatening.

The Handbook made it clear that they imported, translated, and employed an already established international vocabulary. What was imported and what was home-grown remained opaque; there were no clear boundaries between the outside and the inside. Norad in this way emerged as insular, as too Norwegian; the Norwegian aid needed to become better integrated with the international aid community. Evalfo indeed emphasized that the translation of established international practices also made it possible to compare and coordinate the Norwegian aid with that of the others donor countries: «Hence we open for a larger

¹⁸¹ Furthermore, the CMI group had one researcher with background from OECD's regional planning work, more specifically the administration of the Marshall plan funds for regional development across Europe. Cf. Reinertsen 2008.

¹⁸² Norad 1981 *Handbook*, Preface (first page, unpaginated). Norwegian quote: «Det har vært et viktig siktemål at evalueringsarbeidet må tillempes NORADs arbeidsstil og –kapasitet. Derfor har arbeidet med håndboka i forskjellige faser vært utført i nær kontakt med de forskjellige fagkontorene. Evalueringslitteratur (systembeskrivelse og metodehåndbøker) fra andre bistandsorganisasjoner har vært en stor hjelp i utredningsarbeidet hvor en har forsøkt å tilpasse internasjonal praksis til forholdene i NORAD.»

understanding and cooperation on results assessments between aid organizations and vis à vis the recipient countries.»¹⁸³

The effect of this apparently deliberate opacity with regards to the tools' sites of departure was that the Handbook's new version remained both seemingly universal and at the same time particularly Norwegian. The tools came from *somewhere* else, but the main concern was that they were now being adapted for use *here*. The implied international context was never specified, whereas Norad and Norad staff were recurring actors. This undefined context functioned as a source of legitimacy and authority for the proposed changes, but the center of attention remained the Norwegian aid offices and staff.

This way of being attentive to the setting into which the new tools and routines were to enter, was also manifested in how the Evaluation Office paid close attention to the domestic Norwegian political debate. In the next section, I will show how the office sought to marshal parliamentary support for evaluation as a way of persuading Norad at large of the need for more evaluation.

Taking in the domestic political debate

In the quotes by which I introduced this section, the Handbook pointed to increasing demands from the Norwegian political leadership and public at large for more information about the results of aid. In parallel with the Evaluation Office's preparation of their Handbook, the debate over whether aid worked as expected, which, as I showed above, was unfolding both within the social sciences and the international aid community, was taking hold also in Norwegian public debate at the time. The Evaluation Office clearly paid close attention to these debates and made the public concern itself a supporting argument for their own work. As part of their efforts to convince Norad's management of the importance of evaluation, the office argued in a memo that:

Both within the Norwegian and the international aid field, one is increasingly asking for more knowledge about the impact of development aid. (...) [There] is every possible reason to expect that the effect of development aid will be central in the aid policy debate of the 1980s.¹⁸⁴

While here framing their work as part of both an expanding professional concern and an expanding public concern over the effects of aid, the Evaluation Office also strived to bring one specific debate into the halls of the aid administration: That of the Parliament. In a three-page memo to Norad's assistant director, titled «Questions of significance for NORAD's evaluation work which were raised in the Parliamentary debate about White Paper 35, 1980-1981», Evalfo stated:

¹⁸³ Norad 1981 *Handbook*, Preface (second page, unpaginated). Norwegian quote: «Derved åpner vi for større forståelse og samarbeide om resultatvurderinger mellom bistandsorganisasjoner og vis à vis mottakerlandene.»

¹⁸⁴ Memo, Evaluation Office to Director General, 01.10.81, p.1. Norad A-4429: 840. Norwegian quote: «Både i det norske og det internasjonale bistandsmiljøet blir det stadig oftere spurt etter mer kunnskap om virkningen av utviklingsbistand. (...) [Det] er all mulig grunn til å regne med at spørsmålet om effekt av utviklingshjelpen vil komme til å stå helt sentralt i den bistandspolitiske debatten i 80-åra.»

One of the questions which in fact were most central in the Parliamentary debate over White Paper 35 about Norway's cooperation with the developing countries in 1979, was the need for more and deeper knowledge about the effect of the Norwegian aid work. The question was also raised separately in the committee's recommendation. The office of evaluation and research, which has as its assignment to work with this question within NORAD's administration, finds reason to accentuate certain aspects of the view points which emerged in this debate.¹⁸⁵

What Evalfo here referred to was a routine deliberation in Parliament about the government's annual report on its aid work, literally a "Message to Parliament" (more commonly called a white paper in English language terminology).¹⁸⁶ The process followed normal procedure, but what was new, according to the Evaluation Office, was that "the need for more and deeper knowledge about the effect of Norwegian aid work" was "in fact" one of the "most central" questions. Several members of parliament had explicitly addressed this issue during the debate:

The Conservative Party's main spokesman in the Committee of Foreign Affairs, Lars Roar Langslet, highlighted in his remark the importance of a debate being held about how the Norwegian aid effort could have the highest possible rate of return in the form of development effect for the developing countries. He meant that such a debate in time would be more important than a debate about how large percentage share of GDP a country offers in aid. Therefore considerably more weight must be given to critical evaluation, both of the individual projects and of the aid effort as a whole, he asserted.¹⁸⁷

Two other representatives had endorsed Langslet's view, while two more had themselves expanded on his point, asserting a need for more evaluation:

The Centre/Farmer's Party's parliamentary group leader Johan J. Jakobsen was of the opinion that up until now probably too few resources have been used in the work to verify the effect of Norwegian aid. He therefore considered it positive that NORAD wants to employ more systematic methods for evaluation of the development aid. He highlighted as especially important as much independent review and verification as possible, by means of people and

¹⁸⁵ Memo, Evaluation Office to Deputy Director General, 23.6.81: «Spørsmål av betydning for NORADs evalueringsarbeid som ble reist i Stortingsdebatten om St.meld. 35, 1980-81.» Norwegian quote: «Et av de spørsmålene som faktisk sto mest sentralt i Stortingsdebatten om St.meld. 35 om Norges samarbeid med utviklingslandene i 1979, var behovet for mer og grundigere kunnskap om effekten av det norske bistandsarbeidet. Spørsmålet ble også tatt opp separat i komiteinnstillingen. Kontoret for evaluering og forskning, som har til oppgave å arbeide med dette spørsmålet innenfor NORADs administrasjon, finner grunn til å framheve en del av de synspunktene som kom fram i denne debatten.»

¹⁸⁶ The report had the shape of a so-called «Stortingsmelding» (literal translation: «Message to Parliament»), which in the English language is commonly referred to as a White Paper. The white paper was prepared by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and submitted to Parliament on October 24, 1980.¹⁸⁶ Following normal procedure, Parliament acknowledged the report and then sent it on to one of its parliamentary committees for further deliberation, in this case the Committee of Foreign Affairs and Constitutional Matters.¹⁸⁶ The committee read and discussed the report, prepared a special document with its comments and a recommendation for parliamentary action, attached the document to the report and sent it back to Parliament for plenary discussion and decision.¹⁸⁶ The plenary discussion took place on May 20, 1981.

¹⁸⁷ Memo, Evaluation Office to Deputy Director General, 23.6.81: «Spørsmål av betydning for NORADs evalueringsarbeid som ble reist i Stortingsdebatten om St.meld. 35, 1980-81.», p. 1. Norwegian quote: «Høyres hovedtalsmann i Utenrikskomiteen, Lars Roar Langslet framhevet i sitt innlegg viktigheten av at det må bli ført en debatt om hvordan den norske bistandsinnsatsen skal kunne mest mulig av seg i form av utviklingseffekt for mottakerlandene. Han mente at en slik debatt etter hvert ville være viktigere enn en debatt om hvor stor prosentandel et land yter i utviklingshjelp. Derfor må det legges betydelig større vekt på kritisk evaluering, framholdt han, både av de enkelte prosjektene og av bistandsvirksomheten som helhet.»

interests not directly engaged in the individual project. Jakobsen also gave much weight to the fact that the verification must be combined with open information about the effect of Norwegian aid. Margit Tøsdal, The Labour Party, also highlighted the usefulness of debating how the development effect could be increased. She said she was glad of the content of the evaluation handbook NORAD had prepared. The referred views were not countered in the debate.¹⁸⁸

In underscoring that these views had been countered by noone, the Evaluation Office implied that the views should be expected to have broad parliamentary support. The parliamentary remarks all pointed to the principles which the evaluation staff were trying to build support for internally in Norad. The remarks by Langslet and Jakobsen contained several key concepts: «critical evaluation», «systematic methods of evaluation», «independent review and verification», and «open information». Furthermore, Jakobsen argued for spending more resources on «verifying the effect» of Norwegian aid, while Tøsdal endorsed both the debate at large and specifically applauded the Handbook. For this reason, the Evaluation Office argued, Parliament had sent “a clear signal” in favor of their approach:

Evalfo cannot interpret this debate in any other way than that there exists a clear signal from Parliament in the direction of continuing to work to strengthen and systematize the evaluation work in NORAD. A practical way to follow up this signal would in the Office’s opinion be that a certain number of projects/programs every year are made objects of a comprehensive and independent evaluation, as apart from more routine-based project reviews. The request for independence must by our opinion entail that Evalfo must play a leading and coordinating role in the preparation and execution of such evaluations (...).¹⁸⁹

The Evaluation Office’s claims here are intriguing: They were arguing that they “cannot interpret this debate in any other way” and that there “exists a clear signal” from Parliament supporting their work. These assertions are exceptionally strong and beg the question: Were there other ways to interpret the parliamentary debate?

The white paper in question amounted to 86 pages plus appendices, out of which the issue of evaluation was addressed in one short subsection. The paragraphs were part of the introduction to Chapter 4, which dealt with Norway’s bilateral aid, after first giving an overview of the global situation as of 1979 (Chapter 1), then describing aid given through multilateral organizations (Chapter 2) and in concert with other donors (Chapter 3), before

¹⁸⁸ Memo, Evaluation Office to Deputy Director General, 23.6.81, p. 2. Norwegian quote: «Senterpartiets parlamentariske leder Johan J. Jakobsen var av den oppfatning at det hittil trolig er blitt brukt for få ressurser i arbeidet med å etterprøve virkningen av norsk bistand. Han så det derfor som positivt at NORAD vil satse på mer systematiske metoder for evaluering av utviklingshjelpen. Han framhevet som særlig viktig å tilstrebe en mest mulig uavhengig gjennomgang og etterprøving, ved hjelp av personer og interesser som ikke er direkte engasjert i det enkelte tiltaket. Jakobsen la også stor vekt på at etterprøvingen måtte kombineres med en åpen informasjon om effekten av norsk hjelp. // Margit Tøsdal, Arbeiderpartiet, framhevet også nytten av å debattere hvordan utviklingseffekten kunne økes. Hun sa seg glad for innholdet i den evalueringshåndboka NORAD har utarbeidet. // De refererte synspunktene ble ikke imøtegått i debatten.»

¹⁸⁹ Memo, Evaluation Office to Deputy Director General, 23.6.81, p. 2. Norwegian quote: «Evalfo kan ikke tolke denne debatten på annen måte enn at det foreligger et klart signal fra Stortinget i retning av å arbeide videre med en styrkning og systematisering av evalueringsarbeidet i NORAD. En praktisk måte å følge opp dette signalet på vil etter Kontoret’s mening være at et visst antall prosjekter/programmer hvert år gjøres til gjenstand for en grundig og uavhengig evaluering, til forskjell fra mer rutinemessige prosjektgjennomganger. Ønsket om uavhengighet må etter vår oppfatning tilsi at Evalfo må spille en ledende og koordinerende rolle i forberedelse og gjennomføring av slike evalueringer slik det er fastslått i DI 2/1981.»

Chapter 4 described in detail Norway's aid relations with the ten main aid-receiving countries and in lesser detail «other» countries. To that end, evaluation hardly figured prominently in the white paper. Nevertheless, the short section is important because this was the first time the issue of evaluation was included in the the Ministry of Foreign Affairs's annual message to Parliament.

The section first listed the evaluations undertaken in 1979 (a total of five), then briefly described of the composition of evaluation teams.¹⁹⁰ The second half of the section briefly pointed to general lessons to be drawn from the reports:

The evaluation reports show that the aid brings many valuable results. But problems also often arise in relation to aid. The recipient country often has difficulties handling the high technological level that a number of aid projects represent, and which the recipient country has itself requested. Other problems may arise because the aid project often is dependent on economic and societal factors outside the project.

In 1979 NORAD has started a review of more systematic methods for aid assessment.¹⁹¹

The section effectively pointed to specific evaluation studies, general evaluation findings, and that Norad's evaluation work was in the process of being expanded. The attention to problems in the execution of aid and the concern for factors «outside the projects» point in the direction of the Evaluation Office's arguments. Furthermore, the phrase «systematic methods for aid assessment» resembles their main concept of «systematic aid assessment». This phrase is likely to have referred to the preparation of the Handbook, which by October 24, 1980, when the Ministry submitted their document to Parliament, must have been moving towards completion. But although the ministry did acknowledge that this work was going on in Norad, it is hardly offered much attention relative to the overall concerns within Norwegian aid. Furthermore, while the phrases seemed similar, they might imply rather different levels of transformation; support for using more systematic methods by no means meant support for the entire concept of systematic aid assessment, as it was defined by the Evaluation Office (see previous section).

Upon receiving and handling the ministry's report, the Parliament's Committee of Foreign Affairs wrote its own comment which would serve as a basis for parliamentary deliberation. The Committee gave evaluation proportionately more attention than did the

¹⁹⁰ St.meld 35 (1980-81) «Om Norges samarbeid med utviklingslandene i 1979», p. 57. «Most of the evaluations were undertaken by delegations composed of representatives from the authorities of the recipient country, NORAD staff and experts external to NORAD». Norwegian quote: "De fleste evalueringer er utført av delegasjoner sammensatt av representanter for myndighetene i mottakerlandet, NORAD-ansatte og fagfolk utenfor NORAD."

¹⁹¹ St.meld 35 (1980-81), p. 58. Full Norwegian quote: «**Evaluering.** Følgende bistandstiltak er evaluert i 1979: Tanzania / Hydrometeorologiske stasjoner. Tanzania / Helsestasjoner på landsbygda. Tanzania / Tanzania Investment Bank. Ghana / Ghana Nautical College. Kenya / Distriktsutbyggingsfond. De fleste evalueringer er utført av delegasjoner sammensatt av representanter for myndighetene i mottakerlandet, NORAD-ansatte og fagfolk utenfor NORAD. Delegasjonene har som regel oppholdt seg i felten i ca. 4 uker. I tillegg har NORAD finansiert et seminar i Dar-es-Salaam i forbindelse med evaluering av stipendiatbistand i Øst-Afrika. Evalueringsrapportene viser at bistanden gir mange verdifulle resultater. Men det oppstår også problemer i forbindelse med bistand. Mottakerlandet har ofte vanskeligheter med å mestre det høye teknologiske nivået som en del bistandstiltak representerer, og som mottakerlandet selv har ønsket. Andre problemer kan oppstå fordi bistandstiltaket ofte er avhengig av økonomiske og samfunnsmessige faktorer utenfor tiltaket. I 1979 har NORAD påbegynt en utredning av mer systematiske metoder for bistandsvurdering.» (pp. 57-58).

Ministry, addressing it twice during its eight-page comment; first, during its three-page summary of the report,¹⁹² then, as the second to last point in the committee's own remarks:

Evaluation. The committee has noted that NORAD has started a review of more systematic methods for evaluation of the development aid. This is a most important task. As one more systematically may utilize the experiences from the aid work, one also builds the foundation for making the development aid more effective, which is important both out of concern for the recipient country and for the public support of Norwegian development aid here at home.¹⁹³

As the Evaluation Office had noted in their memo to Norad's director Arne Arnesen, evaluation was here indeed handled as a separate issue by the parliamentary committee. The committee asserted that the white paper's reference to a review of more systematic methods was «a most important task». In this way, the committee considered evaluation a tool which enabled utilizing past experience for the purpose of more effective aid, meeting the interests of aid-receiving countries, and maintaining domestic public support for aid.

Of the committee members, only one explicitly addressed evaluation as an issue during his prepared statement: Lars Roar Langslet, whom Evalfo quoted above. Referring to an «unusually strong critical debate about the way aid is being done» which had emerged during the past year, he lamented that the white paper did not address this debate head on. His point was not to join the «new critique», which he described as having a «pessimistic undertone» coupled with a «radical scepticism» to development at large.¹⁹⁴ He «did not lose sleep» over this critique from the left, but rather pointed to the sitting Labour government's minister of planning, Per Kleppe, who had recently given some «remarkable comments» about aid to a Norwegian newspaper, calling for a halt in aid to corrupt regimes. Langslet applauded that Kleppe «recommended a critical assessment of whether aid today really leads to development». This necessitated, according to Langslet, to shift the concern of the aid debate from the amount of funding to its effect upon development:

It should e.g. be said that even more important than the recurring debate over the percentage level of our complete aid is the debate over how the contribution might give a highest possible return in development effect for the recipient countries. There must be placed considerably more weight on critical evaluation, both of the individual projects and of the aid effort as a whole.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹² Innst. S. nr. 255 (1980-81) «Tilråding frå utanriks- og konstitusjonsnemnda om Noregs samarbeid med utviklingslanda i 1979. (St.meld. nr 35.)», p. 3. "The government refers in the white paper to the aid projects which have been assessed in 1979, and mentions that NORAD in 1979 have started a review of more systematic methods for aid assessment". Norwegian quote: "Regjeringa viser i meldinga til dei stønadstiltaka som har vore vurderte i 1979, og nemner at NORAD i 1979 har byrja på ei utgreiing om meir systematiske metodar for stønadsvurdering."

¹⁹³ Innst. S. nr. 255 (1980-81), p. 8. Norwegian quote: «Evaluering. Nemnda har merka seg at NORAD har sett i gang ei utgreiing av meir systematiske metoder for evaluering av utviklingshjelpa. Dette er ei særskilt viktig arbeidsoppgåve. Ved at ein meir systematisk kan nyttiggjera seg røynslene frå stønadsarbeidet legg ein og grunnlaget for ei effektivisering av utviklingshjelpa, noko som er viktig både av omsyn til mottakarlandet og for den almenne oppslutninga om norsk utviklingsstønad her heime.»

¹⁹⁴ Langslet here referred to Gunnar Myrdal and Johan Galtung, who both voiced strong critiques of current aid practices in 1980.

¹⁹⁵ Tidende S., (1980-81), p. 3514. (Annals of Norwegian parliamentary proceedings). Norwegian quote: «Det bør f.eks. være sagt at vel så viktig som den stadige debatten om prosentsatser for vår samlede bistand er debatten om hvordan innsatsen skal kaste mest mulig av seg i utviklingseffekt for mottagerlandene. Det må

Langslet's keyword was *critical*: In his view, evaluation was the tool that enabled a different debate – one about effects and results abroad, rather than intentions and funding levels at home. At the same time, Langslet was not dismissive of aid in and of itself; evaluation was merely a tool to improve it, to make sure that the funds were used as they were supposed to be. To that end, his concept of «critical evaluation» more resembled that of auditable accounting: of verifying that the money were spent as intended. A notion of mistrust, of funds possibly misspent, guided the argument. In this respect, evaluation work entailed to follow the money abroad and bringing evidence of their use back home.

Read this way, the «clear signal from parliament» of enhancing Norad's evaluation work was far less clear than what the Evaluation Office asserted. While strengthening Norad's evaluation work was mentioned both in the white paper, the committee statement, and by three members of parliament, the majority of the debate nevertheless dealt with other issues. Numerous other concerns were discussed more at length and were more strongly promoted, also by the speakers endorsing evaluation. Many voiced concern over the expanding amount of countries receiving aid, and a longer discussion ensued on the need for stronger priorities. Yet, a general concern throughout the debate was to keep Norwegian aid funding high and even to increase it. Some members in effect pointed in the opposite direction of Evalfo's position, speaking confidently of good results from Norwegian aid (notably of Christian missionary activities and of social movements' grassroots organizing). One speaker meant Norad worked perfectly well and saw no need for changes.¹⁹⁶

Hence, Parliament sent countless signals to the Ministry and Norad, some far stronger than that of more evaluation, since they came in the form of direct questions and demands. Furthermore, what precisely the signal of expanding Norad's evaluation work entailed, is unclear; while three speakers endorsed evaluation and applauded Norad's recent work, none in parliament questioned whether aid was evaluable: They took for granted that it was merely a matter of doing it more, and in a more thorough and systematic way.

An office taking in external critique, support, and practical tools

In this section, I have shown how a new Office of Evaluation and Research (the Evaluation Office) was established in 1977 with staff educated within new strands of social sciences and who also had experience from the field. While Norad's management had been aware of and interested in both aid evaluation and “socio-economic” analyses of aid for several years, the new Evaluation Office started working more systematically to develop a whole new system for how aid might be made evaluable. In doing so, they combined insights and methods from the critical social sciences with already existing tools and systems from other aid organizations and other US public agencies. Furthermore, in building support for their case

legges betydelige større vekt på kritisk evaluering, både av de enkelte prosjekter og av bistandsvirksomheten som helhet.»

¹⁹⁶ Tidende S. (1980-81), pp. 3527, 3534. MP Per Ditlev-Simonsen, a member of Norad's advisory board, were of the opinion that “Norad today works well and is managed in an excellent way”. MP Erland Aasdahl emphasized the “impressive results” gained by missionary organizations and other non-governmental organizations.

internally, they actively brought in external debates and arguments, notably from the Norwegian parliament.

In sum, the Evaluation Office emerges as a site with a strong orientation towards actors and debates outside of the Norwegian aid administration, bringing in both a fundamental critique of aid, practical tools of public administration, and political support for enhanced evaluation. What precisely did this combination become when translated into the language of the Norwegian aid administration? This question will be my main concern in the remaining sections of this chapter, in which I will analyze the Handbook in detail so as to understand the practicalities and ramifications of the Evaluation Office's visions for how Norwegian aid could be made an evaluable object.

Articulating projects: Two new tools for writing aid

In the introduction to this chapter, I suggested the term *evaluation optic* to describe the tools which the Handbook introduced to make it possible see aid more clearly. But such optics were of no use unless the aid staff produced material for the optics to investigate. The functioning of an evaluation optic thus depended upon the inscription devices already having been meticulously employed. As seen above, this approach would require meticulous work during planning and implementation of aid projects, far more than was currently demanded by the existing Director's Instruction. The main change in how the work was to be done concerned the amount of writing and the importance of the resulting documents. These, the Handbook argued, would be necessary for enabling potential future evaluations.

But merely writing something, anything, was not sufficient; the documents would have to be prepared in a specific way, following a defined method. For this purpose, the Handbook introduced two new tools: *the Goal Pyramid* and *the Assessment Matrix*. In the following, I will analyze these two tools as specific inscription devices: What were their components, and what were they expected to do? How would they enable transforming the unruly matter of project ideas into writing? And how was this increasing writing work expected to make aid an evaluable object?

Inscription device 1: The Goal Pyramid

In its introductory chapter, the Handbook had stated that Norwegian aid projects were lacking clear goals. A main purpose of systematic aid assessment was to remedy this particular problem. Articulating a clear goal and how it would be reached was a prerequisite also for future evaluation work, as it would function as a standard against which to assess the project. The Handbook's second chapter, titled "Goal and Method", was entirely dedicated to this issue. The chapter started by stating the crucial role of clear goals for the ability to specify what one wanted to do and by which means:

A necessary precondition for being able to assess aid systematically is that one knows precisely what one wants to achieve with the project. It must be clear what target groups the aid is oriented towards, what the goal of the project is, what goals one wishes to reach with which means. Such key specifications should be undertaken in the preparatory phase before

the project is started. They should be clearly stated in the documents which serve as a basis for the project (appraisal, project assessment, formal agreement).¹⁹⁷

Hence, one of the first tasks when considering a new project idea should be to define “precisely what one wanted to achieve with the project”; then to undertake “key specifications” of the project’s target groups, goals, and means; before clearly stating these in all the documents that in combination constituted the “preparatory stage” of an aid project. In this way, precisely defining the main goal was the very first thing aid staff and recipient governments should do when drafting new ideas for aid. In order to help aid staff articulate their goal and how it would be reached, the Handbook introduced a special tool, the so-called *goal pyramid*:

A tool for achieving the sufficient degree of precision is the so-called goal pyramid. The goal pyramid is the very skeleton of the project assessment. It specifies the planned interventions and the expected consequences of the project.¹⁹⁸

To explain the critical importance of preparing the goal pyramid at the outset of project preparations, the Handbook used the metaphor of a *skeleton*, alluding to an organism’s indispensable inner core which connected all its other parts, carried its weight, and enabled movement. A project’s skeleton should consist of specifying what one planned to do and the expected consequences. The goal pyramid was the tool that would enable such specification. The Handbook included the following illustration of the goal pyramid (illustration 2):

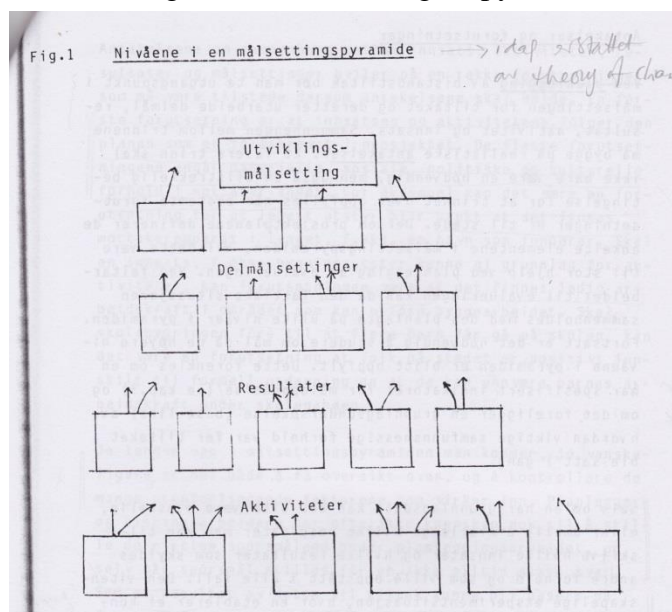


Illustration 2.2: «The levels of the goal pyramid», *Handbook of Evaluation Questions* (1981), p. 5.

¹⁹⁷ Norad 1981 *Handbook*, p. 4. Norwegian quote: «En nødvendig forutsetning for å kunne vurdere bistand systematisk er at en vet nøyaktig hva en vil oppnå med prosjektet. Det må være klart hvilke målgrupper bistanden er rettet mot, hva målsettingen med prosjektet er, hvilke mål en ønsker å oppnå med hvilke midler. Slike sentrale presiseringer bør være foretatt i forberedelsesfasen før prosjektet påbegynnes. De bør gå klart fram av de dokumenter som ligger til grunn for prosjektet (idéskisse, prosjektutredning, avtale).»

¹⁹⁸ Norad 1981 *Handbook*, p. 4. Norwegian quote: «Et hjelpemiddel til å oppnå en tilstrekkelig grad av presisering er den såkalte målsettingspyramiden. Målsettingspyramiden er selve skjelettet i prosjektbeskrivelsen. Den presiserer de planlagte tiltak og de forventede konsekvenser av prosjektet.»

As seen from illustration 2.2, the goal pyramid consisted of four horizontal lines of individual boxes, whose “planned connection are indicated by arrows”¹⁹⁹ all pointing upwards from one box to one or more boxes on the line above. The boxes had the following denominations (seen from the top): development goal, partial goals, results, activities, and input elements.²⁰⁰ This terminology was new in Norwegian aid, the authors of the Handbook explained, and offered the following definition of the concepts (in reverse order from the image of the pyramid):

Input elements are goods and services, e.g. building materials and manual labor.

Activity is the employment of the input elements for a specific task, e.g. building works.

Result is that which quite concretely leads from the building works, e.g. a school house.

Partial goal is the desired consequences of the results being employed, e.g. increased school participation.

Development goal is the desired change within the target group, e.g. elevating the level of education.²⁰¹

These five concepts referred to the five levels of the goal pyramid, and were thus organized in a specific hierarchical order, from the bottom to the top. Indeed, the Handbook interchangeably used the concepts “goal pyramid and goal hierarchy”. Following the metaphor of the pyramid, it would not be possible to reach the top without first taking all the steps from the ground up. When building a physical pyramid, it would clearly be of critical importance to build a solid foundation if the top was to be stable; if not, the top might easily collapse. Hence, the metaphor prescribed a specific direction of purpose, building one level at a time from the bottom up; nothing else would be possible. The one, final stone on top was dependent on an increasingly expanding amount of stones further down towards the ground. The pyramid thus served as a distinct way of conceptualizing a project: As something that had to be built from the ground up, towards one distinct goal, and which would not be complete unless all components were in place at the right time. A number of *inputs* would enable a set of *activities*, which in turn were expected to foster a set of concrete *results*, which again should contribute to fulfill a limited set of *partial goals*, which then finally should enable the fulfillment of one overarching *development goal*.

While these concepts were not completely new in Norad, the Handbook seems to have been the first time they were thoroughly introduced to the staff at large. The process of writing the Handbook had involved a translation process of terminology from elsewhere into both the Norwegian language and into Norwegian aid work. Furthermore, the concepts were in themselves supposed to enable a specific translation: That of a vague project idea into a distinct goal pyramid. The one-page model invited aid staff to articulate the project by filling

¹⁹⁹ Norad 1981 *Handbook*, p. 4. Norwegian quote: «De planlagte sammenhengene er antydnet med piler.»

²⁰⁰ The word “input” was not included in the illustration, but considering the description of the illustration, the lowest horizontal line must have been intended to illustrate the category of project input.

²⁰¹ Norad 1981 *Handbook*, p. 5. Norwegian quote: «Innsats-elementer er varer og tjenester, f.eks. bygningsmaterialer og arbeidskraft. Aktivitet er anvendelse av innsats-elementene til en bestemt oppgave, f.eks. byggearbeid. Resultat er det som rent konkret kommer ut av byggearbeidet, f.eks. en skolebygning. Delmålsetting er ønsket konsekvenser av at resultatene benyttes f.eks. økt skoledeltakelse. Utviklingsmålsetting er den ønsket endring innen målgruppa f.eks. heving av opplysningsnivået.»

in the boxes and connecting them with arrows. In effect, staff would articulate their particular idea by means of a the new set of concepts and link them causally to one another. In this way, the Handbook presented the pyramid as a practical tool for preparing an aid project. It specified that when using the pyramid, one should start with articulating the goal, and work one's way downwards from there. The other components of the goal pyramid (partial goals, results, activities, and input elements) would then follow from the goal. In this way, what one wanted to *achieve* would be the organizing element for choosing what one would *do*. Hence, the project should be articulated from the top and downwards, but implemented from the bottom and upwards. The one overarching development goal should define all your actions, and your actions should all lead towards this one goal.

In this way, while being introduced as a practical tool which would ease both planning, project work, and evaluation work, the goal pyramid also demanded a certain discipline and commitment from its users. For it to be of any use, no boxes could remain un-written. Furthermore, it might expose unclear goals and inconsistencies on the part of project staff, should their intended activities, input elements, and development goals turn out to be not so easily linked. The goal pyramid thus facilitated a translation process in which all actions literally pointed towards one goal, leaving all deviances from the intended direction as potential problems. The Handbook had noted that goals might be changed, but considering the comprehensive process of articulating the one main goal and connecting all other aspects of the project to this one goal, this was hardly a preferred option. Indeed, the Handbook referred to the move between the boxes as "steps", indicating that there was one direction to be preferred, and that moving anywhere but upwards would be unfortunate.

From the look of it, the goal pyramid might seem like a closed system: One's goal and actions should be internally connected in specific ways, and there were no arrows pointing out of the pyramid. However, the Handbook greatly emphasized the importance of understanding the specific site into which the metaphorical pyramid was to be built, and to integrate the site-specific analysis in the articulation of the goal pyramid: «The connection between the steps must build on realistic assumptions» about the specific preconditions present at the specific site where the specific project was to be done:

The assumptions about the connection between input, activities, results, and goals rest upon a range of preconditions which must be present if the assumptions are to hold true. A first precondition is that the input and the activity follows the plan which is prescribed in the project. Most preconditions regard material, social, political, and cultural matters in the recipient country. It may for example be a precondition that there is a recipient apparatus in the country, e.g. a functioning harbor, for the delivered supplies to be used. (...) The further up the goal pyramid one moves, the harder it is to both gain an overview over and to control the many external factors that have effects. Planners and aid workers often do not have enough knowledge to ask the right questions during the planning work, and even when questions are asked, one do not always get secure answers. As a result of this, interventions might be based on preconditions and assumptions which are not valid in the area or for the target group one

intends to support. Such problems are present in all planning. It is hardly possible to plan in such a way that all relevant preconditions have been appropriately considered.²⁰²

Here, the Handbook directly linked aid staff's own knowledge of the project site to their ability to plan and run an aid project. Indeed, aid staff "often do not have enough knowledge to ask the right questions", to the effect that even though the goal pyramid might have been satisfactorily completed, a project might fail to reach its goal because the aid staff's assumptions were "unrealistic" and "not valid" for the specific site into which it was placed.

What was articulated while writing the goal pyramid, was therefore not only the project idea as such, but also the aid staff's *assumptions* about the project idea. Basing a project plan upon unrealistic assumptions and non-existing preconditions should not any longer be possible, because the goal pyramid forced planners to make their assumptions about the necessary preconditions visible. The Handbook in this way introduced a whole new way of planning within aid – one which took as its point of departure the limitations of the aid staff's site-specific insight:

Many of those who plan an aid intervention has little knowledge about the target group's living conditions. This is among other things related to the way in which aid work is organized today, with a relatively modest participation from the target group itself in the preparation of the interventions. This weakness may be corrected by drawing experts or the target group itself more into the aid assessments.»²⁰³

The goal pyramid was thereby also a tool for articulating the specific site of a proposed project, including the people whom it was intended to reach, the so-called "target group". It made them consider the project site not as a generic place, but as a specific site with its own unique history and internal dynamics. The Handbook considered it "a weakness" of current aid planning that there was only "relatively modest participation" from the target group in planning processes directly addressing their "living conditions". This was not only a weakness with the work of individual aid staff, but "related to the way aid is organized today".

This claim indicates the potentially transformative force of the goal pyramid: If employed in the way the Handbook envisioned, it might change how aid was being done, project by project. It would make aid staff articulate both a project goal; the connections

²⁰² Norad 1981 *Handbook*, p. 7. Full Norwegian quotes: «Sammenhengen mellom trinnene må bygge på realistiske antakelser.” ”Antakelsene om sammenhengen mellom innsats, aktiviteter, resultater og målsettinger hviler på en rekke forutsetninger som må være tilstede dersom antakelsene skal holde. En første forutsetning er at innsatsen og aktiviteten følger den planen som er foreskrevet i prosjektet. De fleste forutsetningene angår materielle, sosiale, politiske og kulturelle forhold i mottakerlandet. For eksempel kan det være en forutsetning for at levert utstyr blir brukt at det finnes mottakerapparat i landet, f.eks. en havn som fungerer. (...) Jo lenger opp i målsettingspyramiden man kommer, jo vanskeligere er det å både få oversikt over, og å kontrollere de mange utenforliggende faktorene som virker inn. Planleggere og bistandsarbeidere har ofte ikke kunnskap nok til å stille de riktige spørsmålene under planleggingsarbeidet, og selv når spørsmål stilles får en ikke alltid sikre svar. Som et resultat av dette vil tiltak kunne bli basert på forutsetninger og antakelser som ikke er gyldige i det område eller for den målgruppa en ønsker å støtte. Slike problemer gjelder for all planlegging. Det er neppe mulig å planlegge slik at alle relevante forutsetninger blir tilbørlig tatt hensyn til.»

²⁰³ Norad 1981 *Handbook*, p. 7. Norwegian quote: «Mange av dem som planlegger en bistandsinnsats har liten kunnskap om målgruppas livssituasjon. Dette har blant annet sammenheng med den måten bistandsarbeidet er organisert på i dag, med en relativt beskjeden medvirkning i utformingen av tiltakene fra målgruppa selv. Denne svakheten kan rettes opp ved at fagfolk eller målgruppa selv blir trukket sterkere med i bistandsvurderingene.»

between the goal and all other project components; their own assumptions about these connections; the necessary preconditions for the goal to be met; the specific site into which the project would intervene; and the specific target group the project was supposed to address. Furthermore, it would make aid staff include other people in the planning process, including the “target group itself”. Indeed, aid expertise coming from the outside might in itself “offer problems”, the Handbook argued:

Use of professional aid expertise however also offers problems. Technical experts or others who come from the outside will be affected by their own class-, culture- or gender-specific background. They bring their own ‘cultural cargo’ which colors their view with regards to interpreting local affairs and preconditions.²⁰⁴

Here, the Handbook went far in arguing that aid expertise was in and of itself a problem in aid: Aid staff and technical experts from abroad were most likely to bring with them “cultural cargo” which affected how they saw the project site. Their ability to see the site clearly was contingent on their ability to articulate this cultural cargo and all their implicit assumptions about the site. The goal pyramid, I will argue, was therefore also a tool for making visible the aid staff’s own particular site specificity – to define aid staff, not only aid recipients, as being situated in a local setting which conditioned how they conceived of the world around them. Hence, the goal pyramid served to articulate both the project site, into which the Norwegian aid staff, experts, and funds would arrive, and the Norwegian site, from where the experts and project funding were coming. In this way, the goal pyramid made explicit the specificity of both Norway (and the Norwegian aid staff and experts) and the recipient country (the cooperating government and the intended target group).

Writing the goal pyramid therefore also fostered a third form of translation work: in addition to the translation of new *vocabulary* into Norwegian aid and of a project idea into a one-page *document*, it enabled the translation of a general project idea into a *site-specific aid project*. By its insistence on the necessity of articulating staff assumptions about site-specific preconditions, the goal pyramid made it difficult to apply a project idea from elsewhere, despite its possible success, without first rearticulating the idea within the new site. Whether the project idea sprung from aid staff’s past experience or from specific needs and opportunities at the present site, it would have to be explicitly written into the specific current site. The goal pyramid simply did not allow for anything to be taken for granted.

The Handbook emphasized that the goal pyramid was a means to an end, not an end in itself. It was a *model*, which enabled a better planning process, but it was not sufficient alone:

²⁰⁴ Norad 1981 *Handbook*, p. 8. The handbook uses the Norwegian term «bistandsfaglig ekspertise», to which I have not found an adequate English translation; it signifies aid work which is skilled and professional in character, and implies something more systematic and explicit than long experience or tacit knowledge. In German: *fachlichkeit*, translated into English as «professionalism» or the more literal «subject-matter knowledge». Norwegian quote: «Bruk av bistandsfaglig ekspertise byr imidlertid også på problemer. Fagfolk eller andre som kommer utenfra vil være preget av sin egen klasse -, kultur-, eller kjønnsbestemte bakgrunn. De stiller med sin ‘kulturelle ballast’ som farger deres syn når det gjelder å fortolke lokale forhold og forutsetninger.»

The goal pyramid is a model that contributes to illuminating the connection between input elements and goals. The model is no replacement for information about local affairs or theoretical insight, but comes in addition as an important tool for systematizing this knowledge. It also contributes to asking the difficult questions about who gets to define what development is, which interests the aid should support, and on which criteria to assess results.²⁰⁵

Here, the Handbook again asserted that the goal pyramid was a tool which enabled a different planning process, which included “asking the difficult questions” about definitions, interests, and assessment criteria. The Handbook thus took as its premise that both development processes and the role of aid were potentially contested issues. Defining project goals, project elements, and assessment criteria were not necessarily straightforward tasks. For that reason, having a model that required staff to make these topics an issue for discussion amongst both target groups, government representatives, and aid staff themselves might make the questions less difficult. The responsibility for asking “the difficult questions” was thus delegated to the model, which might make the act of asking them seem less threatening or inappropriate, since it was the model that demanded it, not the particular staff member. Staff might excuse themselves for asking the difficult questions by pointing to a blank box in the project pyramid, and explain that in order for the project to be realized, all boxes would have to be filled in. In this way, the goal pyramid contributed to illuminate far more than the “connection between input elements and goals”, as it stated in the quote above – through the process of asking, articulating, and writing, the goal pyramid made explicit both the project, the project site, the project staff, and the relations between these three.

In the beginning of this section, I suggested understanding the goal pyramid as an *inscription device*. In the analysis above, I have shown how the goal pyramid was introduced as a tool with which aid staff could systematize their multiple sources of information and articulate a specific set of relations between the project goal, project work, and project site, while at the same time laying the foundation for potential future evaluations. But, as I have argued, the Handbook also envisioned the tool to have more fundamental consequences than merely enhancing individual planning processes: The goal pyramid had the potential to not only change the way *aid was being done*, but also how aid staff and visiting experts *were seeing themselves* in relation to the project site. The purpose of fostering such reflexivity on the part of aid staff, was to make explicit and visible the staff’s assumptions about how the aid project they were planning would unfold in practice, and to commit them to far more specific analyses of each potential project. The Handbook seems to draw a direct line between staff reflexivity and aid evaluability: If staff did not articulate their assumptions about potential causalities, it would later be most difficult to reconstruct what happened during the project

²⁰⁵ Norad 1981 *Handbook*, p. 8. Norwegian quote: «Målsettingspyramiden er en modell som bidrar til å belyse sammenhengen mellom innsatselementer og målsettinger. Modellen er ikke noen erstatning for informasjon om lokale forhold eller teoretisk innsikt, men kommer i tillegg som et viktig hjelpemiddel for å systematisere denne kunnskapen. Den bidrar også til å stille de vanskelige spørsmålene om hvem som skal definere hva utvikling er, hvilke interesser bistanden skal ivareta, og utfra hvilke kriterier resultatene vurderes.»

period and why. The work of putting the aid project into writing thus fostered both reflexivity and evaluability.

As I have shown above, the Handbook was not satisfied with just any kind of writing; it had to be done according to a systematic method, through a sequence of appraisal documents, and ultimately with the tool of the goal pyramid. With this tool, the end result was a singular sheet of paper in which the project, its site, and the staff's expectations were compressed into boxes, interlinked by arrows in a hierarchical manner, which in combination took on the shape of a pyramid. The goal pyramid was presented as a practical tool for planning, and as indispensable for future evaluations, but it was nevertheless not sufficient alone. It was necessary to take the building blocks of the pyramid and move them into a new document, a so-called *assessment matrix*. Where the goal pyramid made staff articulate a goal and how to reach it, the assessment matrix made them consider *how they would be able to know* whether they had indeed reached the goal. For this reason, I will analyze the assessment matrix as a second inscription device, building upon the first, the main purpose of which was to enable evaluability of the aid project being planned.

Inscription device 2: The Assessment Matrix

As shown in the section above, the Handbook considered the goal pyramid a key planning tool which would also serve as basis for later evaluations. But the goal pyramid alone was not enough for the latter purpose:

As a planning instrument for evaluations the goal pyramid is nevertheless incomplete. It does not specify how one may know whether the goals are reached and it says nothing about which preconditions that must be present for the connection between the levels of the pyramid to hold. To collect this information in a planning document, an assessment matrix (logical framework) is introduced.²⁰⁶

The key phrase here is “how one may know whether goals are reached”: This question could not be answered with the goal pyramid alone. For that purpose, the Handbook introduced a second planning tool, the *assessment matrix*, which it also referred to as a “logical framework”.²⁰⁷ This tool was expected to make staff articulate specific *criteria* for goal attainment. Hence, aid staff were not only asked to articulate a goal and how to reach it, they should also articulate how to one might *know* whether they had indeed reached it:

During planning, preparation of idea sketches, and project appraisals it is important to specify the criteria for the goal attainment, in other words answer the question: «How may we see that the goal is reached?»²⁰⁸

²⁰⁶ Norad 1981 *Handbook*, p. 13. Norwegian quote: «Som planleggingsinstrument for evalueringer er likevel målsettingpyramiden ufullstendig. Den angir ikke hvordan en kan vite om målsettingene oppnås og den sier ikke noe om hvilke forutsetninger som må være tilstede for at sammenhengen mellom nivåene i pyramiden holder stikk. For å samle alle disse opplysningene i et planleggingsdokument, innføres en vurderingsmatrise (logical framework).»

²⁰⁷ The concept «logical framework» was not translated into Norwegian but included in English in brackets. (See previous footnote for full Norwegian quote.) *Handbook*, p. 13.

²⁰⁸ Norad 1981 *Handbook*, p. 17. Norwegian quote: «Under planlegging, utarbeidelse av idéskisser og prosjektbeskrivelser er det viktig å presisere kriteriene for måloppnåelsen, m.a.o. svare på spørsmålet: ‘Hvordan kan vi se at målet er innfridd?’»

Here, the Handbook reformulated the phrase “how may one know” to “how may we see”. This shift is important: *Knowing* was equated with *seeing*. “Knowing” was thus defined in quite specific terms – as that which might be seen. Furthermore, it should not only be seen by project staff themselves; following my analysis above, the “we” in the quote must be interpreted as a general “we”, which involved external actors, including potential future evaluators. The task, then, was to find ways of making *visible to others* that one’s goal had been reached. It was precisely this the assessment matrix should enable. As argued earlier in this chapter, a key feature of the Handbook’s new approach was to enable a potential second gaze upon aid – to make it possible for someone who had not been part of the planning or implementation of an aid project to see it clearly despite spatial and temporal distance. The assessment matrix would be critical in enabling this view from afar.

The term “assessment” encompassed all considerations about a project undertaken during planning, implementation, and evaluation. This point was also the core feature of the term “systematic aid assessment”, which the Handbook used to denote its new and comprehensive approach of integrating the work done within these three components (planning, implementation and evaluation). This concern for integration was materialized in the assessment matrix, which in a concrete way connected planning work and evaluation work.

The Handbook remained somewhat ambiguous about the relation between planning and evaluation in the preparation of the assessment matrix. In the subheading, the tool was termed “assessment matrix for evaluations”, then a “planning tool for evaluations” in the subsequent paragraph. Towards the end of the chapter, the Handbook considered it “an advantage” for future evaluations if the matrix was already “sketched” during project planning:

An important part of the evaluation work consists of showing which societal effects the intervention has had over time. In order to measure changes one needs to know how the situation was before the intervention was started. It will be an advantage that data for later comparisons are retrieved during the project appraisals. Already in the planning phase one may therefore sketch suggestions for what indicators should be used for evaluation of the intervention, and also indicate where, when, and how these data are retrieved.²⁰⁹

This quote succinctly states how the Handbook envisioned evaluability to be enabled: If aid staff already during their project planning, after doing the goal pyramid, articulated criteria for goal attainment, retrieved data, and sketched indicators for evaluation, they would have contributed considerably to the evaluability of the project. This was because they would then have made it possible to see, in retrospect, the project idea and the project site at the point in time when the project was starting up; they would have produced a “baseline for comparison”, as the Handbook had called for in its introduction (see section on appraisals above). This baseline would give evaluators a point in the past against which to compare the current

²⁰⁹ Norad 1981 *Handbook*, p. 20. Norwegian quote: «En viktig del av evalueringsarbeidet består i påvise hvilke samfunnsmessige virkninger tiltaket har hatt over tid. For å kunne måle endringer må en vite hvordan forholdene var før tiltaket ble påbegynt. Det vil være en fordel at data for senere sammenligninger framskaffes i tilknytning til prosjektutredninger. Alt i planleggingsfasen kan en derfor skissere forslag til hvilke indikatorer som bør brukes for evaluering av tiltaket, og også antyde hvor, når og hvordan disse data framskaffes.»

situation. This temporal comparison was critical if they were to show "which societal effects the intervention has had over time", as stated in the above quote.

The assessment matrix was organized according to the categories of the goal pyramid – development goal, partial goal, results, activities, input – which all were designated one horizontal line in the matrix. There were four columns, of which the first was labeled "summary of the goal pyramid", then came "data or indicators", "methods for collection of data and indicators", and "important preconditions" (illustration 3):

Fig. 2. *Vurderingsmatrise for evaluering*

	Oppsummering av målsetningspyramiden	Data eller indikatorer	Metoder for innsamling av data og indikatorer	Viktige forutsetninger
Utviklingsmålsetting				
Delmålsetting				
Resultater				
Aktiviteter				
Innsats				

Illustration 2.3: «Assessment matrix for evaluation», also called «logical framework». *Handbook of Evaluation Questions, 1981, p. 13.*

The assessment matrix thus built directly on the goal pyramid, in that it employed the same five-level goal hierarchy and demanded a summary of the contents of the boxes. The Handbook explained the matrix in the following way:

The first column of the assessment matrix is identical with the goal pyramid's levels: Development goal, partial goal, results, activities, and input. In the second column data and indicators which are chosen to assess the aid work are listed. The third column lists sources for data and indicators: statistics, continuous reports, interviews, special investigations etc. The fourth column shows the factors and situations which are outside the project's/program's control, but which nonetheless are necessary for the execution. For every level, those preconditions which are necessary for the expectations listed in the first column to be realized are also identified. Read horizontally the matrix gives information of importance for the evaluation at each specific level of the goal pyramid.²¹⁰

²¹⁰ Norad 1981 *Handbook*, p. 14. Norwegian quote: «Den første kolonnen i vurderingsmatrisen er identisk med målsetningspyramidens nivåer: utviklingsmålsetting, delmålsetting, resultater, aktiviteter og innsats. I andre kolonne angis de data og indikatorer som velges for å vurdere bistandsarbeidet. Tredje kolonne angir kilder for data og indikatorer: statistikk, fortløpende rapporter, intervjuer, spesielle undersøkelser osv. Fjerde kolonne viser de faktorer og situasjoner som ligger utenfor prosjektets/programmets kontroll, men som likevel er nødvendige for gjennomføringen. For hvert nivå identifiseres også de forutsetningene som er nødvendige for at de forventningene som det vises til i første kolonne kan bli virkeliggjort. Lest horisontalt gir matrisen informasjon av betydning for evalueringen på hvert enkelt nivå i målsetningspyramiden.»

The first column, the Handbook stated, was "identical" to the five levels of the goal pyramid. But where the goal pyramid included multiple boxes on all but the top level, the assessment matrix included only one field per level. The Handbook acknowledged that the model was "somewhat simplified", and that for a real project, all fields would have to be expanded in order to define assessment criteria for all elements articulated in the goal pyramid.²¹¹ The fourth column, "important preconditions", referenced the aid staff's assumptions about the specific situation of the project site. While this had been an important point in the Handbook's discussion of the goal pyramid, there was no designated box for writing preconditions into the pyramid. The written articulation was instead to be done in the assessment matrix. The second and third columns constituted the new aspects of the assessment matrix relative to the goal pyramid: this was where staff would articulate how one might *see* that the goal had been reached. In the following, I will investigate the implications of these two columns.

Whereas the goal pyramid encouraged a vertical reading of how the boxes in the five levels were interrelated, the assessment matrix encouraged horizontal reading. Read in this direction, the matrix would give "information of importance for the evaluation at each specific level of the goal pyramid", the Handbook asserted in the quote above. Furthermore: «The matrix contributes to order the connected elements in a project structure and explains their internal relation to each other».²¹² It is in this sense the assessment matrix, like the goal pyramid, may be considered an *inscription device*: It drew together multiple, disparate pieces of information and connected them in new ways. The idea of a new aid project, which first had been transformed into a goal pyramid, was here again transformed into a matrix, in which the content of the project, what staff planned to do, amounted to only one fourth of the table. The main concern of the matrix was to connect all five levels of the project idea to new categories – data, indicators, methods, and preconditions. These in combination made up the "project structure". Hence, these categories were considered core parts of the project *itself*. For the matrix to be complete, all the new fields would have to be filled in; thus, the task of project planning would change considerably if it was to be introduced. A whole new set of categories would have to be articulated. Hence, in addition to introducing new categories and ordering all the elements in a *new* way, the matrix was also a tool for ordering all aid projects in the *same* way. Using Latour and Woolgar's concepts, the assessment matrix was an inscription device turning pieces of matter into a written document which purpose was to create order.

The two inscription devices (the goal pyramid and the assessment matrix) were expected to be used in the same way by all staff in all aid projects regardless of sector, country, and goal. Staff was expected to fill in all boxes and fields, and if they did not, the boxes and fields would still be empty. It would thereby be very visible if staff did not use the inscription devices as presupposed by the Handbook. Herein lay the devices' disciplining

²¹¹ Norad 1981 *Handbook*, Appendix IV. «Example of use of the goal pyramid», p. 1. Norwegian quote: «Eksempelet er noe forenklet.»

²¹² Norad 1981 *Handbook*, p. 13. Norwegian quote: «Matrisen bidrar til å ordne de sammensatte elementene i en prosjekt-struktur og forklarer deres innbyrdes forhold til hverandre.»

effect: Staff were in effect forced to articulate a project's expected connections, effects, and criteria for assessment. In this way, the assessment matrix concretely connected planning work and evaluation work: The two became parts of the same horizontal line of reasoning which again were part of the same project structure. The assessment matrix made staff *literally* see planning and evaluation in combination.

The issue of data and indicators were of such crucial importance that the Handbook designated a specific chapter to this.²¹³ I will in the following present the Handbook's conception of data before turning to indicators. The Handbook was quick to point out that there were many potential sources of information about a project and a project site. In this discussion, the Handbook gradually moved from the term "information" to the term "data", emphasizing the importance of *how* the data were gathered:

There are different ways of collecting systematic knowledge. Both in the donor country and the recipient country there is easily available information in reports, plans, studies, statistical material, budgets or accounts, etc. Other types of information are the knowledge and insight of the target group or the project staff. If one is to gain a somewhat certain knowledge about local affairs it is normally necessary to gather data systematically.²¹⁴

Here, the Handbook made a direct link between the *way* data were collected and the degree of *certainty* one might achieve: If one wanted to gain "a somewhat certain knowledge", it was "normally necessary to gather data systematically". In this way, the Handbook indicated that there was a difference between information and data: simply gathering lots of information would not necessarily enable evaluability if the gathering was not done in a systematic way. With this move, the Handbook turned from listing various types of documents from which one *might* gain information to discussing specific *methods* of data collection:

It is important to be familiar with the drawbacks and advantages of different data sources and collection methods before one decides whether one will use written sources, observation methods, personal interviews, surveys, etc. Often different methods may advantageously be used in combination.²¹⁵

The Handbook's earlier insistence on the importance of producing documents to enable evaluability was here integrated into a concern for combining different sources of data. Written sources was but one of several potential sources of data methods for making visible the connections between the project activities, the project goal, and the project site. The Handbook carefully explained that choosing who to interview was in itself an important consideration. Should one interview all, or just a selection? And if so, who should one select?

²¹³ Norad 1981 *Handbook*, pp.15-21: «Chapter 3: Data and indicators». Subchapters: "3.1. Data and information". "3.2. Indicators of goal attainment". "3.3. Participation from the target group."

²¹⁴ Norad 1981 *Handbook*, p. 15. Norwegian quote: «Det er forskjellige måter å samle systematisk kunnskap på. Både i giverlandet og mottakerlandet finnes lett tilgjengelig informasjon i rapporter, planer, studier, statistisk materiale, budsjetter eller regnskap, osv. Andre typer informasjon er kunnskap og innsikt hos målgruppa eller prosjektpersonellet. Skal en få noenlunde sikker kunnskap om lokale forhold er det som regel nødvendig å samle inn data systematisk.»

²¹⁵ Norad 1981 *Handbook*, p. 15. Norwegian quote: «Det er viktig å ha kjennskap til ulempene og fordelene med forskjellige datakilder og innsamlingsmetoder før en bestemmer seg for om en vil bruke skrevne kilder, observasjonsmetoder, personlige intervju, spørreskjema o.l. Ofte kan forskjellige metoder i kombinasjon benyttes med fordel.»

The Handbook described five different ways to delineate the interview group, and emphasized that however one chose to do this, the group should be “selected by means of social scientific method.”²¹⁶ The Handbook’s concern for systematic methods was in this way also a means of pointing aid staff in the direction of methods from the qualitative social sciences.

The Handbook did not elaborate further on this point, so it remains unclear precisely what kind of social science methods it referred to. What is clear, is that it employed this concept to describe a set of considerations that one needed to make in order to collect information that would function as valuable data. For this reason, choosing a representative group of interviewees was necessary, but not sufficient; one should also reflect on what questions to ask, how the questions would be perceived, what answers one could expect, and how to use these answers:

If one employs questionnaires or interviews to collect information, one should be assured that the questions are perceived in the same way by all who are asked (the reliability problem). This is important if one wants to compare answers given by different parts of the target groups or answers given at different points in time. It is also important that the questions are shaped in such a way that one gets answers to exactly that which one wants to know something about (the validity problem). (...) Most who ask questions often finds out that it is far easier to ask than to interpret the answers one gets. One should therefore in advance have thought through how those answers one expects to receive may be used and what they give information about.²¹⁷

In this way, the Handbook argued that *asking questions* was a task which in itself required both caution, skills, and experience. Even before asking anyone anything, one should have considered how they should formulate the questions, whom they should ask, and how they could use the answers. Collecting data were not enough – the data could be both useful and useless, depending on *how* they had been collected. Data had to be *made valuable* if they were to enable evaluability.

Why was it important for aid staff to be familiar with methodological considerations for doing interviews? In the assessment matrix, defining potential data sources and methods

²¹⁶ Norad 1981 *Handbook*, p. 16. Norwegian quote: “(...) og som velges ut ved hjelp av samfunnsvitenskapelig metode.”

²¹⁷ Norad 1981 *Handbook*, p. 16. Full Norwegian quote: «Når en vil samle informasjon fra personer må en avgjøre hvem man skal samle inn data fra. Ressurspersoner i lokalsamfunnet som møter opp ved delegasjonsbesøk gir ikke nødvendigvis uttrykk for meninger som er representative for ei gitt målgruppe. Informasjon fra personer kan komme fra følgende grupper: a) Alle personene i målgruppa / b) Et utvalg som antas å være representativt for målgruppa (og som velges ut ved hjelp av samfunnsvitenskapelig metode.) / c) Alle individer innen en del av målgruppa som f.eks. kvinner, de gamle, jordløse landbruksarbeidere o.l. d) Et utvalg som antas å være representativt for ei bestemt undergruppe av c). / Handelsfolk, lokale myndigheter, lærere, antropologer eller andre som antas ha god kjennskap til målgruppa. / e) Prosjektpersonell eller bistandspersonell som har hatt god kontakt med målgruppa. / Hvis en benytter spørreskjema eller intervju for å skaffe informasjon, bør en forsikre seg om at spørsmålene oppfattes likt av alle som spørres (reliabilitetsproblemet). Dette er viktig dersom en vil sammenlikne svar avgitt fra ulike deler av målgruppa eller svar avgitt på ulike tidspunkter. Det er også viktig at spørsmålene formes slik at en får svar på nettopp det en ønsker å vite noe om (validitetsproblemet). Dersom en ønsker å vite noe om målgruppas helsetilstand er det ikke tilstrekkelig å skaffe data om de helsetjenester som er tilgjengelig for målgruppa. Mer valide data om helsesituasjonen er data om levealder, spedbarnsdødelighet, barseldødelighet, sykdomsbildet o.l. De fleste som stiller spørsmål finner ofte ut at det er langt lettere å spørre enn å tolke svarene en får. Derfor bør en på forhånd ha tenkt ut hvordan de svar en forventer å få kan brukes og hva de gir informasjon om.»

for retrieving these was granted one half of the fields; the other half was designated for a summary of the goal pyramid and important preconsiderations, both of which were to be articulated during preparation of the pyramid. Articulating potential data sources and collection methods was thus the core function of the assessment matrix. Although aid staff were not expected to necessarily collect the data themselves, they needed to understand how data collection could best be done in order to identify possible data sources. In this way, understanding the work of evaluators was key if the aid staff was to enable evaluability. They needed to understand what constituted valuable data and systematic methods if they were to provide evaluators with the best possible foundation for evaluation. They needed to understand that the value of data was relative to the way they were collected – in other words, the value was relative to the work of *collecting*, in effect, the work of the *collector*. The work of filling in all the fields in the assessment matrix was thus directly linked to the ability to produce valuable data and by extension a valuable evaluation.

Collecting data, however systematic, was still not enough if one wanted to make visible the highest level of the goal pyramid, i.e. the development goal. For that reason, the Handbook introduced the concept of *indicators for goal attainment*:

At the lowest steps of the goal pyramid it is as a rule not difficult to find exact data which illuminates that the input elements have been mobilized, activities are happening satisfactorily or that the results have been achieved. For the highest steps of the goal pyramid, it may however be difficult or even impossible to find data or informations which measures directly that which one wants to illuminate. Evaluation in regard to these levels (partial goals, main goal) is often neglected. (...) The indicator is an indirect measurement of change. Because indicators are indirect measurements, they must be interpreted in light of some theory or frame of understanding.²¹⁸

While data “illuminating” the lower levels of the goal pyramid were not expected to be difficult to find, this was getting increasingly more difficult the further up the pyramid one moved. In other words, it was far easier to see the effects at the lower levels of the pyramid, while the higher levels would remain opaque without indicators to illuminate them. The Handbook explained that indicators would make it possible to measure change *indirectly*. But precisely because they were indirect, they also required interpretation. This meant that the degree of goal attainment might be interpreted differently by different actors. For example, the Handbook suggested, one might count an increase in the number of houses in a village with roof tops of corrugated iron. Observers might then disagree on how to interpret such a change, depending on the development model they used as their point of departure:

Such a conclusion may be interpreted positively or negatively depending on what development model one departs from. It might be positive if one sees it as a benefit to draw farmers more

²¹⁸ Norad 1981 *Handbook*, p. 17. In Norwegian: «På målsettingspyramidens laveste trinn er det i regelen ikke vanskelig å finne eksakte data som belyser at innsats-elementene er brakt til veie, aktivitetene foregår tilfredsstillende eller at resultatene er oppnådd. Slike spørsmål bør vanligvis kunne besvares gjennom rapporteringssystemet. For målsettingspyramidens øverste trinn, kan det imidlertid være vanskelig eller umulig å finne data eller informasjoner som måler direkte det man ønsker å belyse. Evaluering i forhold til disse nivåene (delmål, hovedmål) blir ofte neglisjert. (...) Indikatoren er et indirekte mål på endring. Fordi indikatorer er indirekte mål må de fortolkes i lys av en eller annen teori eller forståelsesramme.»

into the market economy (...). It is a bad sign if one chooses to support the «basic needs strategy», i.e. that the farmers themselves first should be able to cover their needs from the existing resources.²¹⁹

With this move, the Handbook made the conclusions of aid assessments contingent upon development policy and theory. Recall the quote above, where the Handbook stated that: “Because indicators are indirect measurements, they must be interpreted in light of some theory or frame of understanding.” In this way, even with a well-prepared assessment matrix, one might not be able to conclude unanimously on what the effects of an aid project indeed had been. If different actors did not share a position on what development theory to apply, they would interpret the data and indicators differently, and thus conclude differently about what they were seeing. The data and indicators might help illuminate the connections and thereby make them visible, but the work of interpreting that which was made visible still remained. Here, another dimension of reflexivity was introduced: The assessment matrix forced aid staff to articulate their theories of development and put these theoretical assumptions into writing.

Articulating one’s theory of development meant to make explicit how one envisioned *change* to come about in a particular project site, and furthermore how this change would materialize. What was change, and how might it be made visible? The Handbook cautioned against quantitative indicators and argued that qualitative indicators might be more useful to make visible change over time:

It is not always necessary to try to gain exact numbers. A meticulous empirical investigation may not be undertaken at all times, and is neither always necessary. Not all aspects of social reality may be quantified. On such occasions one may make use of ‘qualitative’ indicators. Often yes/no-categories may be used with benefit. On other occasions one may employ categories such as ‘much less than before’, ‘less than before’, ‘almost like before’, ‘more than before’, ‘much more than before’. Those indicators which emerge by means of such methods may be just as ‘clarifying’ as exact numbers. In many investigations, the decimals that cost the most are those that say the least.²²⁰

After repeatedly calling for increased precision and clarity, the Handbook here discussed the limits of precision and clarity: Increasing numerical precision might not necessarily bring more clarification. On the contrary, qualitative precision, such as articulation of experienced temporal change (as in the quote above), might make change more visible than would numbers. This point was also related to development theory, as numbers might function as

²¹⁹ Norad 1981 *Handbook*, p. 18. In Norwegian: «En slik slutning kan tolkes positivt eller negativt alt etter thvilken utviklingsmodell man går ut fra. Det er kanskje positivt dersom man ser det som et gode å trekke bøndene mer inn i markedsøkonomien (...). Det er et dårlig tegn såframnt man velger å satse på ‘grunnbehovsstrategien’, dvs. at bøndene selv først skal bli i stand til å dekke sine behov utfra foreliggende ressurser.»

²²⁰ Norad 1981 *Handbook*, p. 18. Norwegian quote: «En indikator kan ha basis i mange typer data. Det er ikke alltid hensiktsmessig å prøve å oppnå eksakte tall. En nitidig (sic.) empirisk undersøkelse kan ikke alltid gjennomføres og er heller ikke alltid påkrevet. Ikke alle forhold i den sosiale virkelighet lar seg kvantifisere. I slike tilfelle kan en gjøre bruk av ‘kvalitative’ indikatorer. Ofte kan ja/nei-kategorier benyttes med fordel. I andre tilfelle kan en benytte kategorier som ‘mye mindre enn før’, ‘mindre enn før’, ‘omtrent som før’, ‘mer enn før’, ‘mye mer enn før’. De indikatorene som framkommer ved hjelp av slike metoder kan være vel så ‘klargjørende’ som eksakte tall. Ved mange undersøkelser er det desimalene som koster mest, men som sier minst.»

indicators, but they would not in and of themselves make visible the desired temporal change unless seen through a theoretical lens.

Instead of seeking precise numbers, the Handbook recommended a hybrid where one translated the experience of temporal change into degrees along a spectrum (consisting of the categories “much less than before”, “less than before”, “almost like before”, “more than before”, “much more than before”). This categorization enabled turning multiple experiences of temporal change into a comparison between “before” and “now”. These categories helped staff measure change over time by establishing a past onto which the present situation might be projected. This projection would then make change visible. Again, the Handbook emphasized the importance of integrating planning, monitoring, and evaluation; if the retrospective projection was to be possible, aid staff had to establish a present before the project started. Only then would future comparison be possible. Aid staff therefore both had to be forwardlooking by establishing a present and by articulating expected temporal change, and also to enable retrospection by future visiting evaluators.

In this way, the assessment matrix was a tool for making temporal connections. By moving back and forth in the chain of documents constituting a project, one would also be able to move back and forth *in time*. While planning, staff would establish a present and chart the way to the expected future; while monitoring, staff routinely fixed points in the unfolding present of the project. Gradually, as time passed, the initial present of the project became its past while the envisioned distant future became its near future and ultimately its present. It may seem an obvious point that time would pass in this way. My argument here is that the Handbook envisioned an aid system in which the passing of time would be possible to rewind by means of documents, in the sense that one would be able to see how change had occurred. The documents would produce a trace through time; in a word, *traceability*. This is why the Handbook kept insisting on the importance of employing specific inscription devices during planning and of accumulating monitoring documents: without these, the project would not be traceable, the past would be lost, and evaluators would have to start by reconstructing it. If the initial project plans was all that was available to the evaluators, they would only have access to the past future of the project (the project idea) and not the past present (the project’s materialization). Continually fixing the present to produce a past was thus a key part of how aid was to be made an evaluable object. But currently, the Handbook noted, such detailed project documentation hardly existed in the Norwegian aid system.²²¹ Traceability was but an idea.

Clearly, doing aid was a temporal endeavor: an aid project was expected to go through successive stages along a temporal trajectory, a timeline. The Handbook subscribed to this forward-oriented, progressive notion of a project by asserting the linear process of project planning, implementation, and evaluation. The insistence on seeing these three components in combination from the outset did not alter this linear conception. On the contrary, I will argue

²²¹ Norad 1981 *Handbook*, p. 26. Norwegian quote: “I praksis er det sjelden at en målsettingspyramide for et prosjekt klart framgår av forarbeidene.”

that the Handbook reinforced and expanded this successive notion of aid by specifying a strict temporal regime for the production of the successive project documents. These documents were supposed to build upon each other in a specific linear sequence. Hence, if the different documents were not written in the proscribed sequence, the successive stages would not be linked as strongly as envisioned. This would in turn weaken the strength of the claims aid staff and evaluators would be able to make about the present situation. Their ability to make visible a specific change would thus be reduced.

The linearity of project planning and implementation was further reinforced by the introduction of *the one development goal* towards which all project activities and components should be oriented. Following the metaphor of the goal pyramid, everything that happened within a project should lead upwards toward the one main goal. The arrows pointed in this one direction only. Indeed, the Handbook did open up for the possibility of changing the goal during implementation if an evaluation team found this to be recommendable. But considering the strong impetus towards articulating the relations between the one goal and all the other project elements (in the goal pyramid) and then articulating how these relations could be made visible (in the assessment matrix), changing the goal was no simple task. All writing work should contribute to articulating, realizing, and making visible the one goal. The inscription devices did not have room for articulating changes that were not related to the one goal, or to activities leading towards other goals. Traces leading elsewhere would not be pursued.

The circulating reference of aid evaluability

At this point, it is useful to expand the analytical toolkit in order to fully understand the ramifications of the Handbook's vision. In the sections above, I have employed the concept of *inscription devices* in order to describe the two new planning tools introduced by the Handbook (the goal pyramid and the assessment matrix). I have shown how these tools enabled a new way of articulating an aid project, the project site, and the project staff, and furthermore a new way of ordering these three in relation to each other. As discussed above, this concept was coined within science studies to describe the tools used by scientists to turn "matter into documents". To that end, the employment of inscription devices entails a translation process. Elsewhere, Latour has argued that such translation processes are made up by multiple small translations connecting the field in which data were collected to the laboratory where they were analyzed. These multiple translations all build upon each other, to the extent that they in combination make up a *chain of translations*. The strength of this chain determines the strength of the scientific analysis.²²²

By analyzing science in this way, one key feature of scientific work emerges: The dual process of reduction and amplification. First, *reduction* describes the process of moving the object of inquiry from its environment into the confined space of the laboratory, thereby transforming it to something the researcher may investigate in detail. Then, *amplification*

²²² Latour 1999.

describes the transformation of the findings of this investigation into scientific facts that may be moved out of the laboratory and back into the world to convince others about its validity.²²³ These twin concepts help illuminate how scientific practice builds upon isolating an object from its surroundings to remove all other features and move it into the laboratory for close inspection through scientific instruments and methods. Inscription devices are crucial tools in the process of transforming the object from specimen to data and onwards to evidence supporting a scientific argument. This argument might then leave the laboratory and move out into the world. These steps all involve multiple small translations, which means that doing science amounts to building a solid chain of translations from the field via the lab to the scientific conclusion.

The Handbook's two inscription devices were critical in enabling this process of reduction and amplification: First, staff would translate the project idea into goal pyramid. This amounted to a reduction – not in the sense of being reductionist (in the common-sensical understanding of the term), but in the sense of being condensed to the extent that the project idea was transformed into an object that might be investigated. By employing this particular inscription device, aid staff were able to see the project in a particular way – in the shape of a pyramid, drawn on a single sheet of paper. In this way, the process of reduction made a set of unclear ideas, assumptions, and preconditions visible, resulting in the project becoming one singular object, with a clear structure and a progressive direction. The project pyramid would function as a the basis upon which all future work would be done, including evaluation work. More specifically, the goal pyramid would be the key referent for the assessment matrix, which I have analyzed as a second inscription device.

If the goal pyramid enabled reduction, the assessment matrix enabled amplification: In it, the project was first further reduced from a pyramid to one column, before it was then expanded into a full table. This made it possible to link planning work and evaluation work by explicitly stating how one would be able to see that the visions of the goal pyramid was materializing. The matrix amplified one specific version of the project (the singular column linking activities and goals) by bringing it onwards as the key representation of the project. The assessment matrix was envisioned to travel with the project through all the further stages. It would be the first document evaluation staff would ask for and lay the foundation for their ability to evaluate the project.

In this way, evaluability depended upon a solid chain of translations which documented every step from project idea and onwards. This is why making aid an evaluable object was so dependent on the routine work of aid staff throughout the duration of the project. Having all the components of systematic aid assessment in place would make it possible for evaluators to retrace every step of the project. This ability to retrace is a key feature of science, argues Latour: For scientists' claims about their object to be found valid and trustworthy, they

²²³ Latour 1999.

must also take care to maintain what Latour describes as *circulating reference*.²²⁴ This means that other scientists should be able to retrace the research process backwards from the scientific text through the lab to the field – that is, to rewind the chain of translations. The concept of circulating reference thus describes the process of constantly moving back and forth between *the object described* and *the description of the object*, between the reference and what it refers to. For this circular move to be possible, the translation chain must be complete; all minor steps between field and text must be documented. If the chain is broken, the circulating reference is expended and the validity of the scientists' claims is reduced. For this reason, convincingly establishing new facts relies on the circulating reference always being intact.

The concept of the circular reference is useful to better understand why the Handbook argued so strongly for the new approach of systematic aid assessment, which included both employing the two inscription devices when starting a new project; enhanced documentation procedures throughout the duration of the project; and comprehensive evaluation during or at the end of a project period. It was the combination of these three components – appraisals, monitoring, and evaluations – which in combination would make aid an evaluable object. The evaluability of aid was directly contingent upon the building of a strong circular reference, which would enable evaluators to move back in time by means of the collected documents. For this reason, aid staff had to engage in transforming a project idea into an object enabling circulating reference. In order to make the effects of aid visible to others outside the project, aid staff had to produce traceability from the very start.

The Handbook in this way sought to make aid staff *see* something else and something more than their sectoral expertise or field experience made them see. They should not trust their own vision, assumptions, and interpretations, nor any conclusions handed them by other actors. Rather, they should translate their own impressions and available information into sources of data in need of critical analysis. They should consider their own effects upon the making and doing of the project and the many potentially unpredictable factors. The continuous writing of documents, which the Handbook called on them to do, equaled the meticulous inscription devices employed by scientists. There were no other ways to produce circulating reference through which the reality of a phenomenon could be established. The documents were indispensable, as were the data and methods by which they were produced.

To summarize this section, I will again highlight the Handbook's persistent insistence on the importance of articulating project goals, activities, site-specific preconditions, and the staff's own assumptions about the relations between these goals, activities, and preconditions. To do this specific articulation, the Handbook introduced two tools, which I have analyzed as inscription devices: the goal pyramid and the assessment matrix. These should preferably be employed at the earliest possible instance, when the project was yet but an idea. These specific devices would thus be fundamental in the shaping of the project itself. The preferred

²²⁴ Latour 1999. Latour uses the concept of *circulating reference* to oppose the binary of language/nature, or words/world and instead point to how they are mutually constitutive.

shape of all projects was that of a pyramid, in which all components together enabled the fulfillment of one goal, and that one goal only. The inscription devices would thus ensure that all projects were to be articulated in the same way. Furthermore, they would enable evaluation, in that they articulated the projects in a way that made them traceable. This traceability is what I have suggested to understand as circulating reference. Hence, I will argue that by enabling circulating reference aid would become an evaluable object (according to the Handbook, that is). When an aid project was an evaluable object, it would be possible to evaluate it. But how did the Handbook envision evaluation be done? This will be the concern of the next section.

Articulating effects: Designing optics for seeing aid

Let us return to the image on the Handbook's front cover: The over-sized human hand grasping the Norad logo, holding it still to enable close inspection. The Handbook's title was "Handbook of Evaluation Questions", clearly pointing the reader in the direction of evaluation as the main topic of the document. But as I have shown above, the Handbook's concern was that aid staff throughout Norad would have to change the way they were working if aid was to be made evaluable in the first place. In its opening chapter, it had introduced the so-called "Systematic Aid Assessment", which included three components, all involving writing: more detailed appraisals during project planning, continuous monitoring during project implementation, and evaluation during or at the end of a project.

Metaphors of seeing

If evaluation was illustrated by the metaphor of seeing aid, then the writing work during planning and monitoring was what made the object visible in the first place. Without this work, and more specifically the work of the two inscription devices (the goal pyramid and the assessment matrix) discussed in the section above, the effects of aid would remain difficult to see. Such opacity would impede evaluation; enabling clarity and visibility by means of these tools was therefore a core concern in the Handbook. It repeatedly employed metaphors of seeing. As shown above, the Handbook several times referred to aid staff's ability or inability to see clearly, as a means of explaining the importance of the inscription devices. This was also the case for evaluation. Before turning to the Handbook's specific suggestions for how to organize and do evaluations, I will pause to investigate more closely the ways in which the Handbook employed different metaphors of seeing.

Firstly, the Handbook conceived of evaluation as a tool for *illumination*. But what was it supposed to illuminate, and how? In discussing this, the Handbook emphasized the importance of attending also to the effects of a project that one had not initially anticipated, while at the same time concentrating on "direct consequences":

Changes in a society will usually also have other consequences than those one have planned. An evaluation must therefore aim at illuminating such effects of the intervention. During evaluation one should strive to illuminate both positive and negative, unpredicted and presupposed consequences. Considering that all things that happen in a local community are 'tied together' there will often not be any limit to the amount of questions and connections an

evaluation may address in relation to a project. It is therefore necessary in most evaluations to concentrate the attention on the intervention itself and its direct consequences.²²⁵

This position was indeed ambiguous: In the first part of the quote, the Handbook called for an expansive definition of “effects”, which included illuminating “both positive and negative, unpredicted and presupposed consequences”. (The Handbook seemed to use the terms “consequence” and “effects” interchangeably.) This would entail going beyond the project as such to trace all potential “connections” in a local community. But at the same time, the Handbook acknowledged the methodological problem of disentangling the project from the project site, because “all things that happen” were “tied together”. For this reason, it concluded with recommending that evaluations should concentrate on illuminating the “intervention itself and its direct consequences”. Although asserting that there by definition would always be “other consequences” than those expected in a plan, attention should nevertheless be focused on the “direct consequences”.

In the quote above, the metaphor of seeing concerned the ability of evaluation to make visible connections between the project and its surroundings which could be interpreted as consequences and effects of the project in question. But the evaluators’ ability to illuminate was in itself contingent on the evaluators’ ability to observe key features in a society which might impact upon the project. To explain this point, the Handbook used the metaphor of seeing in the reverse, by using the term *blindness* – more specifically, what it called “structural blindness”, which referred to an inability to see social structures:

One point of concern in relation to many of those methods which are relevant for evaluation is so-called «structural blindness». Interviews or observation will often not give sufficient information about societal development barriers. There may e.g. be issues of the population’s debt to traders, low salaries and dangerous working conditions, differences in ownership of land, forests, water, and grazing fields. Many such factors may not be immediately observed, but are most important for being able to explain the target group’s situation. The evaluation team must therefore have a special concern for economic, cultural, and social affairs that might carry importance for the execution of the project.²²⁶

The concern here was that at any site into which aid was introduced, there would be a number of existing site-specific social structures that would by necessity affect the aid project – but these could most likely not be “immediately observed” by a visiting evaluation team. Hence,

²²⁵ Norad 1981 *Handbook*, p. 10. Norwegian quote: «Endringer i et samfunn vil vanligvis også ha andre konsekvenser enn dem en har planlagt. En evaluering må ta sikte på å belyse slike virkninger av tiltaket. Under evalueringen må en derfor ikke utelukkende holde seg til de problemstillinger som avledes direkte av målsetningspyramiden. Under evaluering bør en bestrebe seg på å belyse både positive og negative, uforutsatte og forutsatte konsekvenser. På grunn av at alle ting som skjer i et lokalsamfunn ‘henger i hop’ vil det ofte ikke være noen grense for det antall spørsmål og sammenhenger en evaluering kan ta opp i tilknytning til et prosjekt. Det er derfor nødvendig i de fleste evalueringer å konsentrere oppmerksomheten om selve tiltaket og dets direkte konsekvenser.»

²²⁶ Norad 1981 *Handbook*, p. 15. Norwegian quote: «Et faremoment i forbindelse med mange av de metoder som er relevante for evaluering er såkalt ‘strukturblindhet’. Intervjuer eller observasjon vil ofte ikke gi tilstrekkelig informasjon om samfunnsmessige utviklingshindre. Det kan f.eks. dreie seg om befolkningens gjeld til handelsfolk, lave arbeidslønninger og dårlige arbeidsvilkår, forskjeller i eierforhold til jord, skog, vann og beitemarker. Mange slike faktorer kan ikke umiddelbart observeres, men er svært viktige for å kunne forklare målgruppas situasjon. Evalueringsteamet må derfor ta spesielt hensyn til økonomiske, kulturelle og sosial forhold som kan ha betydning for prosjektets gjennomføring.»

the team would unwittingly suffer from structural blindness: They would be unable to see such structures, and what was worse, they would not be aware of this themselves. Following the metaphor of blindness, the evaluation team would not be aware that they had a serious disability, and they would therefore act upon their observations without understanding that these were potentially severely skewed.

To remedy their blindness, evaluation teams needed to “have a special concern” for social structures that might influence the aid project. This argument echoes the Handbook’s insistence (cf. the section on goal pyramid above) on the importance of aid staff articulating their implicit assumptions about what effects an aid project were expected to have, and of being aware of the potential misinterpretations stemming from their class, culture, and gender background. In both instances, the Handbook cautioned that one should not trust one’s own judgement when travelling to new sites, but be reflexive about one’s own position and expectations. In the quote above, this point is expanded into *not trusting one’s own sight* when arriving at a new site, as one might suffer from structural blindness.

The metaphor of blindness on the part of visiting evaluators also had another dimension, which involved the potentially conflicting views, literally, of an aid donor and an aid recipient. This concern went beyond the particular ability to see social structures in a project site; the Handbook argued for the importance of seeing Norwegian aid “with the recipients’ eyes”:

It is important that we see our own contribution with the recipients’ eyes and with an understanding that aid should not become a burden. It is worrying if donor needs lead to the establishment of special administrative units within the recipients’ administration in order to satisfy the donor country’s various evaluation needs.²²⁷

Indeed, The Handbook argued that it was the recipients who first and foremost needed the evaluations, and that aid organizations’ evaluation work should be made part of *aid itself*:

It is the recipient country’s authorities who are principally responsible for the country’s development. It is therefore the recipient countries who first and foremost need information and information routines that may enable them to follow and understand the society’s development and assess it against their own development strategy. The aid organizations’ evaluation program must therefore be subordinated to a recipient-oriented aim and become a means to support the recipients’ administration. It must therefore become a part of aid itself and be built into the administrative routines of the recipient country.²²⁸

The Handbook here used the metaphor of seeing to juxtapose the potentially different concerns of the donor and the recipient. Indeed, seeing aid might be done in different ways

²²⁷ Norad 1981 *Handbook*, p. 22. Norwegian quote: ”Det er viktig at vi ser vår egen innsats med mottakernes øyne og med forståelse for at bistand ikke må virke belastende. Det er betenkelig hvis giverbehov fører til at spesielle administrative enheter må opprettes innenfor mottakerforvaltningen for å kunne tilfredsstille giverlandenes varierte evalueringsbehov.”

²²⁸ Norad 1981 *Handbook*, p. 22. Norwegian quote: «Det er mottakerlandets myndigheter som i første rekke er ansvarlig for landets utvikling. Det er derfor mottakerlandene som først og fremst trenger informasjon og informasjonsrutiner som kan gjøre det mulig for dem å følge og å forstå samfunnsutviklingen og vurdere den opp mot egen utviklingsstrategi. Bistandsorganisasjonenes evalueringsopplegg må derfor underordnes et mottakerorientert siktemål og bli et middel som støtter opp om mottakernes administrasjon. Det må derfor bli en del av selve bistanden og bygges inn i forvaltningensrutinene i mottakerlandet.”

which in turn had different consequences, depending upon *who was doing the seeing* and who was to act upon that which had been seen – the donor or the recipient. The Handbook asserted that the recipient country was responsible for the development process at large; aid projects and evaluations should therefore be subordinated to the recipients' overall concerns:

One should be careful with posing demands to the developing countries which one would not pose to the Norwegian administration. Even though Norwegian public service is thoroughly scrutinized in different ways, it is rarely evaluated in the same way as aid projects in the developing countries. Our evaluation expertise is therefore limited. (...) Considering the large number of donor countries and donor organizations that exist in a given developing country (as an example one may mention that Kenya receives aid from 41 governments and a large number of private organizations), such problems are becoming increasingly important.²²⁹

Here, the Handbook situated its own call for evaluations within the aid field at large: Norad was rarely the only donor present. Hence, if the evaluation work demanded by one donor alone could be a burden, the total amount of evaluations by all donors present in one country would be an even larger burden. Indeed, "such problems are becoming increasingly important". In this way, the Handbook made clear a potential opposition between what donors and recipients needed to see: Whereas all aid donors would want to see the effects of *their* aid projects, the recipient government – "who principally are responsible for the country's development" – would want to see all aid in combination with its domestic priorities.

This argument is puzzling: After having argued strongly for implementing systematic aid assessment, including far more detailed planning, monitoring, and evaluation work, as a means to making aid an evaluable object, the Handbook here brought arguments cautioning about the accumulated burden of evaluation work. Evaluation might take resources away from more important priorities within the recipient government. In this way, evaluation work, no matter how important for aid itself, might in fact impede the recipients' ability to be a functioning state apparatus. The Handbook had introduced systematic aid assessment as a necessary, although "labor-demanding task" for Norad staff – here it admitted that evaluation work might also be a burden for the recipient governments they were supposed to assist.

This problem was further enhanced by the point made in the first part of the quote above: That the demands posed to recipient countries were rarely posed in the same degree to the domestic Norwegian public administration. Although "thoroughly scrutinized", it was "rarely evaluated in the same way as aid projects in developing countries". Following the metaphor of seeing, there already existed tools and systems for seeing the Norwegian public administration, but these were not as comprehensive as what the Handbook envisioned for aid.

²²⁹ Norad 1981 *Handbook*, p. 22. Full Norwegian quote: "En må være varsom med å stille krav til u-landene som en ikke ville fremme overfor norsk administrasjon. Selv om norsk offentlig virksomhet granskes nøye på ulike måter, blir den sjelden evaluert på samme måte som bistandsprosjekter i u-landene. Vår evalueringseksperitise er derfor begrenset. Det er viktig at vi ser vår egen innsats med mottakernes øyne og har forståelse for at bistand ikke må virke belastende. Det er betenkelig hvis giverbehov fører til at spesielle administrative enheter må opprettes innenfor mottakerforvaltningen for å tilfredsstille giverlandenes varierte evalueringsbehov. Tatt i betraktning det store antall giverland og giverorganisasjoner som finnes i det enkelte u-land (som eksempel kan nevnes at Kenya mottar bistand fra 41 regjeringer og et stort antall private organisasjoner) blir slike problemer stadig viktigere.»

Aid evaluation was not the same thing as the “thorough scrutiny” of domestic state affairs. Hence, the Handbook stated that: “Our evaluation expertise is therefore limited.” Evaluation work was not an already established practice in Norway, it was something new and something more than what was already there.

What was the Handbook’s definition of “evaluation expertise”? Although designating a chapter to the topic “Doing evaluations”, precisely how evaluations were to be done and what this work involved in practice was not described in much detail. The chapter rather concentrated on how to *organize* evaluations within Norad in a way that would integrate the many offices and concerns distributed across Norad’s headquarters and field offices. Further, it outlined the preferred format of evaluation documents, that is, the *genre* of evaluation, which would make the evaluations as useful as possible. In combination, what the Handbook outlined was a comprehensive protocol, a set of routines, for how evaluations were to be done. In the following section, I will investigate the four main parts of this set of routines: Preparing an annual evaluation program, preparing specific evaluations, writing the evaluation document, and circulating the evaluation findings. These four steps in combination made up the Handbook’s proposed new evaluation system.

The annual evaluation program: Articulation and circulation of drafts and re-drafts

“Evaluation is labor intensive and may only be undertaken for relatively few projects a year,” the Handbook asserted in the opening paragraph of the chapter “Doing Evaluations”. Hence, from the very outset of discussing how to operationalize evaluation, its premise was that only a selection of the total portfolio could be evaluated annually. Hence, although striving to make Norwegian aid an evaluable object, the Handbook was not aiming at evaluating all Norwegian aid projects at once. The ambition of *seeing aid* was here reformulated into *seeing relatively few projects a year*.

Recall the hand on the Handbook cover: Rather than grasping aid at large, was the object that in practice was being pinched a limited collection of individual aid projects? Following this metaphor, what could be illuminated through evaluation was then a set of sharply delineated spots on a map where most of the terrain remained uncharted. The Handbook did not elaborate on this dimension, but proceeded to outline how these “relatively few projects” should best be chosen. It suggested the following general selection criteria:

It may be important to evaluate projects which are costly, comprehensive, labor intensive, or which are running over an extended period of time. The same holds for projects in new technical areas or projects containing new forms of aid.²³⁰

These criteria would help prioritize what projects to evaluate according to scale and novelty: In short, if a project was particularly wide-ranging (whether financially, temporally, work-wise) or constituted something new, it should be considered a potential object of evaluation.

²³⁰ Norad 1981 *Handbook*, p. 23. Norwegian quote: «Evaluering er arbeidskrevende og kan bare utføres for relativt få prosjekter hvert år. Det kan være viktig å evaluere prosjekter som er kostbare, omfattende, arbeidskrevende eller som pågår over lang tid. Det samme gjelder prosjekter på nye fagområder eller prosjekter som inneholder nye bistandsformer.»

Furthermore, the Handbook asserted that there was “every reason” to evaluate projects that were “not going as planned” – yet, seemingly well-functioning projects might also be important to evaluate:

There is every reason to evaluate projects which are not going as planned. In countries and in areas where one knows that the administrative connections are working satisfactorily, the need for evaluation will normally be less. One should nevertheless be careful with emphasizing too much that the contact to NORAD is working well. The most important question is that of which consequences the aid has for the target groups, the poorest, the women, etc. It is therefore also important to evaluate projects which NORAD and the aid staff are feeling comfortable with.²³¹

Here, the Handbook in effect argued that both well-functioning and malfunctioning projects should be considered relevant evaluation objects. While first asserting that an important criteria for evaluation was “not going as planned”, the paragraph ended in asserting that “feeling comfortable with” was indeed also an important criteria. The Handbook seems to suggest that the perceptions of Norad’s project staff were not necessarily to be trusted; a point which it did indeed repeatedly return to (see section above on the metaphors of seeing and blindness). An evaluation, the Handbook seemed to expect, could illuminate what was not visible to the Norad staff themselves: A seemingly well-functioning project might in fact not have the intended consequences for the target group which it was designed to help.

Defining these general evaluation criteria was but a first step in determining what to evaluate. The Handbook outlined a comprehensive procedure for deciding which specific projects that should be evaluated. The selection process was organized as an annual cycle involving what I have distinguished as ten subsequent tasks, some with elaborate sub-steps or parallel actions at multiple sites (table 2.1). The Handbook sought to include every relevant office within and beyond Norad in making the decision on what to evaluate and how. Suggestions, comments, and drafts circulated with the Evaluation Office as the center – first among all the Norad offices, including the offices located in aid receiving countries, the so-called Norad resident representatives (table 2.1, task 1). All input was collected and integrated by the Evaluation Office (table 2.1, task 2). This wide circulation ensured inclusion and participation by Norad at large, but the Evaluation Office would nevertheless be able to frame the discussions by defining their premise and assessing the incoming suggestions in relation to each other.

There were five specific questions which the Handbook wanted Norad staff to discuss with the Evaluation Office (table 2.1, task 3): “Why does one want to evaluate the project? What is to be evaluated and how? Who should receive the information/recommendations of the evaluation report? When should the evaluation be finished? What will the evaluation cost?”

²³¹ Norad 1981 *Handbook*, p. 23. Norwegian quote: «Det er all grunn til å evaluere prosjekter som ikke går som planlagt. I land og på områder hvor en vet at de administrative forbindelsene fungerer tilfredsstillende, vil behovet for evaluering vanligvis være mindre. En skal likevel være forsiktig med å legge for stor vekt på at kontakten til NORAD fungerer bra. Det viktigste er spørsmålet om hvilke konsekvenser bistanden har for de egentlige målgruppene, de fattigste, kvinnene, osv. Derfor er det også viktig å evaluere prosjekter som NORAD og bistandspersonellet føler seg trygge på.»

#	Task
1	The Evaluation Office invites all offices to suggest objects of evaluation based upon the general evaluation criteria.
2	Technical departments and resident representatives suggests objects of evaluation.
3	Annual meetings between the Evaluation Office and all technical departments and resident representatives to discuss the present and next years' evaluations based on the following questions:
a	Why does one want to evaluate the project?
b	What is to be evaluated and how?
c	Who should receive the information/recommendations of the evaluation report?
d	When should the evaluation be finished?
e	What will the evaluation cost?
4	The Evaluation Office assesses all incoming suggestions in combination.
5	The Evaluation Office prepares a draft evaluation program outlining the following aspects:
a	activities one wants to evaluate
b	costs for each evaluation
c	goal for each evaluation
d	setup of each evaluation
e	argument/legitimation for each evaluation
f	other comments
6	Norad's assistant director preliminary approves the draft evaluation program.
7	Norad's draft evaluation program is included as discussion topic in all country program negotiations, including timing of field visits and comments on draft reports.
8	The recipient countries assesses the evaluation program and adds possible suggestions
9	The Evaluation Office collects all input from country negotiations and prepares a final evaluation program.
10	Norad's assistant director approves Norad's final evaluation program for the coming year.

The next step was then for the Evaluation Office to assess all the different suggestions in combination and select a few projects for evaluation (table 2.1, task 4). The Evaluation Office then started transforming these projects into objects of evaluation, by defining their scope, costs, goal, setup, and legitimation (table 2.1, task 5).

This process of articulation, collection, and selection of evaluation objects was not further described in the Handbook. But I will nevertheless suggest to think of this as a process for making evaluation doable: Just as preparing an aid project needed detailed planning, according to the Handbook, so did evaluations. Embedding the evaluation program firmly in the organization at large, through formalized procedures for preparing an annual evaluation program, was clearly of high priority for the Handbook. Each evaluation in this way became a project of its own: A specific activity with a specific goal, rationale, design and budget. This started the process of turning aid projects into evaluation objects, on which I will expand in the next section below.

The discussions among offices within Norad was but the first step of deliberation in the process of preparing the annual evaluation program. Once the Evaluation Office had concluded on a draft document, it was sent to Norad's top management, where the Assistant Director had to grant his approval (table 2.1, task 6). Having received this affirmation, the draft gained more authority, moving from being the draft of one office to being the draft of

²³² Table based on narrative description in *Handbook of Evaluation Questions*, pp. 23-24.

the whole organization. With this status, it was again made to travel abroad; this time not only to the offices of the Norad's resident representatives, but further into meetings with the governments of the countries receiving Norwegian foreign aid (table 2.1, tasks 7-8).

What the Handbook here envisioned, was to make the draft evaluation program a part of the so-called annual country program negotiations, which Norad engaged in with the many governments receiving Norwegian foreign aid. This annual meeting, which often lasted for two days, alternately in Oslo and the respective recipient's capital, was the most important formal arena for discussing Norwegian aid. Both representatives from the recipient country's government, staff from the Norad headquarters in Oslo, and Norad's resident representatives were present. In these discussions, the whole of Norwegian aid to the country was discussed, among this the progress of the country's development process in general and the Norwegian aid projects specifically; potential changes in the project portfolio; discussion of the Norwegian priorities; and new requests from the recipient government.²³³ In 1981, upon the publication of the Handbook, the tool of the country program negotiation was a well-established routine within Norwegian aid.

By suggesting that the draft evaluation program was integrated into the agenda of the country program negotiations, the Handbook opened the evaluation program up to the considerations of the government representatives of ten other countries.²³⁴ In this way, foreign governments were sought enrolled in the process of making Norwegian aid an evaluable object. Founding the definition of what to evaluate and how in the country program discussions could potentially enable three main concerns of the Handbook: Firstly, to make sure that the recipient governments were part of the evaluation process from the start, so that their concerns were included in the very make-up of the program and the execution of the individual evaluations; secondly, that the evaluation work was not done at the expense of the recipient governments' financial and organizational resources, by enabling efficient planning and preparations of the evaluations; and thirdly, that evaluability was introduced across Norad's work sites and integrated in the existing planning and monitoring routines. The Handbook envisioned this taking very specific forms; it suggested that the meeting discussed when the evaluation was to take place and when to circulate draft evaluation reports for comments.

In this way, the Handbook tried to make the country program negotiations a site for starting to plan specific evaluations. Indeed, the Handbook repeated the need to integrate preparations for evaluations in the overall aid work – that is, to make it a routine part of the project itself:

In addition to making evaluation of aid intervention a formal part of Norad's aid agreements, it is desirable that evaluations to a large extent is included as a part of the project's execution.

²³³ See chapter 3 for a detailed analysis of an annual country program negotiation.

²³⁴ Norway had at this time nine so-called "main cooperation countries" (in Norwegian: hovedsamarbeidsland): Bangladesh, Botswana, India, Kenya, Mozambique, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, and Zambia. Ruud and Kjerland 2003, p. 230.

The evaluation may then to a large degree become a natural cooperation task which both parties are prepared for.²³⁵

Again, the Handbook indicated a concern for evaluations not being made a proper part of project planning, and implicitly assumed that there might be opposition or at least neglect of evaluability work on the part of project staff. The Handbook's solution was to make evaluation a «natural task» of all projects in which both parties – the Norwegian aid staff and the recipient country governments – cooperated. If evaluations were expected and prepared for in advance, then there would be less work for everyone once the evaluation was to be done. Again we see that the Handbook sought to make evaluability integral to aid work at large: On the one hand, it admitted that evaluability would demand more work; on the other hand, it suggested that evaluability could become a part of the project itself. The more integrated, the more accepted evaluability would become, seems to be the Handbook's line of reasoning.

The extension of the evaluation program discussions into the country program negotiations might also have a possible converse effect: That the Evaluation Office lost control of the document because too many actors were getting involved. When travelling abroad as an appendix to the country program negotiations, the evaluation program became but one of many potentially competing concerns and interests. The Evaluation Office depended on the Norad project staff to do the integration in practice. If we read the Handbook as an effort to intervene in the Norwegian aid field, by arguing for changing the way aid was being done in order to make aid an evaluable object, then a key aspect of enabling this depended upon people far away from the Evaluation Office potentially unaware of, indifferent to or even outright opposed to the demands of evaluability. The fate of the draft evaluation program in the country program negotiations was in this sense completely open; by sending it off to multiple new sites, the interests of the recipient countries (which I showed above was important to the Handbook) might be better secured; whether this increased evaluability is not a given.

Regardless of how the evaluation question was discussed in the numerous country program negotiations, the Evaluation Office did maintain control over the draft evaluation program, by being the one actor collecting the input and finalizing the program (table 2.1, task 9). This meant that only the Evaluation Office could see all evaluation concerns horizontally, across offices and sites, and assess the individual suggestions in relation to each other. It was this office that turned the draft program into a Program, capital P. After a comprehensive itinerary, a final version of the draft arrived at the office of the Assistant Director who formally approved of it as Norad's evaluation program for the year to come (table 2.1, task 10).

The evaluation program may be considered a tool necessary for making aid more evaluable: It helped transform a myriad of projects into potential evaluation objects, and to

²³⁵ Norad 1981 *Handbook*, p. 25. In Norwegian: «Foruten at adgang til evaluering av bistandstiltak normalt hjemles i Norad's bistandsavtaler, er det ønskelig at evalueringer i stor utstrekning legges inn som en del av prosjektets gjennomføring. Evalueringen vil dermed i stor grad kunne bli en naturlig samarbeidsoppgave som begge parter er forberedt på.»

embed the process of articulating and selecting evaluation objects within the Norwegian aid system at large. But it was clearly not sufficient alone; the program came into being through an extensive process of articulation, circulation, and rearticulation. In the final version, the formally approved program, Norad at large committed to a specific plan, including the allocation of a budget for evaluation, which would enable the production of a set of evaluation reports. If this work was not done, Norad would be left with an unfulfilled plan. This, we may expect, entailed a certain pressure for doing what had been planned, and gave the Evaluation Office a most specific mandate: to ensure that these evaluations were produced. By means of the extensive circulation process and the specific itinerary of the draft programs, the Evaluation Office founded its approach both in Norad's top management and in every office across the Norwegian aid administration. In this way, it suggested a routine for making the whole organization think and talk about evaluations and integrate this into aid staff's overall work. In this way, the process of preparing the evaluation program had the potential of making the Evaluation Office's specific concern into a concern of Norad at large.

The evaluation working group: Turning an aid project into an evaluation object

After explaining the process of preparing an annual evaluation program, the Handbook turned to explain how individual evaluations should best be undertaken. It strongly emphasized the need for comprehensive preparations of each evaluation – that is, much work needed to be done before an evaluation team could even be appointed. I have distinguished twelve tasks in this process which in combination, I will argue, would potentially transform an aid project into an evaluation object (see table 2.2). With reference to the hand depicted on the Handbook's cover, we may say that the extensive preparation process was what assembled an object that would be possible to grasp, hold still, and investigate in detail. In this section, I will look more closely at how the Handbook envisioned this to happen.

The first step in the process of preparing an evaluation, the Handbook suggested, should be to clarify in more detail what one wanted to achieve with the evaluation (see table 2, task 1). This might entail to “write up in a more detailed way” what the evaluation's goal should be and what aspects one wanted to evaluate (see table 2, task 2). Here, the Handbook suggested to concentrate the investigation on a limited part of an aid project, on certain “aspects” as opposed to a whole. This limitation repeated the move described in the section above (on the preparation of the annual evaluation program), where the vision of making Norwegian aid an evaluable object was rearticulated from grasping *aid at large* to grasping *relatively few projects a year*. Similarly, in the preparations for individual evaluations, the Handbook rearticulated grasping *a project at large* to grasping *certain aspects of the project*. Again, the process of making aid evaluable thus involved seeing less of the whole and more of specific parts. With Latour, we may say that the process of articulating evaluation objects was in itself a process of *reduction*; repeated rounds of selection and limitation were necessary if evaluation work was to be possible.

This reduction, from aid-whole to project-whole to project aspects, was to be undertaken by the Evaluation Office. In this way, this office was in charge of beginning to

Table 2.2: Preparing an evaluation: The work of the working group²³⁶	
#	Task
1	After a project is chosen for evaluation: Necessary to clarify further what one wishes to achieve with the evaluation
2	Might be necessary to write up in a more detailed way the goal of the evaluation and what aspects of a project one especially wants to evaluate.
3	Establish a working group with representatives from Norad offices (including the Evaluation Office) who have been involved in the project under evaluation (possibly also external persons).
4	The working group meets and starts the practical preparations of the evaluation.
5	The working group prepares the collection of data and information by clarifying what is already available of statistics, reports, accounts, and other documents in the archive, and tries to retrieve these.
6	The working group contacts project staff and other people who might have relevant information
7	The working group retrieves research reports and other relevant literature
8	The working group should to the extent possible make an overview of possibilities and limitations to data collection in the project area.
9	Since the goal pyramid is rarely a part of current project documents, the working group should seek to reconstruct the fragments and retrieve what has been said about target groups and assumptions.
10	The working group defines the Terms of Reference for the evaluation.
11	The working group appoints an evaluation team.
12	During the evaluation, the working group maintains contact with the recipient country, oversees the evaluation process, and facilitates the handling of the finished report.

rearticulate the chosen aid project into an evaluation object. At this point, the main concern had become the evaluation as such: to ensure that its goal, focus, and achievements were clarified in writing – or, rather, *through* writing. This begs the question: To what extent would the writing process in and of itself alter the project? The Handbook did not specify what kind of document that was to be produced at this point; clearly, though, the articulation of an evaluation’s key properties would serve as an important foundation for the ensuing process. The evaluation, which was to assess the relation between an aid project’s goal and activities, was thus itself equipped with a goal towards which the ensuing evaluation process should ideally move.

After articulating the evaluation task in somewhat more detail, the Evaluation Office was to establish a so-called working group which was to practically prepare the evaluation team’s work (table 2.2, step 3). The working group should be composed of staff from Norad offices “who had been involved in the project under evaluation”. To that end, the working group was to consist of staff who were already familiar with the specific aid project, either from personal experience or through their offices. The Evaluation Office should also take part in the group. The working group was thus an ad-hoc arrangement in the sense that it was assembled for the sole purpose of enabling one particular evaluation; as opposed to a

²³⁶ Table based on narrative description in *Handbook of Evaluation Questions*, pp. 24-26.

permanent group in charge of preparing all Norad's evaluations. The preparations were thus project-specific and site-specific. The Evaluation Office was the only office envisioned to take part in all working groups, and thus the only potential point of continuity.

In this way, we may consider the working group as a tool to connect the Handbook's general visions of evaluability with the evaluation of concrete aid projects. The working group translated the principles of evaluation into a particular evaluation situation, and enabled it to happen in practice. The working group was the arena in which this concrete connection could be made. This was also reflected in the composition of the group, given that it was supposed to consist of both aid staff already familiar with the project and evaluation staff, who were by definition further removed from the specificity of the project. Although the working group did not include project staff as such (i.e. staff working with running the particular project) it included staff from the Oslo offices through which the project's planning and monitoring documents would have circulated. In this way, it combined the inside and the outside of the project – the participants and the observers. This combination seems to contradict the Handbook's stated concern for evaluations "in principle" being "as neutral as possible" and "not limited by possible personal interests of holding back information".²³⁷ Nevertheless, in the practical preparations, this separation had to be bridged. Without the joint work of the working group, the project would be more difficult to evaluate; thus, it would be less evaluable. In short, the Handbook seemed to expect, joint preparations would enable evaluability. So how precisely was the working group supposed to do these preparations?

As shown in table 2.2 above, the Handbook listed multiple tasks that it envisioned the working group to perform in order to prepare an evaluation: The working group was to clarify what documents was already available in the archive and elsewhere and try to retrieve these documents; contact project staff and other people who might be of assistance; and retrieve research reports and other relevant literature (table 2.2, tasks 5-7). In this way, they would ease the data collection process for the evaluation team. In this way, the working group was asked to mobilize the project archive, project staff, and external institutions in the effort at collecting documents about the project. In addition to clarifying what documents were available and start retrieving these, the Handbook wanted the working group to make an overview of the "possibilities and limitations to data collection in the project area" (table 2.2, task 8). It was thus expected to clarify, identify, collect, and retrieve – in other words, to make visible what data and other resources that already existed and seek to build a collection of these documents. Clearly, the Handbook expected this to be a potentially demanding task, and it therefore wanted someone familiar with the project to do it in advance rather than the evaluation team having to spend time on preparatory tasks.

²³⁷ Norad *Handbook* 1981, p. 23. "In principle an evaluation should be an assessment as neutral as possible which is not limited by possible personal interests of holding back information. Administratively, this is expressed by there being established a special office for evaluation and research in NORAD." Full Norwegian quote: "I prinsippet skal en evaluering være en mest mulig nøytral vurdering som ikke begrenses av eventuelle personlige interesser av å holde opplysninger tilbake. Admistrativt er dette kommet til uttrykk ved at det er opprettet et eget kontor for evaluering og forskning i NORAD."

Reconstructing the project archive and goal pyramid

In this section of the Handbook, the concept of the *archive* was mentioned for the first time: the working group was supposed to “clarify what was available” of relevant documents in “the archive” (table 2.2, task 5). This was the first task mentioned as part of the working group’s preparation for the collection of data and information. In this way, the Handbook asked the working group to look for documents produced during planning and implementation of the project; what it had in previous chapters referred to as appraisals and continuous reporting (see sections above). As I have argued above, a complete chain of project documents was critical for enabling evaluability, in that the project had then been put into writing from the very first moment. An archive containing all these documents would be necessary for an evaluation to be undertaken. But the Handbook did not take for granted that a comprehensive project archive was in place; rather, it asked the working group to search extensively in numerous sites to collect and retrieve relevant information. Although, following the Handbook’s own argument, a detailed project archive would be critical for enabling evaluability, it does not seem to have expected such an ideal archive to exist. A key part of the working group’s preparations, then, was to retrospectively assemble a project archive.

Although the Handbook had repeatedly argued in its previous chapters that planning of aid projects needed to be based on the successive writing of documents and the employment of what I have called inscription devices, the Handbook did not specifically address how the continuous reporting, what it also called monitoring, should ideally happen – neither the writing nor the storing of such documents were discussed. In addition to following the call for more detailed project writing, aid staff would also need to consider how to file the documents in order to make them readily available to potential future evaluators. The Handbook must have presupposed that the documents would be stored together in a physical archive. Indirectly, then, the Handbook must have expected that the building of an archive would be a core part of any project. It was here that the circulating reference might be mobilized. The chain of translation, with project documents building upon each other from planning through implementation to evaluation, was no theoretical matter: on the contrary, it was of a most material character: a pile of documents written by staff at specific sites and points in time. Yet the Handbook did not suggest any specific tools or routines for neither continuous reporting nor building an archive – it only argued for their importance.

Where were the project documents likely to be stored at the point of the Handbook’s publication? Norad’s organization was made up of technical offices in Oslo each responsible for distinct sectors (e.g. industry, fishery, health, education) and field offices located in the main recipient countries. Hence, all projects were both geographically located in a specific site under the auspices of a resident representative and at the same time part of a professional field defined by its societal sector or technical field. In addition came several cross-cutting offices, such as the Office of Plan and Program, the Office of Expert Assignments, and the

Information Office.²³⁸ Where relevant material would be located was not necessarily clear.

Thus, the potentially dispersed project archive was perhaps one reason why the Handbook suggested a cross-office working group to prepare the evaluation. It was an arena where the different involved offices could meet, enabling an overview of both written and unwritten aspects of the project that the Evaluation Office or evaluation team could not itself achieve. For this reason, I will suggest, the Handbook preferred combining offices rather than keeping them separate at this particular stage in the process, despite its concern for neutrality in the evaluation work. Someone's possible interest in withholding documents was seemingly of less of a concern than the inability to assemble the dispersed documents needed to turn the aid project into an evaluation object.

Similarly, the Handbook did not expect aid projects to have finalized goal pyramids at the point of its publication. One of the working group's tasks would therefore be to reconstruct the "existing fragments of the goal pyramid" (see table 2, step 9):

In practice it is rare that a goal pyramid for a project clearly emerges from the preparations. The working group may, if this is useful, put together those fragments of the goal pyramid that do exist and retrieve what is said about target groups and preconditions.²³⁹

As I have shown above, the Handbook conceived of the goal pyramid as indispensable for both planning and evaluation of an aid project. The importance of this tool for producing evaluability had been clearly explained in its preceding chapters: Without establishing a «before», it was difficult to assess the «now». In combination with the assessment matrix, the goal pyramid was the key to connect the past and the present and see the change that had happened during this time. If the past was not available, as the Handbook acknowledged was to be expected, it would have to be reconstructed before the present could be assessed.

The metaphor use is worth noting: The call to put together the "existing fragments" of the pyramid indicated that these were possible to retrieve. The pyramid was currently a ruin in need of reconstruction. Following the metaphor of reconstruction, the pyramid had once been built, it had existed, but was now intermittently reduced to fragments which the working group could retrieve and reassemble into a goal pyramid that the evaluation team might then assess. To that end, the working group's task amounted to an archeological endeavor. But in the same paragraph quoted above, the Handbook also indicated a different way of understanding the relationship between the goal pyramid and the project: The goal pyramid "might not emerge clearly from the preparations", that is, the goal pyramid had not been properly prepared during the planning work. The metaphor of clarity points in a different direction than does the metaphor of reconstruction: The goal pyramid remains opaque, unclear, and it is the job of the working group to make it come into view. If the goal pyramid was an indispensable part of the project itself, as the Handbook had argued in previous chapters, what was it then that the working group was producing when they made the goal pyramid emerge

²³⁸ See chapter 3 for a more detailed presentation of Norad's organization as of 1980.

²³⁹ *Handbook*, p. 26. Norwegian quote: "I praksis er det sjelden at en målsetningspyramide for et prosjekt klart framgår av forarbeidene. Arbeidsgruppa kan dersom det er formålstjenlig sette sammen de fragmenter av målsetningspyramiden som finnes, samt finne fram det som sies om målgrupper og forutsetninger."

more clearly? Would they reconstruct precisely the same goal pyramid as would have been produced at the outset of project planning, or would their retrospective method involve also shaping the project in a different way? Would they define and connect the different project elements in such different ways that they assembled a different project all together? What effect would it have that this process of articulation took place at the opposite end of a project's life?

Terms of Reference: Articulating an evaluation assignment

Moving on, a key task for the working group was to articulate the evaluation assignment in more detail (table 2.2, step 10) and appoint an evaluation team (table 2.2, step 11). The Handbook saw these two in combination, as the definition of the evaluation task would inform who should be part of the evaluation team. Without the proper expertise and experience, the team might not be able to fulfill their task. The evaluation assignment was to be formulated in a document which the Handbook interchangeably called the "evaluation mandate" or "Terms of Reference for evaluation". In the last section of the Handbook, an appendix contained a standard for how a Terms of Reference document might look.²⁴⁰ For any evaluation, the Handbook asserted, the most central questions to address would be the ones deduced from the goal pyramid and the assessment matrix, but in addition "there are some general questions which from experience are important in evaluations, although this might vary".²⁴¹ As shown above, the Handbook acknowledged that one could not really expect to find a goal pyramid or an assessment matrix in existing aid projects; thus, the list of general questions were likely to become of high importance during upcoming evaluations. These questions were outlined in the chapter, while the appendix included more specific formulations (table 2.3).

The list presented in table 2.4 is extensive: an evaluation team was asked to assess both the internal relations of the goal pyramid; the internal relations of the project administration; the relations between the project staff and local and national authorities; the relations between the project and the project site; the relation between the project and the development goals of the recipient country; potential unexpected consequences; and social, economic, cultural, and ecological impact of the project. Finally, in the last point (table 4, task 14), the Terms of Reference called for the evaluation team to "evaluate any other matter which the evaluation team finds relevant". The Terms of Reference, then, at least in the version suggested in the Handbook's appendix II, expanded the scope of the evaluation drastically, taking in multiple contextual factors and embedding the project firmly in its

²⁴⁰ *Handbook*, Appendix II: "Standard for utforming av mandat", written in English with the heading "Terms of Reference for Evaluation". At the top of the page, the standard included a paragraph in Norwegian stating that because evaluations might take on different forms and have different purposes, "one would warn against this becoming the norm" ("en vil advare om at dette opplegget blir en norm", Appendix II, p. 1).

²⁴¹ *Handbook*, p. 27. Full Norwegian quote: "De spørsmål som avledes fra målsetningspyramiden og vurderingsmaterisen (Kap.2) vil ofte være de mest sentrale under en evaluering. I tillegg er det noen generelle spørsmål som erfaringsmessig er viktig i evalueringer, selv om dette kan variere."

Table 2.3: Terms of Reference for Evaluations Tasks of the evaluation team²⁴²	
The evaluation team shall	
1	Review the project's activities and achievements in relation to goals, production targets and inputs, as these are stated in project plans or other documents.
2	Assess whether the project has been implemented in accordance with national policies within the sector and to what extent it has been coordinated with government activities in general.
3	Determine whether plans are followed and budgets adhered to and suggest likely reasons for possible discrepancies.
4	Assess the project's (social, economic, cultural, ecological, etc.) impact and whether the target group is reached.
5	Assess whether project design, implementation and operation is in accordance with needs and wishes of the target group and assess whether local participation is adequate.
6	Assess positive and negative unexpected consequences of the project.
7	Consider the adequacy of institutional and administrative procedures, communication between authorities and the project personnel, training of local staff members, and progress towards full assumption of responsibilities by local institutions and persons.
8	Assess the role of expatriate personnel, their adaptation to the local situation and the likely effect of their stay on the community. Comment on the working and living conditions of expatriate personnel at the project.
9	Discuss the choice of technology of machinery, equipment and materials, as well as the project's organisational model, in view of foreign exchange requirements, need for expatriate personnel, employment creation and maintenance.
10	Assess the adequacy of designs, quality and durability of physical structures in view of existing and planned methods of operation and maintenance and give possible alternative suggestions.
(For phase-evaluations) ²⁴³	
11	Assess plans for continued implementation of (various aspects of the project) in light of the evaluation findings.
12	Indicate possible changes of the project in relation to actual work or plans in order to promote project goals in the best way.
13	Assess the need for future technical and financial assistance to the (specify relevant parts of the project) in view of (special consideration)..... Comment on the need for further studies or evaluations.
14	Evaluate any other matter which the evaluation team finds relevant.

geographical, political, and administrative site. The assessment of a project's internal logic, whether the input and activities had generated the desired results and thus reached the partial and main goals, was but one of the 14 points listed as relevant evaluation questions.

An evaluation team's ability to address the most expansive questions were however directly dependent upon the quality of the documents available in the project archive. If project staff had done their planning and monitoring work according to the demands of the Handbook, then the "circumstances would be favorable to also evaluate societal effects of the project". The Handbook considered this to be the most demanding and also most controversial type of evaluation. Furthermore, the more ambitious the goal of the evaluation, the more specialized the team would have to be. Indeed, handling this challenge required a «stronger presence of social scientific expertise» in the evaluation teams:

²⁴² Direct transcription of list in Appendix II of *Handbook of Evaluation Questions*, Norad 1981.

²⁴³ In Norwegian: «Ved fase-evaluering», i.e. tasks only relevant for evaluations done during the project period (as opposed to at the end of the project period or after the project has been completed).

If both partial goals and a development goal with indicators are defined, the circumstances should be favorable to also evaluate societal effects of the project. This is a far more demanding task than a purely technical assessment of activities and results. It involves an assessment of social effects of the technical results being achieved. This is often controversial. Such assessments will usually demand a stronger presence of social science expertise in the evaluation teams than what has been common in earlier evaluations. (...) The field work should be organized based on the aim and circumstances of the specific evaluation. On some occasions demands for data about socio-economic affairs would mean that one or more social scientists should stay in the field for a longer period of time. On other occasions it might be beneficial that a broadly assembled team during a few weeks assesses different technical, administrative and organizational affairs.²⁴⁴

Here, the Handbook explicitly argued that in order to assess social effects of a project, *social science expertise* was needed. Accordingly, social scientists were expected to be equipped with a set of methods, a set of technologies of seeing, which enabled them to make the link between the activities and the development goal. Neither social science expertise nor the method of field work were further explained.

When the working group had completed a draft Terms of Reference document and decided upon a possible evaluation team, their draft was to be sent off on an extensive round of comments throughout the Norwegian aid system, first among Norad offices and then on to offices located in the recipient country (table 2.4):

#	Task
1	The working group's first draft of Terms of Reference with suggestions to persons who will undertake the evaluation is sent for comments from the resident representative, the Evaluation Office, and the affected technical office.
2	The Evaluation Office assesses and incorporates the comments in their draft.
3	The Evaluation Office sends the revised draft to the Assistant Director General with the received comments as appendices for preliminary approval.
4	The draft is sent to the recipient country for comments and approval.
5	The recipient country's comments are handled internally.
6	The Assistant Director General signs the final Terms of Reference.
7	A copy is sent to the Director General, the head of the affected department, and the Evaluation Office for information.

This comprehensive circulation of the draft terms of reference (table 4) mirrors the process of drafting the annual evaluation program. The document was made to travel extensively

²⁴⁴ Norad 1981 *Handbook*, p. 26. Norwegian quote: «Hvis både delmålsettinger og utviklingsmålsetting med indikatorer er definert, skulle forholdene ligge til rette for også å evaluere samfunnsmessige virkninger av prosjektet. Dette er en langt mer krevende oppgave enn en rent teknisk vurdering av aktiviteter og resultater. Den innebærer en vurdering av sosiale effekter av at tekniske resultater er oppnådd. Dette er ofte kontroversielt. Slike vurderinger vil vanligvis kreve et sterkere innslag av samfunnsvitenskapelig ekspertise i evalueringsteamene enn det som har vært vanlig i tidligere evalueringer. (...) Feltarbeidet bør legges opp ut fra formålet og omstendighetene ved den enkelte evaluering. I noen tilfelle tilsier krav til data om sosio-økonomiske forhold at en eller flere samfunnsvitere oppholder seg i felten i lengre tid. I andre tilfelle kan det være formålstjenlig at et bredt sammensatt team i løpet av noen få uker vurderer ulike tekniske, administrative og organisatoriske forhold.»

²⁴⁵ Table developed from a narrative description in *Handbook of Evaluation Questions*, p. 27.

between offices and continents to ensure that all relevant actors had been included in the writing process. The Handbook did not specify what the working group should do if the circulation process ended in disagreement or outright conflict. It had previously pointed to the potential for conflicting interests and controversial matters surfacing during the preparations for an evaluation; what if the round of comments generated mutually excluding suggestions or demands? Yet, it did not suggest ways to resolve such a situation should it arise. Instead, the Handbook seemed to trust that the inclusion of actors was a positive in itself.

With the working group's assembling of the project archive and its circulation of the draft terms of reference, staff who were not a part of the Evaluation Office took a lead role in enabling the specific evaluation. Only one member of the working group would be from this office, the rest would be from other offices. In this way, the concern for evaluation could potentially be integrated in the overall administration. With time, all Norad offices were likely to be involved in a working group, and thus be responsible for assembling – or failing to assemble – a project archive. They would themselves experience the direct relation between project work and aid evaluability. At the same time, this arrangement meant that the Evaluation Office would never have direct control over the preparatory process. Clearly, the Handbook preferred integration over separation in this regard.

Indispensable preparations

In summary, I will argue that the many tasks assigned to the working group in combination had the potential to transform an aid project into an evaluation object. Before this preparatory work was done, it would not necessarily be possible to evaluate a project in much detail; the documents needed would be dispersed to such an extent that the evaluation team would have to spend much time retrieving them. Given that this, at the time of the Handbook's publication, was not yet a part of general aid work, the working group's function was in effect to retrospectively employ this approach to the project under evaluation: they were to reconstruct the goal pyramid; reconstruct the assessment matrix; and assemble a project archive. When this had been done, the working group could go on to define the evaluation team's mandate and composition by drafting the terms of reference document and suggesting specific team members. I have argued that the ad-hoc composition of the group, with members from multiple offices across Norad, would enable the whole organization to take part in producing evaluability on a practical, material level; they would experience first-hand the work necessary to assemble an evaluable object. In this way, the Handbook outlined a procedure for enrolling the entire Norad organization for its cause.

The *writing of documents* was critical also at this stage of the process, as it was through these documents that a project was re-articulated as an evaluation object: first through the articulation of more detailed goals, activities, and delineation of the evaluation, then through the possible retrospective employment of the inscription devices (the goal pyramid and the assessment matrix) and finally through the multiple drafts of the Terms of Reference for the evaluation. Furthermore, I will argue that at this point, the Handbook highlighted the importance of the *collection of documents* into what I have suggested to conceive of as the

ideal project archive. This ideal project archive would include all internal planning and monitoring documents, as well as all relevant reports, statistics, research, and other published documents from Norad, the recipient country, or other institutions. In addition, the archive would include the working group's overview over the potential for data collection in the project area; this was in itself a document, we must expect, where the group presented the specific project site and discussed where and how to retrieve data about the site and the target group.

In this way, a group both internal and external to the project under evaluation would lay the foundation for the evaluation team's work. What was included in the archive was clearly of critical importance. The Handbook explicitly anticipated that actors might have an interest in withholding information, and therefore asserted that the responsibility for evaluations rested with the Evaluation Office, who for this exact reason was constituted as a separate administrative unit within the organization. Nevertheless, in practice, the office relied on and encouraged the participation of the other offices, who by definition were less neutral, but also more familiar with, the project in question.

I will suggest to understand this preparatory work as practically assembling the chain of translations that would enable the circulating reference which evaluators depended upon to see the results and impact of an aid project. The chain depended upon the documents written by the aid staff by means of inscription devices and routines for continuous reporting. In addition to these, the archive would be proportionately strengthened by the amount of external documents and the mapping of non-written data sources. In this way, I will argue, that the assembling of a project archive was what in practice transformed an aid project into an evaluable object. It was through the archive a project would become traceable. If the archive was found lacking, the traceability would be limited; conversely, if the archive was rich, traceability would be strong. Without a rich archive, the evaluation team could to a lesser extent employ their tools for seeing the aid project. In this way, the resolution of the findings from the evaluation optics depended upon the properties of the object under inspection. If the object was not well defined or documented, it would be less visible, or perhaps not even there.

The evaluation team: Assessing the evaluation object

We now arrive at the point where the evaluation work in the strict sense was envisioned to begin: The work of the evaluation team. As I have shown in the two sections above (on the annual evaluation program and the evaluation working group) much work needed to be done before a specific evaluation could commence. To that extent, evaluation work was far more than the evaluation team's travels, data collection, and report writing. These were indeed crucial elements of evaluation, but, as I have argued, not in themselves sufficient. The work done in the Norad headquarters in Oslo before and (as we will see in the next section) after the evaluation team's work was equally critical. It is in this sense that the conception of evaluation work as a chain of translations is useful: Rather than concentrating on the findings of the evaluation report alone, it is necessary to see the long chain of documents and actions leading up to and from this particular document. Indeed, the Handbook designated only one

page to the subsection "The work of the evaluation team", which constituted the sixth out of seven subsections in the chapter "Doing evaluations".

As seen in the previous section, the Handbook briefly discussed the composition of evaluation teams: It argued that for evaluations aiming at illuminating whether an aid project had achieved its development goal (as opposed to evaluations concentrating on concrete results and direct effects), the team would need someone with social science expertise who could employ social science methods. The Handbook did not specify this any further. Neither did it prescribe in any detail what an ideal team would be. Instead, it pointed to a set of general considerations which the working group would have to make when putting together the team:

- In relation to the composition of the team one must also consider
- whether the recipient country's authorities and Norwegian authorities should be represented
 - which technical/professional groups must be represented
 - to what extent independent expertise from the recipient country should partake, and
 - whether the suggested Norwegian participants have sufficient insight into and experience with the environment they are going to work in?²⁴⁶

Here, the Handbook again suggested to combine actors and institutions across the aid field in the practical evaluation work, rather than separate strictly between evaluation work and aid work. Its inclusion of representatives from the recipient government and the Norwegian government as potential team members clearly attests to this; this was the first point one "must consider". In other words, the participating authorities constituted possibly relevant and important members of the evaluation team. At the same time, by suggesting to include "independent expertise" from the recipient country, the Handbook asserted that independence or neutrality vis-a-vis the evaluation object was possibly equally relevant and important. In this way, the external actor was expected to bring an element of independence to the team. Still, the Handbook did not present independence as a mandatory element in the team in and of itself; what was a "must" was *considering* to include it. Hence, a working group might also decide not to include any external members.

The only mandatory point in the quote above may be drawn from the second bullet point: professionals from several fields should by definition be represented; the question to consider was *which* fields, in the plural. These were not defined as external nor independent, so they might then potentially be recruited among people who had already been involved with the evaluation object itself or similar projects. At the same time, in the last bullet point, the Handbook told the working group to consider whether "the suggested Norwegian participants have sufficient insight into and experience with the environment they are going to work in". Hence, the *field*-specific professionals might not be valuable if they did not also possess *site*-specific expertise. This concern might explain why the Handbook suggested to include independent expertise from the recipient country; it would counter a potential bias in the team

²⁴⁶ *Handbook* 1981, p. 26. Norwegian quote. "I forbindelse med sammensetningen av teamet må en også vurdere: om mottakerlandets myndigheter og norske myndigheter bør være representert; hvilke faggrupper som må være representert; i hvilken grad uavhengig ekspertise fra mottakerlandet kan delta, og; om foreslåtte norske deltakere har tilstrekkelig innsikt i og erfaring fra det miljøet de skal arbeide i?"

towards a Norwegian-based perspective. Given the Handbook's concern for making both aid staff and evaluation staff aware of their "structural blindness" and general inability to see, interpret, and understand the dynamics of the project site (see the section above), this call for independent expertise from the recipient country may be interpreted as a way to counter such potential blindness.

This cautionary approach of ensuring that the Norwegian members possessed the sufficient site-specific insight and experience must also be seen in relation to the statement quoted above: "Our evaluation expertise is therefore limited."²⁴⁷ The Handbook had made this point during its discussion of the possible problematic effects of evaluation: partly that it might amount to a burden upon the recipient government's administration, and partly that it entailed far more detailed scrutiny of public affairs than was common at home (in Norway). It was in this way that "our evaluation expertise" was limited. This formulation highlights a key point: At the Handbook's time of writing, in 1980, aid evaluation in the form envisioned by the Handbook was fairly new in Norway.²⁴⁸ There were no established methods nor systems, and no staff with domestic experience ready to venture abroad to do the same kind of work as they had already done at home. "Doing evaluations", as the chapter title read, was in itself something new. Indeed, while the Handbook called for new routines for both planning, monitoring, and evaluation, versions of the two former were already defined as aid work in a specific "Instruction" from Norad's Director General (albeit in less comprehensive forms) while the latter was not.²⁴⁹ To that end, evaluation expertise was itself a field in the making, and the Handbook clearly sought to contribute to this making.

Seen in relation with the quote above on the composition of the evaluation team, the assertion of Norway's limited evaluation expertise is crucial: The Handbook did not trust that Norwegian participants would do a good enough job – partly because they might not possess the necessary *site*-specific insight and experience, and partly because they most likely did not possess the necessary *evaluation*-specific insight and experience. The Handbook did trust the Norwegian members to possess the necessary *field*-specific insight and experience (i.e., expertise from a specific technical or professional field), but such field-specificity would have to be combined with the other two. Indeed, the Handbook had argued that visiting experts might in themselves constitute a problem in aid precisely for this reason. I will argue that the combination of the three – knowing the profession, the site, and evaluation – was crucial, as it was this combination that would enable an evaluation team to firmly grasp its evaluation object. Even if the project archive was in an ideal constitution, complete with a rich document chain, the evaluation team would not be able to grasp the object if it did not possess this triple-specific insight and experience.

²⁴⁷ *Handbook* 1981, p. 22. Norwegian quote: "Vår evalueringsekspertise er derfor begrenset."

²⁴⁸ As shown in an earlier section of this chapter, there had been evaluation efforts also before 1980, but on a far less comprehensive scale as was now envisioned.

²⁴⁹ See the first section of this chapter, "The novel approach", and my analysis of how the Handbook grounded its suggestions in the existing "Instruction for internal distribution of responsibility and tasks regarding planning and implementation of aid interventions". Norwegian document name: "Instruks for intern ansvars- og arbeidsfordeling vedrørende planlegging og gjennomføring av bistandstiltak."

In its one-page explanation of the work of the evaluation group, the Handbook spent half the text arguing that the team should maintain close contact with the working group. Again, it called for bridging both the different phases of evaluation and the distance between the actors involved:

After the evaluation team has been appointed the working group may if desired function as a secretariat for the team. Normally a member of the working group should also participate in the field work of the evaluation.

The evaluation teams must be given plenty of time to familiarize themselves with the problems before departure to the recipient country. As a rule there should be allocated at least one week to preparatory work. During this time the working group and the evaluation team should work closely together in order for the evaluation team to make the maximum use of the preparatory work that has been done. To the extent possible the members of the evaluation team should be drawn into the working group's preparations.²⁵⁰

Here, the Handbook encouraged the evaluation team and the working group to take part in each other's work to the extent that there was in effect a gradual transition rather than a distinct separation between the two: Members from the evaluation team were encouraged to join the working group's preparations; the evaluation team was encouraged to "work closely" with the working group and make "maximum use" of its preparations; the working group was to function as a secretariat for the evaluation team; and a member from the working group should "normally" take part in the evaluation team's field work. In this way, for all practical purposes, there were few barriers between the working group preparing the evaluation and the evaluation team undertaking the evaluation. The main difference, as I will investigate in more detail in the section below, was who took part in the writing of the evaluation report; here, the evaluation team were on their own.

So what, then, was in practice the work of the evaluation team? What precisely was such a team doing, and how were they going to do it? This the Handbook hardly discussed, beyond stressing the importance of proper preparations in Oslo before embarking on field work at and around the project site. But although the one-page subchapter titled "The work of the evaluation team" was short and mainly concerned preparations, there was more to be found elsewhere in the Handbook.

As shown in table 3 above, the Handbook's Appendix II included a comprehensive list titled "Tasks of the evaluation team" (a shorter version was included in the Handbook's discussion of the work of the working group), which stated that the evaluation should "review", "assess", "determine", "suggest", "consider", "discuss", "indicate", or "evaluate" a number of issues. But these formulations did not further explain *how* the team was to go about doing these tasks. In combination, they entailed a comprehensive process of data collection, analyses, discussion, and judgement. How the team might handle conflicting information,

²⁵⁰ *Handbook*, 1981, p. 28. Norwegian quote: "Etter at evalueringsgruppa er oppnevnt kan arbeidsgruppa om ønskelig fungere som et sekretariat for teamet. Evalueringsteamene må gis god tid til å sette seg inn i problemene før utreise til mottakerlandet. Som regel bør det settes av minst ei uke til forberedende arbeid. I denne tida bør arbeidsgruppa og evalueringsteamet arbeide nært sammen for at evalueringsteamet kan gjøre seg maksimal nytte av det forarbeide som er utført. I den grad det er mulig bør medlemmene av evalueringsteamet trekkes inn i arbeidsgruppas forberedelser."

prioritize between equally relevant tasks under time constraints, negotiate between different interests, interpret ambiguous findings, or even conclude on whether and to what degree the development goal had been achieved, was not expanded upon any further. Indeed, the list was a part of the Terms of Reference template; it thus described what an evaluation team was *supposed* to do, not what it in practice was doing or how. It was written from the perspective of the working group and the Evaluation Office – the actors commissioning the evaluation. To that end, it was a tool for those needing the evaluation, not those doing it.

Indeed, the *how*-question was to a certain extent discussed in the two chapters “Goals and methods” and “Data and indicators”, as shown above. Here, the Handbook introduced a number of key methodological concepts and concerns which were directly relevant to evaluators, but it was written in a way that first and foremost addressed aid workers outside of the evaluation team. In these chapters, the Handbook sought to explain to project staff and other staff why their work was crucial for enabling evaluation work. It discussed the possibilities and constraints of field work, interviews, and surveys, and stressed the importance of taking into account cultural, social, economic, and political factors at the project site possibly affecting the project, but also the potential limitations posed by the staff’s own situatedness. This point also concerned evaluators; they were not exempted from the critique, as the discussion of the concept “structural blindness” (see above) showed. The Handbook several times referred to “social science expertise” and “social science methods” to explain what kind of approach was necessary. The elements drawn from this generic category of “the social sciences” were both the specific methods listed above (fieldwork, interviews, and surveys) and the specific approaches to the evaluation object: being present in the field, embedding the object in the surrounding society, and demanding reflexivity about one’s own preconceptions. To that extent, doing evaluations was a form of context-building. But at the same time, doing evaluations was a very particular version of the social sciences in its concern for reaching the *one goal*.

The Handbook was at its most specific in its prescriptions for how the team should write its report. These prescriptions may be read out of the Handbook’s Appendix III, “Suggestion for structure of an evaluation report”.²⁵¹ This part of the Handbook included a three-page outline of an evaluation report, describing its distinct parts and what these should contain (see table 5 below). I will soon analyze this suggested structure, but will first stress that writing the report was in itself a core part of the evaluation team’s work, and that the Handbook explicitly argued that the report should be written in a most specific way. This might seem an obvious point, but I will argue that it is again critical to acknowledge the weight placed by the Handbook upon the act of writing as a key part of making aid an evaluable object:

When the evaluation team is to write its report, this happens on the basis of the mandate (terms of reference) which is prepared in advance. The structure of the evaluation report is thus to a

²⁵¹ *Handbook* 1981, Appendix III. Norwegian title: “Forslag til disposisjon av evalueringsrapport”.

large extent grounded in the mandate (appendix II). The following is therefore a general guideline for and structure of the evaluation report.²⁵²

Here, in the opening paragraph of Appendix III, the text moves from the evaluation team's work (writing) to the evaluation report's structure (genre) in two sentences. From the report template (table 5), we may see that the evaluation team's writing work was comprehensive, and involved multiple steps: describing the evaluation object; describing the evaluation process; detail its data sources and references; compare the evaluation object's current form to the plans prepared upon its initiation; articulate precise conclusions; articulate precise recommendations for the future of the evaluation object (close it down, continue as planned, or change it); articulate findings of general interest to aid staff beyond the evaluation object; and finally, prepare a short summary with the most important conclusions and recommendations. During this writing process, the team would have to make numerous judgements on the quality of the data, strength of the analysis, relevance of the conclusions, and feasibility of the recommendations.

When I now turn to analyze this evaluation report template it is important to keep in mind that the template's prescriptions were in effect demands put upon the evaluation team, who were the ones actually writing the report. As should now be clear from the analysis, it is not possible to consider an evaluation report an autonomous document; it is but one text in a chain of translations, both enabled by and enabling other documents. Since the work of the evaluation team was so firmly founded in the report writing, I will now turn to investigate how the Handbook envisioned the ideal evaluation report to be done.

The evaluation report: Writing the genre of aid evaluation

The Handbook envisioned the ideal evaluation report to be written in a most particular way, and for this purpose it outlined a specific template. This template was included as an appendix, in the Handbook's Appendix III, titled "Suggestion for structure of an evaluation report" (see table 5).²⁵³ The template specified what questions the team should address and how they should structure the report. In the following, I will organize the analysis of this template report around the following two issues: How the Handbook established the evaluation report as a distinct genre and how the characteristics of this genre built upon and further extended evaluability of aid. I will begin with investigating the genre of the evaluation report.

Genre prescriptions

How did the Handbook establish the evaluation report as a distinct genre? What were its characteristics? With JoAnne Yates, what were its *genre prescriptions*, that is, how would an evaluation report have to be written in order to qualify as an evaluation report, let alone a

²⁵² *Handbook* 1981, Appendix III, p 1. Norwegian quote: "Når evalueringsteamet skal skrive sin rapport, skjer dette på grunnlag av det mandat (terms of reference) som er utarbeidet på forhånd. Disposisjonen av evalueringsrapporten blir således i står grad fastsatt i mandatet (se appendix II). Det følgende blir derfor en generell rettesnor for og disposisjon av evalueringsrapporten."

²⁵³ *Handbook* 1981, Appendix III.

good evaluation report?²⁵⁴ Furthermore, with Carolyn Miller, I will suggest to conceive of a genre *as a social action*: What was this particular genre doing? What kind of intervention might it be understood to be?²⁵⁵

Table 2.5 shows the complete template that made up Appendix III of the report. The template was not referred to in the text of the Handbook's main body. In the chapter "Doing evaluations" and the subchapter "The work of the evaluation team", the Handbook mentioned report writing as a part of the evaluation team's tasks, but it did not go into any details as to

Table 5: Suggestion for structure of an evaluation report²⁵⁶	
When the evaluation team is to write its report, this happens on the basis of the mandate (terms of reference) which is prepared in advance. The structure of the evaluation report is thus to a large extent grounded in the mandate (appendix II). The following is therefore a general guideline for and structure of the evaluation report.	
Part 1	Summary – conclusions and recommendations
	Summary of the most important conclusions and recommendations from the evaluation.
Part 2	Project resume
	There should be given a short summary of the background for the project/program and its most important characteristics. Likewise it might be of interest to have presented a short history of the project's development, especially if important changes has happened during the project period. This part should be of approx. 5-10 pages.
Part 3	The aim of and execution of the evaluation
	It is important that the aim of the evaluation is made completely clear before the evaluation work starts.
	Furthermore the execution of the evaluation itself should be described in such a way that the readers are made aware of what the individual assessments and conclusions are building upon and what general validity they have. It must therefore be described how the mandate is understood and what methods are employed during data and information collection. References for important data is given either in parantheses inside the text or through references to footnotes in the back of the report.
	The report must also contain a discussion of how certain the knowledge is (the validity and reliability of the data). As attachments to the report, the mandate, program for the evaluation work, literature lists, overview over who has been interviewed, possible surveys, etc., are presented.
Part 4	Plan and reality – degree of goal attainment
	The evaluation will normally have one retrospective and one forward-looking part. The retrospective part describes how the project has developed in practice, what might perhaps have gone wrong, and to what extent the goals have been reached.
	The question of whether the project goals have been reached must be assessed based on documents which serve as the project's foundation. If a goal pyramid has been formulated, it must be assessed whether the assumed connections between different levels has been valid and whether the preconditions have held. It is also important to assess unpredicted connections and effects in the project, both preferable and unpreferable. Such effects may easily lead to the intervention having to be revised.
	The forwardlooking part is included in part 6.
Part 5	Administrative and organizational questions
	In addition to discussion of goal and effect of the intervention, it will often be necessary to

²⁵⁴ Yates 1989.

²⁵⁵ Miller 1984.

²⁵⁶ *Handbook* 1981, Appendix III. Norwegian title: "Forslag til disposisjon av evalueringsrapport". Italics in the original.

	address many administrative and organizational questions of the kind discussed in Chapter 3.5. ²⁵⁷ Quite a lot of information of this kind will normally emerge from the continued reporting routines. It will therefore in many instances be unnecessary to repeat in detail matters of fact that are known from before. Unless the evaluation brings new aspects or conclusions about such matters, the evaluation report should only in brief recount the main content and show where information may be found.
Part 6	Questions about continuation of the aid
	If the project is planned to be continued, the evaluation team must always ask itself the foundational question of <i>whether the project is still justified</i> .
	This is partly a question of whether the initially formulated development goal is still valid, e.g. whether it still makes up an integrated part of the recipient country's development strategy. Partly one has to ask whether results and partial goals still are expected to contribute to fulfilling the development goal. Such questions are necessary because changes may have arisen both in political, economic, and social affairs between the planning and implementation stages.
	Thereafter it has to be discussed whether the project set-up still is adequate, logical and coherent. This may concern both questions about the connection between input and goal; technical and administrative matters; or whether the precondition still holds.
	If the evaluation team concludes that there are more or less critical weaknesses with the project's justification or the project set-up, an important task becomes to indicate <i>alternative solutions</i> . A central question then becomes whether the project should be finalized or continued in changed form.
Part 7	General lessons from the evaluation of the project
	A purpose of evaluations is to draw general lessons from different aspects of the aid work. This must build upon an assessment and sorting of experiences which are expected to be valid for more projects within the same sector. The experiences are to be listed in a short and succinct way with reference to which pages in the report that covers these questions. It is recommended that the following questions at the least are covered:
	Planning, organization and administration in cooperation with the recipient country; development effect; plan assessed against reality; technical and professional experiences; choice of technology; and experiences with the aid work itself.
Part 8	Conclusions and recommendations
	On the basis of part 4 and 5 the evaluation team should try to formulate as precise conclusions as possible about the duration of the project (or since the last evaluation).
	The same parts, combined with part 6, should give a basis for recommendations about the further arrangement in projects which are not finalized. This concerns revision of both goals and the shape of the project.

how they were to go about writing, what to write, or how to prepare the report in specific terms. These issues were however explicitly discussed in Appendix 3. Here, the Handbook stated clear prescriptions and demands for how a report would best be written. It repeatedly used the terms “should”, “must”, “has to be”, “are to be”, “necessary”, and “important”. For example:

It is important that the aim of the evaluation is made completely clear before the evaluation work starts.

The report must also contain a discussion of how certain the knowledge is (...).

The question of whether the project goals have been reached must be assessed based on documents which serve as the project's foundation.

²⁵⁷ Given that the Handbook had no chapter 3.5, the appendix most likely referred to chapter 3.2, which described how results might be determined for the different levels of the goal pyramid.

Thereafter it has to be discussed whether the project set-up still is adequate, logical and coherent.

If the project is planned to be continued, the evaluation team must always ask itself the foundational question of *whether aid is still justified*.

If the evaluation team concludes that there are more or less critical weaknesses with the project's justification or the project set-up, an important task becomes to indicate *alternative solutions*.²⁵⁸

These statements served to impose clear directions for the evaluation team's work – what they should ask, discuss, consider, and include both in their work and in their text. Furthermore, the template gave the team a procedure for how to translate its findings and discussions into conclusions and recommendations. In this way, the template suggested a structure for *the text*, but at the same time for the *writing process*: The template did not separate the text from the work; these were the completely integrated.

A key concern for the template was to tell the evaluation team how to structure an evaluation report: What should be written in which parts and how should the different parts build upon each other? Multiple times, the Handbook gave explicit instructions in this regard:

[In Part 1] Summary of the most important conclusions and recommendations from the evaluation.

[In Part 4] The evaluation will normally have one retrospective and one forward-looking part. (...) The forward-looking part is included in part 6.

[In part 7] The experiences are to be listed in a short and succinct way with reference to which pages in the report that covers these questions.

[In Part 8] On the basis of part 4 and 5 the evaluation team should try to formulate as precise conclusions as possible about the duration of the project (or since the last evaluation).

[In Part 8] The same parts, combined with part 6, should give a basis for recommendations for the further arrangement in projects which are not finalized.

[In Part 3] As attachments to the report, the mandate, program for the evaluation work, literature lists, overview over who has been interviewed, possible surveys, etc., are presented.

As seen from these statements, the template prescribed a clear relation between the different parts of the report: The first part of the report was a summary of the most important conclusions and recommendations. In this way, the reader would have to read only the very first few pages in order to gain an understanding of what the team thought of the project and their suggestions for what should be done moving forward. Part 1 built directly on Part 8, which included all the report's conclusions and recommendations. Part 8 in turn built upon a combination of findings and arguments from parts 4, 5, and 6, which the Handbook asserted "should give a basis" for recommendations. Furthermore, in part 7, the template demanded the evaluation team to articulate "general lessons" or "experiences", with direct references to where in the report these findings had been discussed. Finally, in part 3, the team should discuss its own working process and was asked to include a number of documents as attachments to the report.

²⁵⁸ Handbook 1981, Appendix III. My translation. Quotes from parts 3, 4, 4, 6, 6, and 7 respectively.

In combination, then, the report included a range of documents, discussions, and arguments which not necessarily had to be read, but which would nevertheless have to be written and included in the report if the report was to follow the genre prescriptions and maintain a complete structure. If one part was missing, the structure would by definition be weaker. This weakness would affect all the parts building upon the weak part, and thus ultimately weaken Part 1, where the team was to state its most important conclusions and recommendations.

Reductions and amplifications

In this way, the structure of the report, i.e. the way the different parts were to be related to one another, involved a sequence of *reductions*: the reduction of a general aid project into a clearly defined evaluation object; of a potentially vast amount of data and literature to a discussion of these data and references to where they might be retrieved; of descriptions of relevant aspects of the evaluation object to a list of conclusions and recommendations about both the evaluation object as such and of more general relevance; and a reduction of the conclusions and recommendations into a summary, to be placed up front.

These reductions all involved minor alterations from one piece of text to the next; they were, I will argue, a chain of translations from one part into another and onwards. During this translation process, from the archive and the field through the multiple different parts into the summary, the parts became increasingly shorter and more prescriptive. Uncertainties, ambiguities, and gaps were not likely to be brought on to the next part. At the same time, I will argue that a key feature of the genre of the evaluation report was that all these aspects – the ambiguities, uncertainties, and gaps – would have to be included, as the report would be of less value without these parts upon which to build the final summary. For example, the template stated that in part 3, the team should explicitly discuss this issue:

Furthermore the execution of the evaluation itself should be described in such a way that the readers are made aware of what the individual assessments and conclusions are building upon and what general validity they have. It must therefore be described how the mandate is understood and what methods are employed during data and information collection. References for important data is given either in parantheses inside the text or through references to footnotes in the back of the report.

This reflexive discussion of evaluation methodology, including the validity and reliability of the conclusions and direct references to data, were critical for the evaluation report to gain strength. The template stated that this was to be done in “such a way that the readers are made aware” of how the team had handled these issues. But at the same time, by calling for a specific translation chain enabling intense reductions of the evaluation team’s work, the Handbook implied that for the readers, it should suffice to read the summary. Still, in order to ensure that the circulating reference of aid evaluability was being kept intact, it was of crucial importance that the parts were included.

Did the genre of the evaluation report in this way encourage *non-reading*?²⁵⁹ Based on my analysis above, I will suggest that this was indeed the case. The template established a set of genre prescriptions for evaluation reports which in combination enabled multiple reductions that in combination had the radical effect of encouraging non-reading of everything but the first pages. These were the most important pages of the report, as this was where the whole circulating reference of aid evaluability culminated: in the short summary of the report's "most important conclusions and recommendations". It should not be necessary to read more than these first few pages in order to gain the main points. Again, the strength of the summary rested upon the complete circulating reference and upon the traceability of all claims back to specific data sources.

Returning to Miller's conception of genre as a social action, what did this particular genre do? As argued above, it enabled the reduction of an evaluation object into a summary which might easily be read by project staff, other aid staff, and other government officials in Norway and the recipient country. In this way, the template promised certainty, overview, and a basis for action. To that end, the genre enabled grasping the evaluation object: The template promised that, if the evaluation team followed the genre prescriptions and completed the report structure, it would be possible to see and act upon the aid project. In effect, what it told potential readers, was that "this is the project, these are its properties, and this is what you should do with it."

In this way, the process of *reduction* gave way to *amplification*.²⁶⁰ The summary, the first few pages of the report, would serve as a condensed version of the evaluation object and thus also the aid project as such. This would be the final and last possible reduction. The summary was, in this sense, the culmination of the evaluation team's work. It would be made mobile and travel through the aid system. It remained a part of the report, but was at the same time the part most likely to be read by most readers. In this way, the reduction process also enabled an amplification of the evaluation team's work through the summary of the evaluation report. Amplification of the summary was a key part of the further circulation of the report; to that end, it is critical for understanding how the report would be used upon its publication.

Let me return to the question posed above: What did the specific genre of the evaluation report do? What did it enable – if indeed the evaluation team followed its prescriptions? In addition to the arguments posed above, I will suggest that the report had the capacity to transform a three-dimensional aid project, with all its potential opacity, fuzzy edges, and unclear connections, into a fixed evaluation object contained within the two-dimensional linearity of a written argument. Albeit the template prescribed the team to explicitly discuss such opacity and uncertainty, the very structure of the report translated this unclear situation into a logical string of argument with the following narrative order: object

²⁵⁹ Bayard 2007. "Non-reading is not just the absence of reading. It is a genuine activity, one that consists of adopting a stance in relation to the immense tide of books that protects you from drowning. On that basis, it deserves to be defended and even taught." (e-book version, chapter 1, p. 9.)

²⁶⁰ Latour 1999.

history, methodological deliberation, retrospective account, forward-looking account, general lessons, object-specific conclusions and recommendations, summary (which was then placed up front, as discussed above). This also points us towards another feature which the genre enabled: to fix the temporality of the evaluation object.

Temporality

To determine the temporality of an evaluation object – its past, present, and future – was, I will suggest, a core task for the evaluation team. As part of the “Project resume” (Part 2), the template suggested that:

Likewise it might be of interest to have presented a short history of the project’s development, especially if important changes has happened during the project period.²⁶¹

Furthermore, in Part 4, where the evaluation team was to address the relation between “Plan and reality” and the “degree of goal attainment”, temporality was also key:

The evaluation will normally have one retrospective and one forward-looking part. The retrospective part describes how the project has developed in practice, what might perhaps have gone wrong, and to what extent the goals have been reached.²⁶²

Finally, the evaluation team should be able to articulate potential futures for the project. In Part 6, as part of discussing “Questions about the continuation of the aid”, it stated:

(...) the evaluation team should try to formulate as precise conclusions as possible about the duration of the project (or since the last evaluation).²⁶³

Whether the team found that the object had critical weaknesses or was worthy of continuation, they in both instances should consider potential different futures:

[The team’s conclusions] should give the basis for recommendations about the further arrangement in projects which are not finalized. This concerns revision of both goals and the shape of the project.²⁶⁴

[If a project has critical weaknesses] an important task becomes to indicate *alternative solutions*. A central question then becomes whether the project should be finalized or continued in changed form.²⁶⁵

In this way, the evaluation report translated the potentially opaque causal relations of an evaluation object into a clear, linear timeline, in which the narrative affirmed one specific set of causal relations, upon which to build future action. In doing this, the team would to a large extent have to rely on the planning and monitoring work done by project staff during the everyday administration of the project. As I argued above, by continuing to articulate the project in writing, project staff would enable potential future evaluation teams to travel back in time by tracing the project through its documents. In this way, project staff built the temporality of the aid project, which the evaluation team then could use to build the

²⁶¹ *Handbook* 1981, Appendix III, part 2.

²⁶² *Handbook* 1981, Appendix III, part 4.

²⁶³ *Handbook* 1981, Appendix III, part 6.

²⁶⁴ *Handbook* 1981, Appendix III, part 8.

²⁶⁵ *Handbook* 1981, Appendix III, Part 6.

temporality of the evaluation object. It enabled them to fix the object's *past* in a particular way, which informed how its *present* should be understood, which again informed how its *future* should be conceived.

In establishing the temporality of the evaluation object, the evaluation team would then to a large extent rely on existing documents. If these did not exist, they would have to reconstruct the project's history retrospectively, which, the Handbook had argued, would be of far less value. Indeed, that the report should be built upon existing documents was repeatedly stated in the template: Both goal pyramid and continuous reporting, which had ideally been prepared by the project staff, and the Terms of Reference for the evaluation itself, which had been prepared by the evaluation working group, were given a strong weight:

[The introductory paragraph]: When the evaluation team is to write its report, this happens on the basis of the mandate (terms of reference) which is prepared in advance. The structure of the evaluation report is thus to a large extent grounded in the mandate (appendix II). The following is therefore a general guideline for and structure of the evaluation report. The question of whether the project goals have been reached must be assessed based on documents which serve as the project's foundation. If a goal pyramid has been formulated, it must be assessed whether the assumed connections between different levels has been valid and whether the preconditions have held.

Quite a lot of information of this kind [the many administrative and organizational questions] will normally emerge from the continued reporting routines.²⁶⁶

Here, we again see how work done outside the evaluation team, by actors involved in the projects (whether directly or indirectly), influenced the evaluation work, by directly prescribing the structure of the evaluation report. With reference to my analysis above of how the genre of the evaluation report may be seen as a particular form of social action, this means that the evaluation team should build their work and their writing directly upon the work of the internal working group. Again, therefore, we see how the gradual transition from the internal to the external continued to be extended, and that the concerns of the involved actors in a direct way framed the work of the perceived neutral and independent evaluation team.

Furthermore, by being asked to retrieve and address the goal pyramid of the evaluation object, the evaluation team would contribute to rearticulating the evaluation object in a way that adhered to the categories of this particular inscription device. The template asserted the importance of considering the internal logic and strength of the pyramid. This was first addressed in the part quoted above; in addition to assessing the initial goal pyramid (or reconstruct it) and compare it to the current evaluation object, the template prescribed the evaluation team to rearticulate the goal pyramid within the present situation:

[T]he evaluation team must always ask itself the foundational question of *whether the project is still justified*. This is partly a question of whether the initially formulated development goal is still valid, e.g. whether it still makes up an integrated part of the recipient country's development strategy. Partly one has to ask whether results and partial goals still are expected to contribute to fulfilling the development goal. Such questions are necessary because changes may have arisen both in political, economic, and social affairs between the planning

²⁶⁶ Handbook 1981, Appendix III. Quotes from Introduction, Part 4, and Part 5 respectively.

and implementation stages. Thereafter it has to be discussed whether the project set-up still is adequate, logical and coherent. This may concern both questions about the connection between input and goal; technical and administrative matters; or whether the precondition still holds.²⁶⁷

In this way, the evaluation team was urged to reassess the very legitimacy of the aid project in question: Could it be justified to continue its activities? Was the goal still valid, would the results fulfill the goal as expected? What changes might have happened in the project's surroundings? It was precisely in this kind of discussion the evaluation report's function as a technology of politics was made prevalent: Not only was it a technology of seeing, making it possible to investigate the aid project in detail; it was also a tool expected to provide useful advice for the aid administration on what to do next. Precisely this point, how the new evaluation optics were expected to make it possible not only to see aid more clearly but also to act upon it, will be the concern of the next section.

Evaluation report follow-up: "Little value unless it is used"

Having worked my way through the Handbook, I have now arrived at the short, final chapter titled "Follow-up".²⁶⁸ The chapter outlined what should happen to an evaluation report once it was finished. How did the Handbook envision this document to circulate within the aid administration and to gain influence upon decisions? How could the optic of evaluation be enabled to act back upon its object?

Up until this point, I have analyzed the Handbook's visions of how aid might be made an evaluable object by employing a cluster of concepts from science studies. These were all developed to describe how science is done: How the world might be transformed to words on a page, and how this translation process was in and of itself a process by which the object studied became conceivable at all. With Latour, this is what is necessary to establish something as *real*:

Stage by stage, we lost particularity, materiality, multiplicity, and continuity, such that, in the end, there was scarcely anything left but a few leaves of paper. (...) But at each stage, we have not only reduced, we have also gained or regained, since, within the same world of re-representation, we have been able to obtain much greater compatibility, standardization, text, calculation, circulation, and relative universality.²⁶⁹

The multiple steps on the way from turning an aid project into an evaluation object and further into an evaluation report in important ways resembles the process Latour describes above: "there was scarcely anything left but a few leaves of paper". Indeed, one of the purposes of evaluation, the Handbook's final chapter stated, was a "systematic collection of knowledge with a concern for future activities". It was for this reason, the Handbook

²⁶⁷ *Handbook* 1981, Appendix III, Part 6. Italics in the original.

²⁶⁸ Norad 1981 Handbook, p. 30-32. The chapter had three subsections: "5.1. Follow-up of the evaluation"; "5.2. Externally oriented information"; and "5.3. General learning". In Norwegian: "Chapter 5. Oppfølging" with the subchapters "5.1. Oppfølging av evalueringen"; "5.2. Utadrettet informasjon"; and "5.3. Generell lærdom".

²⁶⁹ Latour 1999, p. 70.

explained, that an evaluation report should contain a distinct chapter summarizing its findings, “with cross references to the place in the report where the issue is handled in more detail”.²⁷⁰

While the concept of circulating reference aptly describes the process of turning an aid project into an evaluable object, there also remains notable differences between the settings and practices of evaluation and science. Latour’s concept is based on an analysis of the routine work of academic scientists; more specifically, soil specialists studying the border of the Amazon forest. Their work is clearly different from that of Norad’s evaluation staff, and even more so from the general aid worker. While the answers the soil scientists were seeking were indeed of both academic interest and practical value, they were working in university settings and publishing for an academic audience. Their work was surely structured by institutional, financial, and genre constraints, but the research team remained independent to make all decisions regarding the research process, and they were themselves undertaking all the steps from problem definition through data production and analysis to writing and publishing.

In contrast, the evaluation team started their assignment with their questions already defined. As envisioned by the Handbook, the team would be but a small group involved in the comprehensive endeavor of turning an aid project into an evaluable object. Their work was part of an administrative system of offices, routines, genres, and expectations very different from those of science. But as seen above, the process of producing evaluability by ensuring a solid translation chain and circulating reference required a concerted effort from staff across Norad offices and for the duration of a project – from idea to completion. The multiple actors the Evaluation Office needed to convince for this to succeed were of a considerable number, and they were disbursed in offices across the globe. Compared to the soil research project, in which a small team with a common understanding of the purpose and procedure of their project, including the importance of enabling circulating reference, enabling evaluability in Norad was potentially a far more unforeseeable endeavor: The team was large, dispersed, and shifting according to the evaluation; their methods were not established, in fact the Handbook’s ambition was to introduce new tools and routines to the entire Norad organization. Finally, it was necessary to convince the staff to adopt this new approach in the first place.

The evaluation team depended on numerous other staff members having meticulously written project documents and built rich project archives. While the individual team members were expected to be external to the aid administration and do their work independently, their work was nevertheless fundamentally integrated with the work of the aid administration. As quoted above, they were expected to contribute with “systematic collection of knowledge *with a concern for future activities*” (my emphasis). Indeed, the very *purpose* and *value* of the evaluation report rested with the ways in which it was circulated and used after its publication:

²⁷⁰ Norad 1981 *Handbook*, p. 31. Norwegian quote: “Et av formålene med evalueringer er systematisk innsamling av kunnskap med tanke på framtidig virksomhet. (...) Evalueringsrapporten vil i tråd med dette inneholde et kapittel /se Appendix III, Del 7) som kort oppsummerer generelle erfaringer, men med sidereferanser til det stedet i rapporten hvor emnet er behandlet mer utførlig.”

For the evaluation to have any purpose, it must be followed up in a systematic way in the recipient country and in Norad. This is necessary so that the experiences that have been made may serve the specific project, the activities within a sector, one country or NORAD's aid interventions more generally. An evaluation report – no matter how good it might be – has little value if it is not being used.²⁷¹

The Handbook here placed high demands upon the document of the evaluation report: Even the most well-planned, well-performed, and well-written evaluation report would lose almost all of its value if the administrative systems in Norad and the recipient country did not pick up the report, read it, and use it. Its value thus rested upon the aid administration at large first to enable the report to be produced at all, and then to keep it in motion.

What did it entail that a report was “being used”? When could one say that it was used sufficiently to qualify as useful and valuable? The Handbook did not specify this in any detail. Indeed, it explicitly stated that there was no automatic or direct relation between the report itself and how Norad would use it:

The evaluation report stands solely on the account of the evaluation team. NORAD is free to consider the suggestions and recommendations leading out of the report.²⁷²

Norad was “free to consider” the report as its conclusions stood “solely on the account” of the team. This clear separation of the report and its use served to emphasize the Handbook's previous assertion of evaluation being done externally and independently, that is, *outside* the aid administration. And yet, it was what happened once the report entered into and circulated *within* the aid administration which determined its value. While specifying how a report should be prepared and done, it remained vague on how it should be used. What it did suggest, was a procedure for articulating and circulating comments about the report (see table 6):

#	Step
1	If the evaluation enters into a decision-making process with a strict timeline, it should be suggested a mutual deadline for statements (normally no less than two months).
2	The working group preparing the evaluation work should coordinate the follow-up.
3	In some instances, it might be beneficial that the working group and the evaluation team come together to discuss the evaluation and the follow-up in more detail.
4	Resident representative should on all occasions comment on the report.
5	The task of the working group is normally to make a first draft for a comment. This should include suggestions to what financial, organizational, legal, and other consequences the report should have.
6	The handling of the draft and the further follow-up in NORAD are tasks for responsible office/department.
7	If the evaluation is undertaken from the Norwegian side alone, NORAD's comment should follow the report upon when it is sent to the recipient country.

²⁷¹ Norad 1981 *Handbook*, p. 30. Norwegian quote: «For at evalueringen skal ha noen hensikt, må den følges opp på en systematisk måte i mottakerlandet og i NORAD. Dette er nødvendig for at de erfaringene som er gjort kan komme det konkrete prosjektet, virksomheten innen en sektor, ett land eller NORADs bistandsvirksomhet mer generelt til gode. En evalueringsrapport – hvor god den enn måtte være – har liten verdi hvis den ikke blir brukt.»

²⁷² Norad 1981 *Handbook*, p. 30. Norwegian quote: “Evalueringsrapporten står for evalueringsteamets egen regning. NORAD tar på fritt grunnlag stilling til de forslagene og anbefalingene rapporten munnar ut i.”

²⁷³ Deduced from the Handbook's chapter 5: “Follow-up”, p. 30. Like in the previous tables, the text segments are direct quotes, but they appear in a different order here than in the chapter; the narrative of the chapter to a less extent followed the strict temporal logic of the list.

The procedure outlined in table 2.6 above ensured that both the report, draft comments to the report, and the approved comments circulated among the working group, the relevant technical offices, the relevant field offices, and the recipient government. But what should a comment include? What might happen to the draft during its circulation? What did coordination of the follow-up entail? What would happen in case of disagreements? Such questions were not resolved. A similar vagueness characterized the Handbook's subchapter on "externally oriented information": Here, too, potential conflicts of interest were left unattended:

Most evaluation reports contain much information about the projects of interest both to various organizations and individuals. Norad's Information Office has the responsibility of assessing how the material might best be exploited. It may be suitable that the material is presented through articles, abridged reports, or through the original reports. As a general routine, the authorities of the recipient government should be asked whether they have anything against the reports being used by researchers, journalists and others interested. Ultimately, NORAD's director decides in the matter when the view of the recipient country has been received.²⁷⁴

Clearly, the public interest in gaining access to a report might come into conflict with the recipient country's and NORAD's interest in containing potential controversies. What happened if the recipient government *did* have something against the report "being used" by someone external to Norad or the recipient government? The Handbook's solution was to let Norad's director make a decision in each case on whether and how much to make publicly available. Hence, the circulation of the report beyond the world of aid might potentially be cut short by internal and diplomatic concerns.²⁷⁵ Although the report's value depended upon it "being used", the Handbook did in effect indicate that external use might be restricted in order to accommodate the concerns of the government in the recipient country.

Despite the obvious implications for the potential use of evaluation reports, the Handbook did not discuss such potential problems and contradictions. Rather, it suggested multiple ways of making the report available to a larger audience both in the wider aid community and the general public: As quoted above, the Information Office might produce its own articles and abridged reports, which would amount to a new round of translation with a new set of reductions and amplifications. Furthermore, the Handbook suggested to organize

²⁷⁴ Norad 1981 *Handbook*, p. 31. Norwegian quote: "De fleste evalueringsrapportene inneholder mye informasjon om prosjektene av interesse både for ulike organisasjoner og enkeltpersoner. NORADs informasjonskontor har som ansvar å vurdere hvordan stoffet best kan utnyttes. Det kan være formålstjenlig at materialet presenteres gjennom ulike artikler, forkortete rapportutgaver eller gjennom originalrapportene. Som fast rutine spørres myndighetene i mottakerlandet om de har noe imot at rapportene benyttes av forskere, journalister og andre interesserte. I siste instans avgjør NORADs direktør dette spørsmålet etter at mottakerlandets syn på dette spørsmålet foreligger."

²⁷⁵ The question of whether evaluation report should be made publicly available became an issue in Norad during 1981-1982, when the Evaluation Office and the Information Office jointly argued that all reports should be made automatically available to the public, rather than the existing solution (also presented in the Handbook) where Norad's director made a decision in each case. Cf. memos between Norad's Evaluation Office, Information Office, Legal Office, and the Director during October, 1983. Norad, A-4429, 840; A-4430-84, 841, 848.

meetings where different actors could meet to discuss the report and exchange experiences and ideas:

On many occasions it may be fruitful to discuss the evaluation report in a larger forum and in an informal way to ensure as open an exchange as possible of comments and ideas. To such a meeting one may invite interested and involved Norad staff, former and present project staff, representatives from consultancy firms, members of the evaluation team and other professionals from outside the organization. These may contribute to pulling the largest possible experience out of the evaluation which has been undertaken. The conclusions from such a meeting should be followed up by the working group, the Evaluation Office, or responsible office/department.²⁷⁶

Here, the Handbook's main concern was to enable an exchange of experiences, comments, and ideas, and to make this exchange *as open as possible*. The Handbook's encouragement of doing this "in an informal way" adds to the impression of it being less concerned with imposing control and forcing aid staff to change how they were acting. Instead, the Handbook seemed to suggest that enabling an open exchange, whether in writing or face-to-face, would also foster "general learning" and add to the accumulation of knowledge of aid and its effects.

The specifics of *how* an abridged report or an open discussion might lead to the report being used, remains unresolved. Indeed, as stated in the final sentence in the quote above, the conclusions of an open meeting should be followed up by the working group, the Evaluation Office, or the responsible office; but how? What authority did they have to impose changes emerging from the report, the comments, or the meeting? What if they disagreed? Clearly, as my analysis of the Handbook itself has demonstrated, the Evaluation Office and the technical and field offices might have conflicting views of how aid was to be done. Coordinating a document's circulation served to ensure that it landed on all the relevant desks; it did not ensure that it was read, far less that it was used. And yet, despite the institutionalized distance between the evaluation report and its users, the very action on part of its users was what determined its value.

In this way, an evaluation report departs in important ways from a work of science. While clearly being a *technology of seeing*, it is always also a *technology of politics*. I have suggested to capture this combination in the concept of *evaluation optics* to describe a document which is simultaneously expected to follow basic principles of scientific writing and at the same time function as a management tool. This dual expectation makes the preparation, writing, and uptake of the evaluation report a highly complicated process: The evaluations were in themselves expected to have tangible results in ways echoing the very aid projects they were investigating.

²⁷⁶ Norad 1981 *Handbook*, p. 31-32. Norwegian quote: "I mange tilfeller kan det være fruktbart å diskutere evalueringsrapporten i et større forum, gjerne på en uformell måte for å sikre en mest mulig åpen utveksling av kommentarer og ideer. Til et slikt møte kan en invitere interesserte og involverte personer i NORAD, tidligere og nåværende prosjektpersonell, representanter for konsulent-firmaer, medlemmer av evalueringsteamet og andre fagfolk utenom organisasjonen. Disse kan bidra til å trekke størst mulig erfaring ut av den evalueringen som er foretatt. Konklusjonene fra et slikt møte bør følges opp av arbeidsgruppa, Evalfo, eller av ansvarlig kontor/avdeling."

The promise of evaluation which the Handbook was promoting rested upon both a comprehensive processes of writing, storage, and circulation and upon high expectations of what the reports themselves might achieve. Making aid an evaluable object would require a radical transformation of how aid was being done. To what extent would the evaluation staff be able to start such a transformation? Indicative answers to this question emerge from the Handbook's appendices.

On the authority of appendices

In this final section of the chapter, I will investigate a part of the Handbook which is easily overlooked, yet, as I will argue, has great significance: The appendices. The Handbook had four appendices, two of which I have already analyzed in detail in previous sections:

- Appendix I. Director's Instruction for evaluation of aid interventions
- Appendix II. Standard format for Terms of Reference
- Appendix III. Suggestion for structuring of evaluation report
- Appendix IX. Example of use of the goal pyramid²⁷⁷

Appendices such as these may serve several purposes: In the above, the appendices are a formally approved mandate (for the Evaluation Office), two templates (for Terms of Reference documents and evaluation reports), and an example (of how to use the goal pyramid). Also numerous other documents might constitute an appendix; appendix 3 itself included a list expected to be included in an evaluation report: The evaluation team's own mandate; a program of their field work; a list of referenced literature; overview of interviewees; survey (if used).²⁷⁸ Following my analysis throughout this chapter, I will argue that these appendices were critical in enabling *circulating reference*: Claims in an evaluation report are backed up by the possibility to trace them back through the text, to the appendices, and back into the world of research literature, data collection, and project archives. Furthermore, the appendices to the evaluation report might serve to strengthen the authority of the evaluation team by demonstrating that their work methods had been thorough and strong, that they had overview over the relevant literature, and that they had fulfilled the mandate they were given. To that extent, the appendice had also the effect of *granting authority and weight* to the report, its writers, and thus also its conclusions.

The Handbook's appendices had different effects than those of an evaluation report, but were equally important for the authority of the document and its writers. In the following, I will concentrate my analysis on Appendix 1, as I will argue that it was especially important for establishing authority. This document formally established the mandate of the Evaluation Office: Their tasks, routines, and responsibilities both in individual evaluations and the annual evaluation program. It specified both how and when different offices should be involved and what texts should be written and read by whom at what time. In sum, the instruction described

²⁷⁷ Norad 1981 *Handbook*, table of contents. In Norwegian: «Appendix I. Direktørinstruks for evaluering av bistandstiltak / Appendix II. Standard utforming av mandat / Appendix III. Forslag til disposisjon av evalueringsrapport / Appendix IV. Eksempel på bruk av målsettingspyramiden»

²⁷⁸ 1981 *Handbook*, Appendix 3.

the internal organizational landscape of Norad's evaluation work, situating the Evaluation Office as a hub in this landscape and distinguishing their specific area of expertise. Furthermore, the very document was vested with authority from Norad's top management: It was titled "Director's Instruction for evaluation of aid interventions"; it ended with the signature of Director General Arne Arnesen; and in the top corner on the first page, it stated to have been approved by Norad's board on January 22, 1981, one month after the finalization of the Handbook.

Furthermore, the Instruction referred to the Handbook for further details on the evaluation process. Hence, if read in isolation, the template was an authoritative document referring to another document for more detailed descriptions of the practicalities of evaluation. In this way, the Handbook might also be conceived of as an appendix to the Instruction. When contrasting the main body of the Handbook to its far more precise and condensed appendices, the Handbook emerges as what I with Hilgartner will suggest to understand as an *act of persuasion* more than a manual for doing a specific work task.²⁷⁹ In a pedagogical way, it introduces its reader to a new approach to aid work, complete with a new language, a new model, a new matrix and new demands for what it means to be a good aid worker. *The reader* is expected to be experienced in aid, but also hesitant to change. But although the Handbook strongly argues for implementing the new approach across Norad and throughout the life of a project, from the inception of an idea to the follow-up of an evaluation, the notion of evaluability at the same time seems open to some negotiation. The Handbook points to unresolved and contradictory issues and discusses conflicts of interest and inherent tensions in aid. In these sections, *the author's voice* emerges more clearly. Named in the preface, the author is clearly the Evalfo staff headed by Helge Kjekshus, but the author function is also dissolved by Evalfo by their explicit embedding of the writing process within Norad at large.

At the same time, the Norad director, Arne Arnesen, also emerges as an important author from his signature on the Evaluation Instruction, the first of the Handbook's four appendices. This document, through Arnesen's signature and the board's endorsement (referred on the Instruction's first page) increased Evalfo's authority and legitimacy: The Instruction's author function connects Evalfo directly to Norad's top management and signifies that they have the Board and the Director's support. If Evalfo did not do what the Instruction instructed, they would not be doing their job. To that end, the Instruction served to both reduce and expand Evalfo's autonomy: They were bound by the management's will, and might thus point onwards to management if meeting opposition from other Norad offices. In this way, we may read the Handbook as a means of preparing Norad staff to accept and conform to the new evaluation regime explicated by the new Evaluation Instruction. The handbook explained and argued in favor of the production of evaluability; the Instruction formally enabled the production of evaluations. By simply pointing to the Handbook as the basis for the Instruction, the Director indirectly endorsed not only the new evaluation optics,

²⁷⁹ Hilgartner 2000.

but also the whole concept of systematic aid assessment, with its potential for radical transformation of how aid was being done.

In this way, the the appendices, and especially Appendix 1, were where the authority rested. It was to the Director's Instruction the evaluation staff might point to argue for the importance and relevance of their work. Together with Appendix 1, Appendices 2 and 3 served to establish evaluation as a distinct field of expertise, a distinct field of work, and a distinct way of writing (see sections above for further analyses of the latter two documents). They order Norad's evaluation work in a specific way, including both the role of evaluation within Norad, the role of the Evaluation Office within Norad, and the role of Norad staff in the individual evaluations. In this way, they in combination both developed the optics of evaluation and the routines and system which would enable its use.

Yet, the authority of the Evaluation Office only reached so far: the Instruction did not vest them with any authority to push through the changes they saw necessary in aid administration aid large. Their mandate was confined to doing evaluations. Appendix 4 attests to this: It concerned the use of the goal pyramid, i.e. the new planning device which use the Handbook argued was necessary if Norwegian aid was to made an evaluable object. This appendix had the status of an *example*: It showed how the goal pyramid might be used. The evaluation staff had no further authority to vest in this device than to demonstrate its use.

In sum, I will argue that the appendices, more than simply being add-ons to the Handbook, were most significant in understanding the authority of both the Handbook, the Evaluation Office, and its proposed changes to how aid was currently being done. With the Instruction, the evaluation staff was formally vested with the Director's and the Board's authority for expanding evaluation work in Norad. The appendices show how the work of formalizing and standardizing evaluation work was well underway by 1980. Yet, the appendices also demonstrate the limits of the Evaluation Office: While Norad's Director had in general terms endorsed the Handbook, the office had no formal support for the potentially radical transformations of the aid administration at large. Through its work with preparing the Handbook and gaining its own Instruction, the evaluation staff had clearly managed to establish evaluation as a distinct field of expertise; yet they seem to have had less support for the ramifications of systematic aid assessment, where all staff would intensify their writing, circulation, and storing of aid documents. These parts of the Handbook remained an act of persuasion more than a guide for action.

Chapter conclusions

In this chapter, I have shown how aid evaluation was first institutionalized within the Norwegian foreign aid administration (Norad). A distinct Office of Evaluation and Research was established in 1977, staffed with three social scientists experienced both within new academic approaches to development and in hands-on aid work – a combination which enabled a whole new way of seeing aid. I argued that the initial direct connection between evaluation and research, notably critical and qualitative social science, is vital for

understanding the evaluation staff's visions of transforming Norwegian aid into an evaluable object. The office was actively moving beyond Norad, bringing back both fundamental critiques of aid; specific tools and systems of evaluation and administration; and external support for their work voiced in Parliament.

The main task of the new Evaluation Office, as described in their mandate issued in January 1981, was to produce more and better evaluations of Norwegian aid projects. How this was to be done was not straightforward. For this reason, writing a handbook of how and why to do evaluations was among the Evaluation Office's first major concerns. Beginning the work in 1978, the office spent about two years travelling, collecting experiences and handbooks from other agencies within and beyond aid; drafting and redrafting their handbook; and discussing its contents with colleagues in other offices. The result of this prolonged process was the *Handbook of Evaluation Questions*, finalized in December 1980, published early 1981, and circulated within Norad during the next months.

In the *Handbook of Evaluation Questions*, practical tools for doing evaluations was but a minor part. The specifics of evaluation work was described mainly in the appendices, which included both the Evaluation Office's mandate and templates for Terms of Reference documents (deployed to describe and commission evaluation assignments) and for how to structure an evaluation report. To that end, the appendices attest to how evaluation was emerging as a distinct professional field with a formalized organizational home and standardized textual tools.

Yet the narrative of the Handbook, I will argue, was not directed mainly towards fellow evaluation professionals or prospective evaluation report writers; rather, it was arguing that for evaluation to even be possible, all aid staff throughout Norad would have to change how they were currently doing their work. To that end, I have argued that the main concern of the Handbook was to convince Norwegian aid workers about the necessity of employing its new tools and systems for enabling aid to become an evaluable object; in a word, to enable what I have suggested to call *evaluability*.

In my analysis of the Handbook, I have sought to unpack the ramifications of this point: what would evaluability, as it was envisioned by the Evaluation Office, require? What would the new approach of "systematic aid assessment" entail? Firstly, it involved seeing all parts of aid work – from the initial planning through the practical work and follow-up to the potential final evaluation – as integrated aspects, in which work done during planning would have direct effects both upon the project itself and upon the possibility to evaluate it in the future. Doing evaluations depended upon available data about the project in question, and such data could only be produced while the project was still unfolding. Hence, the tools of evaluation, what I have suggested to call *optics of evaluation*, could not function without other staff already having done comprehensive work.

More specifically, what the Handbook called for was to intensify staff writing both during project planning (by writing and rewriting *appraisals*) and while implementing the project (by *monitoring* the project through *continuous reporting*). While not discussing in

much detail how the continuous reporting should best be done, it was most specific on how to do appraisals. Here, it introduced two new tools all aid staff were called upon to employ, what I with Latour and Woolgar have analyzed as inscription devices: The *goal pyramid*, with which aid staff would articulate the project's overarching development goal and establish logical connections between this goal, expected results, and project activities. As a next step, staff were asked to fill in an *assessment matrix* (also called a *logical framework*) which made them articulate how one might verify whether the activities had indeed led to the expected results and ultimately achieved its goal. In doing so, the Handbook asserted the importance of producing valid and reliable data and indicators about the project, and define so-called *means of verification* (the specific ways in which the relation between activities, results and goals could be established).

The new tools not only entailed a new set of writing routines. Moreover, these tools would force staff to make explicit their own assumptions about how the project would cause the desired change in its specific site and about their own role in this process. The Handbook repeatedly referred to social sciences methods, approaches, and expertise, notably qualitative methods and self-reflexivity. In doing so, it employed the metaphor of *seeing* in multiple ways – including its contradiction, *blindness* – to highlight how aid staff often did not properly see the specific dynamics and preconditions of the site into which they were intervening. In this way, the Handbook served to operationalize the fundamental critique of aid, voiced first by external social scientists and frustrated aid workers and from 1977 by Norad's own evaluation staff, and turn it into practical tools for doing aid. These specific tools were most retrieved from public agencies in other countries whose organizations, practices, and rationales were not necessarily related to the critical social science approach.

In my analysis, I have argued that a key feature of the Evaluation Office's new approach was what I with Latour have suggested to call a *chain of translations*: The numerous individual documents which the Handbook required staff to write were important because they in combination would enable an external gaze upon aid: both from the outside in and from the future backwards. This bore the potential to move back and forth in time through documents. To capture this point, I have employed Latour's concept of *circulating reference*, arguing that this was what would connect the project's past with its present and ultimately articulate its potential futures. The very reality of the project – the ability to connect it directly to changes in the world – depended on the circulating reference being intact. In a word, what this would enable, I have suggested, was *traceability*. To enable traceability, it was crucial that staff employed the new inscription devices, engaged in meticulous continuous writing, and compiled a rich project archive.

For this reason I have argued that evaluation must be conceived of in an expansive way: not only did it depend on traceability, that is, staff writing documents throughout the life of the project; moreover, every evaluation assignment demanded comprehensive preparations by and beyond the Evaluation Office. Hence, understanding evaluation as the work of an evaluation team going through data and writing a report is not sufficient for grasping the

ramifications of what it would entail to make aid an evaluable object. Doing an individual evaluation was but one part in a long chain of documents and actions extending far beyond the work of an evaluation team. Numerous drafts and redrafts of an evaluation's purpose, terms of reference, the report itself, and follow-up comments were supposed to circulate throughout the aid administration. Hence, employing the evaluation optic would not be possible without a concerted, sustained effort by a larger number of offices and staff dispersed in Oslo and the project site.

While I have analyzed the Handbook and its visions of evaluability with concepts developed to explain how science is done and how truths are established, a key dimension of the evaluation optics is how they are simultaneously *technologies of seeing* and *technologies of politics*: They are expected both to follow key principles of scientific writing, notably enable and sustain circular reference, and yet also to be useful for the aid administration. Hence, their circuits of circulation are very different from those of science: albeit indeed being defined intermittently as independent, neutral, and distanced from hands-on aid work, evaluations are both emerging from and returning to the world of politics and administration. Indeed, as the Handbook asserted: "An evaluation report – no matter how good it might be – has little value if it is not being used."²⁸⁰

I opened this chapter with a description of the Handbook's cover illustration: A human hand pinching the Norad logo between its thumb and index finger. I suggested that the image evoked the work of a scientist investigating her research object. The metaphor suggests that evaluation optics enables aid to be grasped, seen, and made mobile: By means of text, a project may move across long distances. But, as John Law reminds us, as something moves, it also changes.²⁸¹ With Asdal, I will argue that documents have transformative capacities, but it is not a given what this transformation will entail in a particular situation. The visions of the Evaluation Office as of 1980, as they are materialized in the *Handbook of Evaluation Questions*, would clearly require fundamental transformations to how aid was being done in Norway. But having argued that such transformations were needed did of course not necessarily mean that they were accepted, gained authority, and were realized. The comprehensiveness of the new approach and the concerted action needed for it to be realized also made it vulnerable.

What happened with the new approach and its proposed new evaluation optics and planning tools? In the coming chapters, I will investigate this question through an analysis of one specific aid project and how it was planned, realized, and assessed. My aim will in part be to understand how the new tools were introduced and used (if at all), but more so, I will seek to investigate the project from the inside out. Rather than taking at face value the Handbook's argument that staff did not write enough, I will follow the making of an aid project through the archives and look for what staff in fact did write. In the next chapter, I will investigate how an aid project was initiated at the point in time when the Handbook was launched. In

²⁸⁰ Norad 1981 *Handbook*, p. 31.

²⁸¹ Law 2006 [1997].

doing so, I will ask how the documents were written, read, and circulated, and what they enabled. How did the routine work of the aid administration enable a new object of aid to be realized, and to what extent did the object itself act back upon the routines of aid?

Chapter 3: Tracing an aid project through the archives

Introduction

In april 1980, the Norwegian aid office in Maputo, the capital of Mozambique, received an informal request for a new aid project from the government of Mozambique. Having gained its independence from Portugal in 1975, Mozambique was a young nation with a government based in the independence movement, Frelimo. Norway, who at the time was a vocal supporter of African independence movements, was eager to support the new nation and made it one of its so-called “main cooperation countries” from 1977. The informal request posed in april 1980 would potentially include a whole new sector in the Norwegian aid portfolio: The Mozambican government wanted to explore the potential for petroleum resources within their borders, and were inquiring into the possibility of gaining assistance from Norwegian petroleum experts to further investigate this matter and, hopefully, help build a national oil sector that could help fuel the government’s ambitious development plans.

In this chapter, I will analyze how this informal request spurred a long chain of documents that culminated in the signing of a contract between the two nations of Norway and Mozambique. In the process, numerous documents were written and made to circulate between offices in Maputo, Oslo, and Stavanger – Norway’s “oil capital,” in which the oil companies and the public oil administration held office. In undertaking this analysis, I will be particularly concerned with how the writing and circulation of documents served to gradually realize the new aid project, long before it was formally approved. By following the realization of the project step by step, document by document, I will seek to understand how an aid project at this point in time, 1980-81, came into being. Bearing in mind the strong critique voiced by the Evaluation Office of how Norad staff were planning their aid projects, what may this particular planning process tell us about the daily routines of the aid administration? In a word, how did they go about doing their *paperwork*, and what did this paperwork enable?

Furthermore, analyzing how this new project came into being also necessitates an inquiry into what the project itself was all about. The project is of particular interest because it was established at a moment in time when oil was emerging as a completely new object of Norwegian aid. In 1980, Norway was itself a young oil nation, yet it was increasingly experiencing interest from other nations with regards to how to handle their oil resources. In responding to such requests for assistance, how would Norway in practical terms share its historical experience? How was this translation done, and what happened in the process? Making the Norwegian oil experience an object of aid was one way of doing this. For the purposes of my analysis, key questions become: What happened when oil was made an object of aid? How did the aid administration turn the Norwegian oil experience into an object that might be incorporated into their existing routines and systems?

Finally, in investigating how this particular project emerged through writing, I will also seek to tease out how aid staff and oil staff were engaged in multiple, co-existing forms of evaluation. While the Evaluation Office served to establish a terminology and an administrative system in which evaluation was but one of three distinct aspects of so-called systematic aid assessment, I will show how staff from the Norwegian Petroleum Directorate, whom Norad engaged to help realize the new oil aid project in Mozambique, conceived of evaluation in a way that differed from Norad's in important ways. When seeking to make oil an object of aid, the aid staff would have to reconcile their routines and concerns with those of the oil administration, including the latter's version of evaluation. And the way this was done, I will argue, was through the writing of documents.

An informal inquiry

The first occasion on which oil aid from Norway to Mozambique is documented to have been discussed, was during the so-called country program negotiations in Mozambique's capital of Maputo, in April, 1980.²⁸² The country program meeting was a well-established annual arena within Norwegian aid where government delegations from Norway and the aid receiving country met to discuss the complete scope of their ongoing aid cooperation. The first country agreement had been signed in 1977, when Norway decided to make Mozambique a so-called main cooperation country ("hovedsamarbeidsland"). This involved entering into a comprehensive four-year agreement about distribution of aid funds and also opening a Norad office in the capital, staffed with a residential representative, an assisting representative, and an administrative assistant. During the program's fourth year, a new four-year country agreement would have to be negotiated. In April 1980, the country program negotiations in Maputo therefore had a special function, as the present agreement was about to expire. Theoretically, then, the flow of aid funds from Norway to Mozambique could stop at the end of the year.

The delegations from both countries were vested with the formal authority from their respective governments to sign two key documents: the *meeting minutes* where the previous year's activities were discussed and the *program document* outlining plans for the coming year. Because of this formal function, the meeting was carefully prepared. On the Norwegian side, the delegation brought with them a clear instruction from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) on which issues to raise, which signals to give, what new initiatives to suggest, which requests to accept, and which requests to decline. Drafts of the instruction had in advance been circulated within the Ministry and Norad before being formally approved and submitted to the delegation. During the meeting, the delegations presented their views of the cooperation between the two countries and of the progress of the aid program, before they negotiated on how to proceed.²⁸³

²⁸² «Mosambik Landprogram 1981-1984», MFA 37-4/187-8. The meeting took place April 16-19, 1980.

²⁸³ «Mosambik Landprogram 1981-1984», MFA 37-4/187-8. I have not been able to retrieve archival material on the process leading up to the country program negotiations in April 1980; the general description of the process

The country program meeting thus involved a form of assessment of the aid portfolio at large: It provided an opportunity to consider the past and the future in combination by discussing what had been achieved and how to proceed. The process demonstrates how the established systems of aid planning, management, and assessment were institutionalized in the form of bilateral agreements and systems for communication, in which personal contact was of great importance: both through the presence of Norad's resident representative in Maputo, who enabled a close routine connection between Norad, the recipient government, and the ongoing aid projects; through the annual program negotiations, where the aid relation was made part of the diplomatic deliberations of the Ministry; and through regular travels and visits by Norwegians to Mozambique and Mozambicans to Norway. The meetings and travels also involved circulation of multiple versions of texts, both prior to and after the country program negotiations. Subsequent drafts moved between the different sites, and the final version laid the premise for the delegates' actions.

In 1980, the two delegations meeting in Maputo would have to attend not only to the aid activities of the previous and the coming year, but also to the past and future four-year periods as a whole. There is no indication that Norway considered *not* renewing the agreement; on the contrary, the suggested new country program included considerable budget expansions, and the funds for the coming year had already been allocated. For the following years, less and less allocations were specified.²⁸⁴ Hence, the future of the program was flexible and open, waiting to be filled with specific projects and activities.

The issue of *oil* was raised informally during the country negotiations in April 1980.²⁸⁵ It was not included in the formally approved country program; no new budget post was assigned to the issue of oil. There is no document trace of the informal inquiry itself. Hence, the content of this informal inquiry, the specifics how it was raised, discussed, and circulated, is not available.²⁸⁶ We may expect that the topic had been discussed with Norad's resident representative before the meeting. On any occasion, the informal inquiry soon initiated a bureaucratic process to accommodate the inquiry. This process immediately started producing a document trail which may be retraced through Norad's and the Ministry's archives. The documents show how the inquiry moved within and beyond the aid administration, from office to office across Norwegian state agencies, how staff made an effort to keep them in motion, and how the project during this process gradually gained reality.

Three weeks after the country program meeting, the Country Office sent a memo to

is therefore based on the processes from 1981 onwards. I have no reason to assume that the general process was different in 1980 than in the subsequent years beyond what is discussed above.

²⁸⁴ 50 million Norwegian kroner (NOK) for each year during 1981-1984, compared to 40 million NOK in 1980. All 50 millions were allocated in 1981; 40 mill. in 1982; 12,5 mill. in 1983; and 5,1 million out of the annual 50 million NOK in 1984. Cf. the program budget in Appendix 1 to the «Mozambik Landprogram 1981-1984», MFA 37-4/187-8.

²⁸⁵ Memo, Country Office to the Director via the Planning Office, 29.5.1980. Norad Eaa-L0248.

²⁸⁶ Details on this might have been possible to retrieve from actors participating in these discussions, but for the purposes of this thesis, the *effects* of the request - what it became and how - has been the main concern.

the Office of Study Grants and Expert Missions (from here on: the Expert Office).²⁸⁷ The Country Office was the point of contact in Oslo for all of Norad's residential representatives, including Maputo; the Expert Office handled requests for technical assistance and administered the Norwegian experts working abroad. For this reason, the Expert Office worked closely with numerous other Norwegian public agencies from whom Norad requested staff for international missions. Among these agencies was the Norwegian Petroleum Directorate (NPD), located in Stavanger on the Western coast of Norway, close to the international oil companies' Norwegian headquarters and the petroleum supply industry's busy shipyards and workshops.

Within a few weeks after the Country Office forwarded the informal inquiry from Maputo, the Expert Office and NPD agreed that a senior NPD staff member would travel to Maputo on a fact-finding mission that same summer; the specific dates would be determined «as soon as possible».²⁸⁸ Following normal procedure, Norad would fund the travel and compensate NPD for their loss of work hours. The expenses would be carried by the country program, which included a budget post for technical assistance. In this way, the informal inquiry posed in Maputo in Mozambique was swiftly put in motion by the aid staff in Oslo.

Making oil an object of aid

Although oil aid was a new issue in the Mozambican setting, the object was not new in Norad. The longstanding Office of Shipping and Industry had recently been renamed “the Office of Shipping, Industry, and Oil”. The Expert Office had already established routines for how to make oil a matter of aid procedures. The Mozambican inquiry could therefore be handled within an already well-established relation between Norad and the Norwegian Petroleum Directorate, which dated back to 1975.²⁸⁹ By 1980, Norad had commissioned NPD staff for missions to Portugal, Tanzania, Vietnam, Jamaica, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan.²⁹⁰

By 1980, the cooperation between Norad and the NPD had expanded to the extent that the two agencies started discussing how they could «increase the NPD's work capacity on the desired technical level».²⁹¹ On April 30, 1980, two weeks after the meeting in Maputo and one week before Mozambique's informal inquiry arrived at the Expert Office in Oslo, they signed an agreement regulating the cooperation between them in more detail: the NPD agreed to participate in expert missions on a regular basis while Norad agreed to finance the

²⁸⁷ In Norwegian: Landkontoret and Kontoret for stipendiater og internasjonale oppdrag (SIO, often referred to as «Stipendiatkontoret»).

²⁸⁸ Memo, Expert Office to Country Office, 27.05.80. Norad Eaa-L0248.

²⁸⁹ NPD's Annual Report, 1975.

²⁹⁰ NPD's first three Norad assignments were missions to Portugal, Tanzania and Vietnam in 1976; during the next five years, NPD staff continued visiting these three as well as Jamaica (from 1977), Sri Lanka (from 1978), and Pakistan (from 1979) Cf. Annual reports from the Norwegian Petroleum Directorate, 1975-1979. From 1976, the reports started including a short paragraph with the title «Aid to foreign states». NPD also took part in official Norwegian missions to and India and China (in 1979 and 1980).

²⁹¹ NPD annual report 1979, p. 74. Full Norwegian quote: «Som allerede nevnt i tidligere årsberetninger, har Oljedirektoratets engasjement på denne sektor fortsatt å øke i de senere år. Mulige løsninger som vil øke Oljedirektoratets arbeidskapasitet på det ønskede fagnivå, diskuteres nå med Norad.»

equivalent of two man-years of NPD staff time.²⁹² When the Expert Office a few weeks later in an internal Norad memo articulated their support for sending an NPD staff member to Maputo on a «fact-finding mission», they could simply refer to the new joint agreement to justify their recommendation.²⁹³

The growing attention to oil as a potential object of Norwegian foreign aid was not restricted to Norad and the NPD alone. The concept of oil aid was gaining support and encouragement also from members of parliament and from several governmental ministries. During the parliamentary debate to which I referred in the previous chapter, the same MP who endorsed evaluation also endorsed oil aid, notably how private firms were included in expert missions:

(...) a fruitful cooperation has developed with the Petroleum Directorate about resource mapping, advice, and training in relation to planned offshore activities in certain developing countries. A range of private companies are also pulled into this aspect of aid activities, where Norway has special competence to offer.²⁹⁴

The issue was not raised by anyone else during the debate; the quote merely serves to show how oil aid was an expanding object in Norway at the turn of the decade. Attention and support was increasing; the procedures of cooperation and administration were being formalized. The informal inquiry posed by the Mozambican government fit smoothly into the ongoing and expanding cooperation between Norad and the Norwegian Petroleum Directorate. For this reason, when the informal Mozambican inquiry arrived in Oslo, there was no reason to object; on the contrary, there was every reason to pursue the request. The expanding country program made more aid funds available, which enabled the NPD to make more staff time available. In combination, this meant that the informal inquiry could be accommodated, and the project moved one step further in the process of becoming a formalized project.

A formal, yet still unclear request

Towards the end of May 1980, Norad received a formal request from the government of Mozambique for an aid project on oil. The formal request is not itself available in the archive, but was referred to in a memo written by the Country Office with the aim of gaining approval from Norad's leadership to proceed with the project. The memo outlined the details of the potential new aid project: «Mozambique - aid to the oil sector». It explained that an NPD staff member was ready to travel and that the Mozambican government had now “formalized their request for aid for various activities on the oil sector, as previously indicated”.²⁹⁵ Clearly, the

²⁹² NPD annual report 1980, p. 92.

²⁹³ Memo, Expert Office to Country Office, 27.5.1980. Norad Eaa-L0248.

²⁹⁴ Tidende St. 1980-81, p. 3515. Quote from MP Lars Roar Langslet (Conservative party, *Høyre*). Norwegian quote: “Det har f.eks. utviklet seg et fruktbart samarbeid med Oljedirektoratet om ressurskartlegging, rådgivning og opplæring i forbindelse med planlagt offshorevirksomhet i enkelte u-land. En rekke private firmaer er også trukket inn i denne side av bistandsvirksomheten, hvor Norge har særlig kompetanse å tilby.” Oil aid was not mentioned by anyone else in the debate, neither was it mentioned in the white paper from the Ministry.

²⁹⁵ Memo, Country Office to the Director via the Planning Office, 29.5.1980, p.1. Norad Eaa-L0248. Norwegian quote: “Mosambik har nå formalisert sin anmodning om bistand til ulike aktiviteter på oljesektoren, som tidligere antydte under landprogramdrøftingene i år.”

Country Office had been waiting for this document to arrive from Maputo in order to continue the process that they had already set in motion.

In the two-page memo, the Country Office argued its case to convince Norad's Director General and the head of the Planning Office, who had the overall responsibility for the Norwegian aid portfolio's combined profile and orientation. The Country Office first outlined the content of Mozambique's request: they were asking for support from the Norwegian Petroleum Directorate to undertake seismic investigations and gain advice in the matters of legal regulation and taxation of the international oil companies' activities. The memo explained that the request included documentation of considerable exploration activities in Mozambique during colonial rule. The newly independent government had recently reopened past negotiations with international oil companies, and «there can be little doubt that Mozambique has a need to strengthen its technical competency for such negotiations».²⁹⁶

There can be little doubt that Mozambique has a need: This argument, combined with the readily available NPD staff, made the emerging project a seemingly clear-cut issue. There were, however, two potentially complicating factors to this request, the Country Office admitted. The first possible complication was that the request ran contrary to the so-called *concentration principle* guiding Norwegian aid. This principle entailed that Norway should only support a limited amount of sectors and countries so as not to spread its aid activities too thin.²⁹⁷ But, as the Country Office argued: «There can be little doubt about the aid needs in this field, and as support to projects in the oil sector is not included in the concentration principle, there are no formal hindrances to accommodate the request.»²⁹⁸

Hence, the concentration principle was not a problem after all, because oil aid had been defined as an exception to this very rule. On the contrary, oil aid might be defined as a *priority*, since it had recently been deliberately exempted from the concentration principle. By explicitly addressing this critical nuance, the Country Office avoided a situation where the request was deemed favorable on its own terms but nevertheless declined because of its lack of fit within the overall Norwegian aid policy. In this way, a sector-specific concern (the opportunity to expand Norwegian oil aid) and a site-specific concern (Mozambique's demonstrable need for support to build an oil sector) were given the most weight.

The second possible complication in pursuing the project was that the request, although now formal, was «somewhat unclear with regards to the scale and type of technical assistance desired». This situation might hypothetically have prompted the Country Office to return the request and demand clarifications before it could be further assessed. As I showed

²⁹⁶ Memo, Country Office to the Director, 29.5.1980, p. 1.

²⁹⁷ Norwegian aid was initially limited to a few countries (by 1974 the majority of funds were granted to projects in Bangladesh, Botswana, India, Pakistan, Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia), yet during the 1970s and 1980s, the amount of countries receiving aid was growing. A government white paper argued in 1970 that the aid should still be "concentrated to a limited amount of countries" (quoted in Ruud and Kjerland 2003, p. 229). This notion was what came to be termed the "concentration principle". While later governments and parliaments also endorsed this principle, aid was in practice being granted to a steadily increasing amount of countries.

²⁹⁸ Memo, Country Office to the Director, 29.5.1980, p. 1.

in Chapter 2 of this dissertation, articulating clear project goals was a core concern of the Evaluation Office; in fact, they stated in the Handbook that all documents should reflect that “one knows precisely what one wants to achieve with the project”.²⁹⁹ Clearly, this was also a concern for the Country Office in this particular case; in other words, aid staff were already aware of the importance of clear requests. But rather than demanding a clearer request before moving on, the Country Office argued that precisely *because* the request was unclear, they recommended that an «assignment was to be undertaken».

More specifically, what the memo suggested was that an NPD staff member would travel on a fact-finding mission to Maputo to assess the potential of a Norwegian oil aid project. These results would then serve as a basis for Norad’s decision on whether to proceed. In this way, the Country Office added a theoretical exit option for the planning process, in that Norad would *wait* with further assessing the request until the report was ready.³⁰⁰ Hence, the future of the potential project rested upon the results of the fact-finding mission. The memo was endorsed by the Director General and the Planning Office during the next few days, and the Expert Office took on the task of preparing the mission.³⁰¹

In this way, two potential complications to realizing the project idea – the concentration principle and the unclear request – was fended off by the Oslo staff. This happened in writing, in specific documents. While the *Handbook of Evaluation Questions*, which at the time was being prepared by another Norad office, argued for more detailed documents to enable evaluability, the oil aid project indeed emerged *within* the documents – but these documents played a different role than the Handbook envisioned. Rather than enabling evaluability, they enabled the swift transformation of an informal inquiry into a routine process.

This particular process alerts us to a willingness within the Norwegian aid administration at the time to swiftly accommodate new requests from governments receiving Norwegian foreign aid. Rather than stopping at possible hindrances, staff helped the request onwards by pointing to available exceptions and potential solutions. This was made possible by expanding budgets, to the extent that stopping the process seems not even to have been considered an option. Already at this point, in early June 1980, the willingness to respond swiftly to the needs of the aid-receiving government involved downplaying the necessity of articulating a clear request. There existed a specific need to which NPD was ready to respond, and Norad offices cooperated in articulating the argument in favor of realizing the project idea.

This situation, where the concern for a swift process trumped the concern for a clear request, might serve as an example of what the Evaluation Office had identified as a core problem with how Norwegian aid was being done at the time: that an incomplete and un-detailed chain of project documents would at a later point make it difficult to evaluate the project. In this case, the request from Mozambique for Norwegian assistance to build an oil

²⁹⁹ Norad 1981, Handbook of Evaluation Questions, p. 4.

³⁰⁰ Memo, Country Office to the Director, 29.5.1980, p. 1.

³⁰¹ Hand-written inscriptions on Memo, Country Office to the Director, 29.5.1980, pp. 1-2.

sector was moved swiftly through the aid offices to minimize delays in the start-up process. Instead of slowing down the process to wait for all documents to be in the proper shape, staff across the aid administration worked hard to maintain a high speed and accommodated the documents to this concern. They had both a clear goal and a specific result in mind: the realization of a new aid project for supporting the making of a Mozambican oil sector. This kind of goal and result clearly differed from what the Evaluation Office would have wanted.

A fact-finding mission

After the Norad's Director General had approved the Country Office's suggestions for the potential new aid project, the Expert Office moved on with the practical organizing of the NPD's fact-finding mission to Maputo. It is worth pausing here to consider the significance of who Norad sent to find the facts they needed for determining whether the project should be realized before proceeding to investigate the mission itself.

The Country Office had explicitly stated that the project request from Mozambique was unclear, and that Norad would need more information before proceeding. They therefore commissioned the NPD to assess the potential for starting an oil aid project. Hence, the question of whether an aid project on oil was worthwhile was made an oil-specific discussion. This move indicates how Norad at the time perceived that a project should be planned: The relevant object to explore when assessing an oil aid request was *oil*, not aid. Aid was the tool with which to enable Norwegian oil expertise to travel to Maputo; aid was what made it possible to put actors in contact. When compared to the Evaluation Office's visions for how projects should ideally be planned, this process was clearly defined from the outset as an oil-specific issue; thus the preparatory work was to be undertaken by *oil experts*.

The expert taking on this task was an experienced petroleum geologist and the current Director of Planning at the NPD, Farouk Al-Kasim. Al-Kasim, an Iraqi national, had moved to Norway in 1968 with his Norwegian wife and their three children. After having gained his education from Imperial College in London, UK in 1957 with funding from the Iraqi government,³⁰² he had worked a decade for the Iraqi Petroleum Company before relocating to Norway.³⁰³ In 1962, Al-Kasim had been in contact with the Geology Department at the University of Oslo, discussing the possibilities of doing a PhD. Upon his arrival in Oslo in 1968, he approached both his university contacts and the Ministry of Industry to inquire into potential positions with international oil companies.³⁰⁴ The Ministry promptly hired him as a

³⁰² Al-Kasim recounts how he during his studies at Imperial became interested in understanding the specific geological formations, soft rock, in Iraq that enabled the production of hydrocarbons. In pursuing this interest, he also challenged the "hard rock community" at Imperial's geology department, and with a friend proceeded to undertake field work on soft rock formations in France. Cf. geo365.no 2010, p. 4; Tonstad 2010, pp. 42-43.

³⁰³ The family had also previously considered moving to Norway; in 1962, Al-Kasim was about to do a Ph.D. at the University of Oslo but the family could not find housing. When in 1967 their third child was born with serious disabilities they arranged for the move to ensure that the child had access to necessary health care. Cf. Tonstad 2010, pp. 83-84, 89-91.

³⁰⁴ Tonstad 2010, pp. 92-94.

consultant, giving him the task of interpreting data received from the oil companies.³⁰⁵ After three months, he was offered a full-time position in the oil team in the Ministry. By 1980, he had been a key actor in the establishment and expansion of the Norwegian public oil administration.

In August, 1980, Farouk Al-Kasim left Stavanger for a four-day visit to Maputo. He communicated to Norad's office in Maputo that the trip was to be «a pure fact-finding mission for mapping of existing data and subsequent recommendations about the next step of the project».³⁰⁶ Here, he referred to «the project», even though, formally, Norad had not yet accepted the request or made a decision on how to proceed. The fact-finding mission was defined as a means to enable this very decision. As of yet, there was no project. But just by starting the process and establishing the relation between the Mozambican government and the NPD, the activities did indeed begin to gain the features of a project. From the NPD's perspective, it clearly was a project-in-the-making; their concern was how to proceed, to recommend a next step. Hence, the fact-finding mission had a forward-looking aim; it was part of an expected continued process. Finding facts was directly linked to preparing the project.

In this way, even writing memos with the titles «Mozambique – aid to the oil sector» and «Mozambique – oil cooperation» itself helped produce oil aid as an object within the aid administration. Although Norad did state that they would not make any decision before obtaining a more detailed report from the NPD, just starting the process clearly had the effect of producing expectations of a future project. For every step taken, stopping the process would seem more and more dramatic. Indeed, I have found no indications of any considerations to stop the process. On the contrary, it may seem that even asking for facts helped produce the project by filling a general request with specific content.

The question, then, was *how*, not *whether*, the project was to be realized. But what was a potential project supposed to contain? In addition to the intentions outlined in the formal request – seismic investigations of the bedrock offshore Mozambique; advice on legal regulation and taxation of resource exploitation; and assistance in negotiations with international oil companies about exploration concessions – the Mozambican Secretariat for Coal and Hydrocarbons (SECH) were also hoping that the visitor from the NPD could help

³⁰⁵ This story has the recent years been the object of public attention after Financial Times published a long interview with Al-Kasim titled “The Iraqi who saved Norway from oil” (29.8.2009). While Al-Kasim had for decades been held in high regard within the Norwegian oil sector, he was until then unknown to the general public. The Financial Times article presents the story of Al-Kasim's visit the Ministry as a strike of luck, omitting the part of his long-standing connection to leading Norwegian university geologists, and give his subsequent strong impact for Norway's “oil adventure” a near mythical status. A more sober and in-depth account was published in 2010 by the online magazine of the Norwegian Geologists' Society (www.geo365.no). Journalist Per Lars Tonstad published his authorized biography of Al-Kasim the same year. In 2012, Al-Kasim was granted the Royal Medal of Honor (statement from the Royal Castle, 24.9.2012).

³⁰⁶ Telex, Expert Office to Maputo Office, 4.7.1980. Norad Eaa-L0248. (The Expert Office organized all the practical matters relating to the trip, including flights, visa, hotel, and the details of Al-Kasim's plans. The Office of Shipping, Industry and Oil also took part in some of the formal preparations (Kontoret for skipsfart, industri og oljevirkksomhet).

them draw up a model for establishing a national oil company.³⁰⁷ In this way, the potential project was already expanding. The Mozambican secretariat clearly expected Al-Kasim to start sharing his experiences and recommendations as soon as possible. This expectation prompted Norad's Energy Office to emphasize that Al-Kasim's visit was a «pure fact-finding mission».³⁰⁸

During his four-day stay in Maputo, Al-Kasim tried to gain an overview of the available seismic data of the Mozambican oil and natural gas fields. No significant oil fields had been declared, but the material indicated three promising fields of natural gas.³⁰⁹ The existing data available in the ministry in Maputo was in general of good quality, he reported, but several challenges remained: Firstly, several data catalogues were in Portuguese and would therefore have to be translated into English if oil companies and external experts were to analyze them. Secondly, the data were dispersed across several sites, some in uncertain locations. For example, a set of seismic data tapes from 1968 were reported to be stored in Houston, Texas by an agency named Geodata.³¹⁰ Hence, Mozambican oil data would have to be located and retrieved from multiple sites before the data analysis could even begin.

The topic of data quickly turned into an issue of timing and speed in a meeting between Al-Kasim and the Mozambican State Secretary for Coal and Hydrocarbons, Mr. Osman.³¹¹ Al-Kasim explained that the process of systematizing the existing data and gathering additional data would probably take two years, after which the oil companies normally spent about one year assessing the government's analyses. One should therefore expect three years to pass before exploration drilling could begin. This timeframe was clearly not what the Mozambican government had envisioned. According to Al-Kasim, «State Secretary Osman most clearly expressed that Mozambique wanted to expedite the progress in their investigations in the oil/gas sector and that the country therefore wanted as soon as possible to proceed to call concessions (allocation of exploration blocs) to foreign companies».³¹² By stating its wish to «expedite the progress» and start negotiations «as soon as possible», the Mozambican government urged Al-Kasim to consider how to speed up the process.

Al-Kasim cautioned Mr. Osman and Norad about this speeding-up approach. He argued that before Mozambique could call its first round of concessions, the government would have to:

³⁰⁷ Telex, Maputo Office to Energy Office, 13.6.1980. Norad Eaa-L0248.

³⁰⁸ Telex, Expert Office to Maputo Office, 4.7.1980. Norad Eaa-L0248. Norwegian quote: "det vil bli en ren fact finding mission for kartlegging av eksisterende data og paafølgende anbefaling om neste skritt i prosjektet."

³⁰⁹ Memo, Expert Office to Planning Office, 22.9.1980. Norad Eaa-L0248. Al-Kasim found that there had been drilled 59 wells by international oil companies during colonial times, out of which 11 were drilled offshore. The largest of the natural gas fields, Pande, was located on the Mozambican mainland, along the coast in the middle part of the country.

³¹⁰ Telex, Expert Office to Maputo Office, 28.10.1980. Norad Eaa-L0248.

³¹¹ He was referred to as State Secretary Osman; no first name was included in the memos.

³¹² Memo, Expert Office to Planning Office, 22.9.1980, p. 2.

gain a best possible picture (...) [of] the possible existence of oil and natural gas in the blocks they wish to announce. One way of gaining such knowledge would be to undertake new and independent seismic investigations oneself (financed e.g. by NORAD) with subsequent handling and interpretation of data.³¹³

It was this process that Al-Kasim expected would take a total of three years. But considering the Mozambican government's strong wish to start the exploration as soon as possible, he suggested a possible alternative approach in which Mozambique did not do the work all over again by themselves, but rather commissioned new analyses of the existing data. State Secretary Osman agreed to this, and Al-Kasim suggested in his report back to Norad that Norad should fund "an evaluation of the existing seismic data".³¹⁴

Norad should fund an *evaluation*: Clearly, what Al-Kasim was recommending was not to involve Norad's Evaluation Office. What needed to be evaluated, in Al-Kasim's view, was *the existing seismic data*. In other words, the task would be to retrieve the now sprawled data produced from past drilling, and analyze these data again. His own fact-finding mission had mapped the existing data – i.e. found out what wells had been drilled, what data had been retrieved, and where these data were located – while the work of evaluating the data remained. The purpose of the evaluation would be to "gain a best possible picture" of the "possible existence" of oil and gas in Mozambique. Doing an evaluation would thereby enable the NPD, Norad, and the Mozambican government to identify potential oil and natural gas – what its properties were, how much there was of it, and where it was located. In this way, an evaluation would contribute to distinguishing the features of Mozambican petroleum, in other words, to establish it as a specific object. In Al-Kasim's view, it was necessary to establish the object before moving forward with negotiations or formulating legislation. First, it was necessary to build an archive of oil data and evaluate these data. Importantly, evaluating the existing data was the second-best option; Al-Kasim had recommended producing new data, but in order to save time, he agreed to work with the existing data.

Al-Kasim concluded with supporting the idea of a possible future oil aid project in Mozambique, but at the same time hesitated to proceed with further field explorations and negotiations, which was what the Mozambican government most wanted. Precisely how Al-Kasim reached his conclusion, how he built up his argument in his report, is unclear. The report itself has not been available to me; in Norad's archive, it is repeatedly referred to, but it is not itself included in the files. My account above has been based on the Expert Office's summary of Al-Kasim's conclusions, written as a memo for internal use. For this reason, I do not know precisely how Al-Kasim weighed his argument beyond the quotes and paraphrases included in the Norad memo.³¹⁵ This is unfortunate; I am indeed curious about the content, structure, and argument of the report from his fact-finding mission. At the same time, this

³¹³ Memo, Expert Office to Planning Office, 22.9.1980, p. 2.

³¹⁴ Memo, Expert Office to Planning Office, 22.9.1980, p. 2.

³¹⁵ When I asked Farouk Al-Kasim about the fact-finding mission of 1980, he could not recall any details and did not himself possess the original report. (Interview, Farouk Al-Kasim, Stavanger, April 2014.) I expect the report to be in the NPD archives, but as explained in the introduction to this thesis, for the purpose of delimiting the data collection process, I have refrained from exploring this archive.

omission does in and of itself tell us something important about the way the specific report and the potential project in general was handled in Norad: Most likely, only a few people read the actual report; what most staff would read, was the memo *summarizing* the report. What circulated beyond the Country Office was thus their own summary of Al-Kasim's recommendations, and most likely not the report itself.

My point here is that the issue of whether the oil aid project should be realized, was defined as an oil-specific discussion which was unnecessary for Norad to engage in, as long as an oil expert had made his recommendation. To that end, Norad delegated the issue to the NPD; they were after all the experts in matters of oil. The substantial content of their considerations were taken at face value, to the extent that the report itself was not considered necessary to include as part of the expanding project file. Only Norad's *handling* of the report was considered necessary to keep on record. Of course, this might also have been an occasion of a misplaced document, a report that was not archived as it should have been. But, as I will show below, the omission of oil-specific reports in the Norad archive seems to have been the routine, not the exception. None of the reports commissioned by Norad made it into the project's archival folders. I choose to interpret this as a significant feature of Norad's aid administration at this point in time: Norad staff conceived of themselves as enabling aid – connecting actors, finding funds, making projects happen – and for that purpose, their key concern was to move the conclusions of the external reports forward and not enter into the experts' and recipient governments' deliberations.

A pre-feasibility study

Norad's Country Office had perhaps expected that the fact-finding mission would find, well, *facts*. When commissioning the mission, they seem to have supposed that the report would enable them to make a clear-cut decision on how to proceed. But what Al-Kasim concluded in his report, was that more investigation was needed in order to gain an overview of what facts there even were to assess. At that moment, it was not possible to say much about potential oil within Mozambican borders. In his report to Norad on the results of the fact-finding mission, Al-Kasim therefore outlined a proposed work program for the potential oil aid project in Mozambique. The first phase of this work program would be to gain a better overview of the available data. Al-Kasim prepared a special document for this purpose: A so-called "Terms of Reference" for what he defined as a «Prefeasibility study for assistance in Petroleum Sector Development in Mozambique». He estimated that evaluation of the existing seismic data would amount to 2-3 man-months, of which two would be spent in Maputo and one in Norway; the latter for the purpose of «drawing maps and preparing reports».³¹⁶

By calling the assignment a *pre-feasibility study*, Al-Kasim maintained a temporal distance to the potential future project. This was work that would have to be done *prior* to any further work, it was to be a *pre-study*, because «at this time there is insufficient information available to NORAD to define the scope of work for awarding a consultant

³¹⁶ Memo, Expert Office to Planning Office, 22.9.80.

contract»; that is, to commission a Norwegian oil expert to assist the Mozambican government. The purpose of the pre-feasibility study was therefore «to establish the scope, costs, and schedule for the total proposed assistance from NORAD». The first point on the list of objectives was the following:

1. Review all geological and geophysical data available in Maputo with relevance to assessing the petroleum potential offshore Mozambique. Specific questions include: How good are the existing data? What is missing? What can meaningfully be done?³¹⁷

In this way, Al-Kasim emphasized that in order to even establish an aid project, petroleum data had to be retrieved and analyzed. One needed to know the quality of the data, the gaps in the material, and how it might be used. Indeed, he indicated that at the present time, the ability to do something «meaningful» was not a given. Al-Kasim had at this point clearly accepted that the Mozambican government would not do the collection and analysis of data themselves; still, he insisted that even an analysis of existing data by foreign experts would have to be done *before* anything else could happen. The result of the fact-finding mission, then, was not that all facts had been found; rather, what Al-Kasim had found, was that the facts about Mozambique's petroleum were highly uncertain, since the very data that would sustain these facts in the first place were dispersed across multiple sites and in need of further analysis.

The Expert Office approved of Al-Kasim's recommendations, and moved them on to the Planning Office for their approval, which was granted in October 1980 with the explicit intention of «swift implementation».³¹⁸ Mozambique's State Secretary for Coal and Hydrocarbons also endorsed the Terms of Reference, but at the same time expressed a wish to move on with the project in two ways: Firstly, the State Secretary requested a consultant to assist in negotiations with a consortium of international oil companies about exploration drilling offshore. Secondly, he wanted to establish a more long-term cooperation with Norway in the field of oil.³¹⁹ In this way, Mozambique's government might have tried to avoid the delay which the pre-feasibility study would produce, and sought to run two parallel tracks – do the pre-feasibility study *and* proceed to negotiations at the same time. This clearly ran contrary to al-Kasim's advice: he had explicitly given the advice to wait with the latter. Norad's Maputo Office, which forwarded the State Secretary's considerations, nevertheless asserted that such an expanded project «should be assessed», and that with regards to the pre-feasibility study, «it is urgent to have the consultants in place».³²⁰

Again, then, the Maputo Office promoted maintaining high speed rather than pausing the process to await the preparatory work. The Expert Office, on the other hand, emphasized

³¹⁷ «Terms of Reference. Prefeasibility study for assistance in Petroleum Sector Development in Mozambique.» Norad Eaa-L0248. The suggested Scope of Mission also included the following objectives: «2. Review the plans and wishes of the responsible authority. 3. Draft a work program and schedule. 4. Estimate resources locally and in Norway. 5. Estimate costs. 6. Discuss the proposed program with the responsible authority. 7. Complete report in English covering the points above.»

³¹⁸ Telex, Expert Office to Maputo Office, 7.10.80. Norad Eaa-L0248.

³¹⁹ Telex, Maputo Office to Expert Office, 6.10.80. Norad Eaa-L0248. Norwegian quote: “Dr. Osman oensker etablert et mere langsiktig samarbeid med faglig bistand/konsulentbistand.”

³²⁰ Telex, Maputo Office to Expert Office, 13.10.1980. Norad Eaa-L0248. The funds were to come from the budget for consultancy services under the country agreement.

Al-Kasim caution against rushing ahead. Referring to the report, they pointed out that getting hold of data tapes and data catalogues should be of high priority for the Mozambican secretariat if they intended to prepare a legal framework for the oil sector: «the handling of technical data from past and future operations would be an essential part of this framework.»³²¹ Hence, data were not only important or interesting in themselves, they were an *essential part* of the whole legal foundation for the oil sector. The legal framework would be the main tool to regulate the relations between the national government and the industry actors. Hence, moving on to negotiations with the oil companies without a strong legal framework would give the government a weaker position. And to enable a strong legal framework, grasping the oil was critical.

Moving on with the suggested pre-feasibility study, Norad's Expert Office and the NPD approached Norwegian consultancy firms. Few had the necessary expertise alone, so Al-Kasim suggested combining consultants from two different companies: The well-established consultancy firm Norconsult was invited to submit a joint proposal with the smaller firm Geophysical Company of Norway (Geco). Norconsult, who already had a longstanding relation to Norad's Energy Office from assignments within hydropower planning and engineering in East Africa, asserted that their experience with energy planning "per se included petroleum". What they did lack was expertise in petroleum geology, which was what Geco would provide, given their specialization in seismic testing and analysis.³²² The companies negotiated an agreement of cooperation and took on the assignment.³²³

Norconsult's move into petroleum was part of a bigger strategic move, they stated, as the company was experiencing a growing need for services "within the field we may summarize as petroleum planning":

Norad as well as the World Bank, the development banks and the UN are taking on projects within this sector. Norwegian services are especially welcome because of the development we have had within the energy sector both technically and politically.³²⁴

This statement indicates that oil aid was an emerging field not only in Norway; also the major multilateral aid organizations indicated an interest to which Norconsult would like to respond. At the same time, their particular Norwegian experience made their contributions "especially welcome".

What, more precisely, was this experience? Before proceeding with my analysis of how the aid project in Mozambique came into being, it is necessary to unpack this history of the Norwegian experience. In the above, I have introduced the Norwegian Petroleum

³²¹ Telex, Expert Office to Maputo Office, "Oljesamarbeid Mosambik", 28.10.1980. Norad Eaa-L0248.

³²² Memo, Expert Office to Planning Office, "Oljesamarbeid 1980", 10.11.1980. Norad Eaa-L0248.

³²³ Letter, Norconsult to Norad, "Oljesamarbeid 1980", 27.10.1980, p. 1-2. Norad Eaa-L0248. The special agreement between Norconsult and Geco, signed as a result of Norad and NPD's invitation, pointed to Norconsult's numerous current assignments under the loose heading of «petroleum planning»: «assessments of geology, assessment of production potential, planning of exploration programs, procedures for data collection and archiving, suggestions for legislation and tax schemes, optimization of exploitation of oil and gas as well as other aspects of the oil industry and electrical power production.»

³²⁴ Letter, Norconsult to Norad, 27.10.1980, p. 1-2.

Directorate and its Director of Planning as of 1980, Farouk Al-Kasim; in the following, I will bring in the literature on Norwegian oil history, and describe a set of distinguishing features which in combination enabled the specific Norwegian oil experience.

The Norwegian oil experience as of 1980

In this section, I will highlight six features of the Norwegian oil experience as of 1980 which, according to Norwegian historians, have been of key importance: a well-established regulatory system; a well-established private sector; an active Parliament; an effective administration; a risk-willing state; and a moderate tempo of oil production and consumption. As I will show, in combination, these factors enabled firm national, democratic control over the petroleum resources, the build-up of domestic expertise, and the build-up of a domestic oil industry.

Norwegian oil history is indeed rich, and this short discussion cannot possibly include the many details of this history. The following section will build on the standard works of Norwegian history at large,³²⁵ the three-volume Norwegian oil history written during the 1990s and related publications,³²⁶ and on more recent publications by historians of the Norwegian oil experience.³²⁷ The purpose here will not be to check these actors' versions against the historians' versions. The written history of the Norwegian oil experience is in itself affected partly by the narratives of the sector's pioneers and partly by limited access to archives. The Norwegian Petroleum Association, which organized the industry actors, commissioned the three-volume work. This enabled expanded access to archives and key actors, but also framed the project in key ways. Because of this, any version of the Norwegian oil history will to a certain extent be affected directly or indirectly by the field's own narrative and self-conception, regardless of the historians' dedication to maintaining a critical distance from and independent understanding of its object. It is with this awareness of how the Norwegian oil history is in itself contested that I now proceed to discuss what the Norwegian oil experience amounted to in 1980.³²⁸ We must then first look to key events during the 1960s.

In 1962, following the news of vast oil fields in the Northern Sea offshore the Netherlands, the American oil company Phillips approached Norwegian authorities with an

³²⁵ Furre 2000, Hanisch and Nerheim 1992, Tamnes 1997. These all have in common a detailed attention to the making and expansion of the Norwegian oil policy and economy in the 1970s through the 1990s. There is far less historical investigation into the recent decades, characterized by partial privatization of Statoil, internationalization of the oil industry, and a massive wealth accumulation in Norwegian society. Works by Asdal (2011, 2014) and Ryggvik (2000, 2009, 2013) are exceptions to this.

³²⁶ Hansich and Nerheim 1992; Olsen and Sejersted 1997; Nerheim 1996; Ryggvik and Smith-Solbakken 1997.
³²⁷ Gjerde, Ryggvik and Meland 2009; Ryggvik 2013.

³²⁸ Already in 1974, while the Norwegian system was in the process of being built, the first calls for the documentation of the Norwegian oil experience was made. Following an exhibition of offshore technology and machinery at the first oil fair in Stavanger, a discussion ensued on the importance of preserving these pieces of history for the purposes of memory, research and public display. During the coming decades, as the Norwegian oil sector itself grew, the municipality of Stavanger established a foundation to gather artifacts and documents and start planning a museum. In the mid-1980s, a major history project was commissioned by the Norwegian Petroleum Society, a foundation organizing the petroleum companies. Published during the years 1992-97, the three volumes document the Norwegian oil history in great detail. In this way, discussions about what constituted the Norwegian oil experience had been ongoing almost from the start.

inquiry about exploration drilling on the Norwegian continental shelf.³²⁹ The Norwegian government granted Phillips such rights, and the first seismic testings started in 1963. This involved shooting echo sound waves from a boat down to the seabed, where they would bounce back and be recorded by sensors trailing the boat. The angle and character of the rebounded signals were recorded and represented as a geological map of the bedrock, which again would indicate the potential for basins of hydrocarbons – that is, oil and natural gas. The expectations of finding oil was low in Norway at the time. The Norwegian Geological Study (NGU), a state-run geological mapping service, had concluded in 1958 that Norway had no oil of importance. The existing geological expertise was concerned with the hard rock formations making up the Norwegian mainland – these were not the soft rock formations in which hydrocarbons might be found. Geologists had previously disregarded the potential for oil based on the general geological qualities of the seabed; oil was something found in the desert, not beneath the ice cold waters close to the North pole.³³⁰ Following the first inquiries from Phillips, however, the Norwegian Ministry of Industry started designing a system of drilling concessions which gave the oil companies access to specific demarcated fields on the shelf, granted that they themselves financed their explorations and submitted all their data to the Ministry.

This concessionary system was based on the Norwegian regulations of the hydropower resources that had been in effect since 1906. The main component here, on which the petroleum regulation was based, was the concept of *escheat*, or end-of-lease obligation (in Norwegian: *hjemfallsrett*). This entailed that the Norwegian government would keep the ownership of the natural resources, but let international (and later national) companies build a power station and harvest the hydroelectric power of a given Norwegian waterfall for a set period of time, after which the rights to the power production and the entire installation of the power plant would be returned to the government without compensation. In this way, power companies would gain the profit of the production for a set period without ever acquiring ownership of the resources.³³¹ This system, which by 1962 was well established within Norwegian law, public administration, and private enterprise, subsequently became the foundation of the Norwegian petroleum regulations. It enabled civil servants who were handling the international oil companies' requests to fairly quickly design a system of temporary concessions that enabled both national control and foreign investment. The first main component of the Norwegian oil experience, then, was an already well-established

³²⁹ The making of the Norwegian continental shelf in itself an important story – up until 1963, the North Sea was not separated into national territories. The Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) was engaged in intense negotiations with the UK and Denmark to find an agreeable solution. The UK government suggested drawing the boundary, the «delelinje» along the middle of the North Sea measured from the two countries' shorelines. Denmark agreed to this principle. Cf. Hanisch and Nerheim 1992 for a detailed account of the diplomatic negotiations. The Norwegian landmass was dramatically expanded through this agreement. Most major oil fields were later found close to the middle line between the UK and Norway.

³³⁰ Hanisch and Nerheim 1992, pp. 82-86.

³³¹ Cf. Skjold 2009, pp. 48-49 for an historical analysis of the political discussions and ensuing legal framework of 1917 which regulated the development of Norwegian waterfalls.

system for managing water, which enabled the swift establishment of an efficient regulatory regime for oil before any such resources had even been found.

The first round of concessions for oil exploration was called in 1965. Vast offshore areas were divided into individual blocks by the ministry's oil office, and foreign companies made bids for the concessions. The concessionary system, although maintaining domestic control over the exploration process, was indeed favorable to the international companies through generous tax exemptions and a favorable rate of return of investments.³³² Several international oil companies, including Phillips, established local offices in Stavanger, a small city on the Western coast soon functioning as the main point of departure to the North Sea drilling blocks. The concession round gained fairly little attention in the Norwegian press, but Norwegian business leaders had noticed "the Klondyke mentality" among international companies, and struggled to gain access to the process. Major domestic industry actors, notably the shipping magnate Fred.Olsen and the chemical industrialist Norsk Hydro, were especially interested.³³³ These two are examples of strong private companies equipped with both financial capital and technological expertise based on the handling of water: Fred.Olsen's building of ships for navigating across the world's oceans, and Norsk Hydro's harnessing of hydropower enabling industrial plants in numerous of the nation's steep valleys and fjords. Although these domestic business actors gained limited access in the first round of concessions, they and several others would during the next decade shift their activities towards the growing oil industry and, with the strong help from Norwegian government, gradually both supplied the industry and increasingly partook in all aspects of the oil production.

In this way, the Norwegian experience with water also enabled the second main component of the Norwegian oil experience: A well-established industry already having the financial means and technological expertise to employ existing shipyards, factories, technologies, and logistical systems for the purpose of building, serving, and later also running oil rigs, platforms, and distribution networks. This entailed that when oil was found on the Norwegian continental shelf, there were both strong legal systems and strong business actors operative in Norway. This in turn served as a solid foundation on which to build both petroleum regulations and a petroleum industry. This of course required much work – translating the systems, technologies and expertise from water to oil was not easily done – but there nevertheless existed a solid foundation that enabled a translation process, as opposed to building both regulations and industry from scratch.

The third main component I wish to highlight was the Parliament's role in affirming political control of the petroleum activities as soon as the presence of vast oil resources was confirmed. Following the first round of concessions in 1965, international oil companies drilled for oil for several years across the vast areas of the south-western Norwegian continental shelf. Oil was found in some of the wells, but from the companies' perspective too

³³² Hanisch and Nerheim 1992, pp. 50-51, 54-58.

³³³ Ryggvik 2013, p. 15.

little was of interest for further production, and many considered pulling out. Then, on December 23, 1969, Phillips found vast volumes of oil; what in popular accounts of the Norwegian oil history is commonly referred to as “the Christmas Gift”. The discovery was what proved to be “a giant”: the Ekofisk field, the first substantial Norwegian oil field. Indeed, its mere size was unprecedented in a global perspective. Ekofisk was soon followed by the Troll and Frigg discoveries, both smaller than Ekofisk, but still substantial.³³⁴

The Ekofisk field changed completely both Norwegian oil policy and domestic industry, and is often credited for inaugurating the oil era of Norwegian history. The publicity also inaugurated broad public deliberation about the impact of the oil upon Norwegian society. Up until the Ekofisk discovery, the oil issue had been handled by a limited group of civil servants, first in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and later by a small contemporary oil office within the Ministry of Industry, which consisted of only four staff members in 1968.³³⁵ Although being swift in putting the regulatory system in place, the Ministry did not rush forward with the production of Ekofisk. In fact, the Ministry hesitated to go public with the information; it took several months from the oil was found until it became part of Norwegian political deliberations.³³⁶ The Ministry had been working on a white paper to Parliament about the emerging Norwegian oil prospects, and did not change their document to reflect the news about Ekofisk. Members of the parliamentary opposition seized the opportunity to criticize the sitting government for not acting upon the potentially vast socio-economic consequences of Ekofisk. Breaking with standard procedure, the Parliament’s industrial committee decided not to accept the white paper.³³⁷ Instead, the committee made a statement where it emphasized the need to ensure that “natural resources on the Norwegian continental shelf are exploited in a way that benefits the whole of society”.³³⁸ It further formulated ten points, soon approved by Parliament at large, which would serve as the basis for Norwegian oil policy in the coming decades (cf. table 3.1).

For the purposes of the present account of Norwegian oil history, the main point to take from Parliament’s ten-point oil policy is the strong commitment to national ownership and control over the petroleum resources: It should be the task of the government to equip both the state and the private sector for fully taking part in all activities on the shelf: from exploration, through all aspects of production, to distribution of oil. This included embedding the petroleum activities in society by building domestic expertise and industry around it.

One of the practical effects of the “Norwegianization policy” for the oil industry was seen in the issue of oil distribution. The parliamentary opposition argued that it was a key

³³⁴ Hanisch and Nerheim 1992, pp. 119-123.

³³⁵ Hanisch and Nerheim 1992, p. 133ff.

³³⁶ Hanisch and Nerheim 1992, p. 161-162. Phillips announced the promising news internally on New Years’ Eve 1969; before this, rumours had circulated about the possibility of a major discovery. Phillips made public announcements in May and June 1970, but the Ministry of Industry did not take this into account in the white paper submitted to parliament in June 1970.

³³⁷ Hanisch and Nerheim 1992, pp. 162ff.

³³⁸ Innst. S. nr. 294 (1970-71), p. 638.

Table 3.1. The Norwegian Parliament's "Ten Oil Commandments" (1970)

The committee wishes to express,

that national governance and control must be secured for all activities on the Norwegian continental shelf;

that the petroleum discoveries are exploited such that Norway becomes as independent as possible of others with regards to the supply of crude oil;

that there are developed new business activities with a basis in petroleum;

that the development of an oil industry must take place with the necessary concern for existing business activities and the protection of nature and the environment;

that the burning of exploitable gas on the Norwegian continental shelf may not be accepted, with the exception of shorter periods of testing;

that petroleum from the Norwegian continental shelf should as a general rule be brought ashore in Norway with the exception of single instances where sociopolitical concerns serve as a foundation for a different solution;

that the state will be engaged on every purposeful level and contributes to a coordination of Norwegian interests within Norwegian petroleum industry and to the build-up of a Norwegian integrated oil community with a national as well as international perspective;

that there will be established a state oil company that may maintain the state's commercial interests and have a purposeful cooperation with domestic and foreign oil interests;

that there north of the 62nd latitude will be chosen a pattern of activities that accommodates the special sociopolitical concerns facing this region;

that Norwegian petroleum discoveries to a larger extent may expose the Norwegian foreign policy to new tasks.

Table 3.1. The Norwegian Parliament's "Ten Oil Commandments", 1970³³⁹

political responsibility to ensure that the oil was transferred from the platforms directly to refineries on the Norwegian coast:

Here, one concern must be more important than anything else, and that is the macroeconomic consequences for Norway. The moment we allow for distribution on-land into another country than Norway, we have moved the distribution of power in this game in the favor of a privately owned oil company.³⁴⁰

Hence, the decisions of the specific location of the main distribution channels of the oil – pipelines, refineries, petrol stations – became a matter of national policy. Incidentally, because of other events on the domestic political scene, most notably the heated debates over Norway's potential membership to the EEC (and decline of such in 1972 following a general referendum), the sitting centre-right government was further weakened, and did not manage

³³⁹ Innst. S. nr. 294 (1970-71), p. 638. (My translation from the Norwegian.)

³⁴⁰ First head of Statoil, Arve Johnsen, quoted in Hanisch and Nerheim 1992, p. 163. Norwegian quote: "Her må ett hensyn være viktigere enn noe annet, og det er de samfunnsøkonomiske konsekvenser i Norge. I det øyeblikk vi tillater ilandføring i et annet land enn Norge har vi flyttet på fordelingen av makten i dette spillet til fordel for et privateiet oljeselskap". Johnsen was at the time the leader of the Labour Party's industrial committee, and would later serve as state secretary and political advisor to the Minister of Industry, before becoming the second head of the national oil company Statoil (established in 1972).

to regain control of the oil issue from Parliament.³⁴¹ Changing constellations of government during the 1970s did not change this. Indeed, a strong consensus was maintained across the political landscape about the salience of the ten oil points, to the extent that they have later been commonly referred to as “the ten oil commandments”.

In this way, the third component of the Norwegian oil experience was the strong and active role taken by Parliament in discussing and defining the foundation of the nation’s oil policy and production. In the years following the formulation of the ten-part policy, the Ministry issued several influential white papers which filled this overarching policy with more specific content. Hence, the Norwegian oil experience included a dynamic of discussions between Parliament and the Ministry through the well-established tools of white papers and parliamentary deliberation.

A fourth component of the Norwegian oil experience emerged through the writing and discussion of this string of white papers: a specific governance model developed for the Norwegian petroleum sector. In 1972, the Ministry of Industry submitted a proposition to Parliament suggesting major changes to the current Norwegian administration of the oil issue.³⁴² Farouk Al-Kasim was part of the small group of ministry staff drafting the document. The proposition outlined a major reorganization of how the oil was handled: Rather than having an office within the Ministry of Industry handling all aspects of oil administration, it argued for establishing two new institutions in addition to the Ministry: An independent *directorate* (the Norwegian Petroleum Directorate) which would provide the ministry with technical expertise and handle the day-to-day relations with industry; and an independent oil *company* (Statoil) which would be state-owned and operate on a fully independent basis. From 1978, the oil issue was also granted its own *ministry* (the Ministry of Oil and Energy).³⁴³

This division of tasks and responsibilities into three distinct fields – the political (to the ministry), the technical (to the directorate), and the commercial (to the company) – has later been referred to as “the Norwegian model” of oil governance and by many considered the main success factor of the Norwegian oil experience.³⁴⁴ The Norwegian Petroleum Directorate was to be an independent agency under the Ministry, with two of its main tasks being to collect geological data and to analyse the potential oil resources.³⁴⁵ The national oil company Statoil would maintain the state’s commercial interest in Norwegian oil production without being run from inside the government. Furthermore, through Statoil it would be possible to build domestic oil expertise; this necessitated taking part in all aspects of oil

³⁴¹ EEC: European Economic Cooperation. Ryggvik 2013 emphasizes the importance of the EEC discussion for understanding the strong national message of the Parliaments’ 1970 oil policy.

³⁴² St.prp. nr. 113 (1971-72), ”Opprettelse av statens oljedirektorat og et statlig oljeselskap m.m.”.

³⁴³ Hanisch and Nerheim 1992, p. 463.

³⁴⁴ For example Al-Kasim 2006; Hanisch and Nerheim 1992; Ryggvik 2013.

³⁴⁵ NPD’s mission statement, clause 2e, quoted in Hanisch and Nerheim 1992, pp. 288-289. In Norwegian: «Oljedirektoratet har til oppgave å samle inn og bearbeide geologisk, teknisk materiale og vurdere undersjøiske naturforekomster, herunder vurdere dette og de muligheter det gir til hjelp for utformingen av den statlige oljepolitikk og forhandlingsopplegg, samt planlegge og besørge utført petroleumsgesologiske og geofysiske undersøkelser.»

production, which was only possible through a commercial company. In this way, the three-part model enabled a separation of tasks and interests that made Norway able to keep national political control of the resources; build up domestic expertise in geology, engineering, and planning within and outside government; build up a domestic industry that could partake in all aspects of oil production; and in addition secure a substantial part of the oil revenues.

This brings us to the fifth component I wish to highlight as part of the Norwegian oil experience as of 1980: the willingness to control the resources by managing time. Initially, all Norway's earnings from oil activities were channelled back into the sector through investments in platforms, machineries, technological innovation, and training. When the oil price started increasing internationally during 1973³⁴⁶, however, the Norwegian revenues started increasing proportionately.³⁴⁶ The ensuing discussion of how to use the growing income from oil was coupled with the issue of the tempo of oil production. A white paper submitted from the ministry to Parliament in 1974 became the foundation for the subsequent Norwegian policy in this matter. The white paper, which was titled "The role of petroleum activities in Norwegian society"³⁴⁷, repeatedly emphasized the importance of maintaining democratic control of all aspects of petroleum policy, and that the decisive factor was to control the *pace* of development. Indeed, the white paper opens with the following statement:

Out of the wish for a long-term view on resource exploration and after a concerted societal assessment the Government has concluded that Norway should keep *a moderat pace* in the exploitation of petroleum resources.³⁴⁸

The white paper has been called "the most far-reaching of all the reports" from the early years of Norwegian oil experience.³⁴⁹ The concern for timing and the call for a moderate pace of production entailed that the resources were not extracted as fast as possible. Rather, the production of the different fields was coordinated and timed in relation to each other to maintain a steady number of assignments, procurements, and jobs so as to avoid fluctuations. Furthermore, adding to the stability, the Norwegian government could demand higher recovery rates (the percentage of oil extracted from each reservoir) than what was the norm in the sector. This was possible because of the mere size of the fields: The substantial reservoirs meant that they were highly profitable for the companies even with stricter regulations and stronger demands.

The moderate pace of production was also extended to moderation in consumption. The white paper asserted that while the oil revenues would make the nation richer, the new wealth should be used to "create a qualitatively better society".³⁵⁰ Norwegian politicians were

³⁴⁶ Hanisch and Nerheim 1992, p. 406ff.

³⁴⁷ St.meld.25 (1973-74), "Petroleumsvirksomhetens plass i det norske samfunnet" [The petroleum activities' place in Norwegian society].

³⁴⁸ St.meld.25 (1973-74), p. 6. Full Norwegian quote: «Ut fra ønsket om en langsiktig ressursutnyttelse og etter en samlet samfunnsmessig vurdering er Regjeringen kommet til at Norge bør holde et *moderat tempo* i utvinningen av petroleumressursene.»

³⁴⁹ Ryggvik 2013, p. 26. According to Hanisch and Nerheim, it came to play "a most central role" in the public and political debates during the 1970s when the role of oil in society was discussed (1992, p. 407).

³⁵⁰ St.meld.25 (1973-74), p. 6. Full Norwegian quote: «Petroleumsfunnene i Nordsjøen gjør at vi som nasjon, blir *rikere*. Regjeringen mener at en i første rekke må benytte nye muligheter til å utvikle *et kvalitativt bedre samfunn*».

well aware of the experience from the Netherlands, where the oil industry boosted the economy to the extent that existing businesses and sectors could not compete (what later has been named “the Dutch Disease”).³⁵¹ Politicians tried different approaches: during the mid-1970s, oil revenues were used to fund social services and pay off national debt; in 1977-78, they were used as so-called “counter-conjuncture measures”, boosting the economy during the expanding international economic crisis. As this policy was abolished from 1978, the oil revenues were increasingly funneled back into the oil sector through investments in exploration, production, technology development, and expansion of expertise.³⁵²

In this way, revenues from oil enabled the Norwegian state to take higher risks than private companies would normally do in their investments and to push for stronger demands of technological innovation. This amounted to a sixth and final feature of the Norwegian oil experience: The concerted build-up of domestic expertise combined with investments in technological innovation. Indeed, Norwegian historians have argued that the Norwegian oil system may be considered a project of technology development, in which the challenge and risk of deep-sea drilling fuelled important innovations which in turn also made the Norwegian oil more profitable.³⁵³

To summarize, based on the established accounts of the Norwegian oil history, I have argued that the Norwegian oil experience consists of six main components: An established regulatory system; an established private business sector; a strong parliament; a three-part governance system; a moderate tempo of production and consumption; and investments in domestic expertise and technological innovation. These factors – in combination with the mere size of the oil fields – enabled a particular Norwegian version of oil governance that in turn enabled national and democratic control over the resources and the revenues they generated. Indeed, the co-constitution of the political and the technical, what we with Mitchell and Hecht may term the *technopolitics* of oil, is a fundamental trait also of the Norwegian experience.³⁵⁴

Yet this particular Norwegian version of oil governance is different from the general model suggested by Timothy Mitchell, who develops the concept of “carbon democracy” to analyze the relation between carbon (notably coal and oil) and democracy. He argues: “States that depend upon oil revenues appear to be less democratic than other states.”³⁵⁵ In this case, on the other hand, democracy was what enabled “the Norwegian oil fairytale” (*det norske*

En bør unngå at resultatet bare blir en rask og ukontrollert vekst i bruken av materielle ressurser uten at samfunnet ellers blir vesentlig endret. De retningslinjer som trekkes opp for petroleumsvirksomheten og bruken av inntektene, må derfor være et ledd i en planmessig omforming av det norske samfunn.»

³⁵¹ Hanisch and Nerheim 1992, p. 406. “The Dutch disease” included a rapid real wage increase, a weakened ability to compete for existing sectors, and higher exchange rates, and expectations of increased public spending.

³⁵² Hanisch and Nerheim 1992, pp. 436-457.

³⁵³ Olsen and Sejersted 1997, pp. 11-25; Olsen and Engen 1997, pp. 104-141.

³⁵⁴ Gabrielle Hecht develops the concept of *technopolitics* in her study of French nuclear power (Hecht 2009). Her analysis of the role of nuclear power in French national identity (what Hecht refers to as the “French *grandeur*”) has interesting parallels to the narratives of Norway as an “oil nation” and of the Norwegian “oil fairytale”. Cf. Ryggvik 2009 for an account of the Norwegian oil narrative.

³⁵⁵ Mitchell 2009, p. 399; Mitchell 2011.

oljeeventyret).³⁵⁶ At the same time, it is important not to recast the Norwegian oil history as purely a success story. Conflicts, controversies, and tragic accidents are also important parts of this history.³⁵⁷ The condensed story presented here is intended to display the local specificity of the Norwegian oil experience, and to highlight how much was needed for oil production to even begin, let alone be made beneficial to the “whole of society”.

This point is critical to acknowledge in the following analysis of how oil was sought made an object of foreign aid. My account of the Norwegian oil experience highlights how it was, precisely, *experienced*: it had been built, lived, and done by domestic Norwegian actors who could not at the time know what effects their work might have. How, then, might this lived experience be translated into new sites with a very different history, current situation, and perhaps also a different kind of oil? How might experiences gained through processes unfolding in time be transformed into retrospective accounts, by compressing its features into conversations, courses, lectures, and travels? Bearing these questions in mind, I now return to the analysis of the emerging oil aid project in Mozambique.

Losing the “pre-“ in the feasibility study

During November 1980, Norad, NPD, Norconsult, and Geco agreed on a revised Terms of Reference and signed the contract. Norad allotted NOK 250.000 for the task. In December 1980, a four-person team of staff from Norconsult, Geco, and NPD left for Maputo. The mission on which the joint team was embarking had changed in crucial ways during the process of finding and commissioning the consultants. Firstly, it was termed a feasibility study, not a *pre*-feasibility study. The revised Terms of Reference document, which had expanded from one to two pages, also framed the mission in a rather different way than had Al-Kasim in his first version. The revised Terms of Reference started by quoting the aid request from Mozambican authorities. It was now articulated in the following way:

- To assist in the establishment and execution of a seismic programme in the offshore area between Beira and Inhambane. The objective of such a survey is to identify favorable structures prior to the allocation of licenses to foreign companies in the area.
- General advice to the competent Government institutions in Mozambique on defining a strategy for the allocation of petroleum licenses, including the establishment of a legal and a fiscal framework for such licensing.

Hence, the potential project included a seismic program and advice on how to allocate, regulate, and tax the exploration licenses. The word *prior* indicated that the government acknowledged the need to first analyse the petroleum potential before proceeding to

³⁵⁶ In the white paper (1973-74) referred above, the government explicitly states that it “with the white paper aims to build the foundation for broad debate about petroleum policies in all parts of the Norwegian people. It is therefore much emphasized to make clear the tasks and problems one are facing and the choices one has.” Norwegian quote: «Regjeringen tar gjennom meldingen sikte på å legge grunnlag for en bred debatt om petroleumspolitikken i alle deler av det norske folk. Det er derfor lagt stor vekt på å få klart fram de oppgaver og problemer en står overfor og de valgmuligheter en har.» St.meld.25 (1973-74), p. 5.

³⁵⁷ Two major accidents came to affect how the sector was governed; the blowout at the Bravo rig in 1977 and the collapse of the Alexander Kielland rig in 1981. The illness and death of several deep-sea divers, who worked on the bedrock during the early years of oil exploitation, has in recent years received public attention. Cf. Øye, Ryggvik and Meland 2009.

negotiations. Furthermore, the aim of the mission was no longer that Norad should decide *whether* to proceed; rather, it should help define *how* to proceed:

Authorities in Mozambique and Norway have agreed that a feasibility study be carried out in order better to assess and define the nature and scope of work to be carried out, including total cost and work schedule.³⁵⁸

This section closely resembled a formal agreement between the two countries, at least of their mutual intention to build a joint project. The main Norwegian counterpart in the document was not a Norad office, but the Norwegian *authorities*. The document went on to summarize Al-Kasim's recommendations from the fact-finding in the following way:

In his report, Mr. Al-Kasim recommended i.a. that NORAD approves the allocation of funds to finance a review of the available exploration data in order to attempt an overall integration into a regional study of petroleum prospects offshore Mozambique.³⁵⁹

Here, the revised Terms of Reference defined Al-Kasim's report as a petroleum-related advice, rather than aid-related advice: the feasibility study was expected to contribute to build a so-called regional study, that is, an analysis of the entire continental shelf, as opposed to the individual wells. Combining the data from the existing wells into one joint map would be an important step in assessing the total potential for finding petroleum offshore Mozambique. This purpose was quite different from the aim of the *pre-feasibility* study, which had been designed to accommodate Norad's «insufficient information» on which to base a decision about whether to proceed with establishing an aid project: While the *pre-feasibility* study was initially conceived of as a tool for enabling Norad to make a decision on whether to establish a new project, the feasibility study was designed as a tool for the NPD to assess the potential of oil offshore Mozambique.

The same move towards beginning to do the oil work is evident in the revised list of objectives for the feasibility study. In Al-Kasim's initial version, the key questions to be answered had been: «How good are the existing data? What is missing? What can meaningfully be done?» In the revised version, the questions were the following:

- Do the geophysical and geological data give an adequate basis for a regional geological assessment of the area.
- The quality and density of the geophysical data must be evaluated in terms of defining drillable prospects.
- Which parts of the area require additional seismic mapping.
- On the basis of the above recommend (if possible) which areas (blocs) to be allocated.³⁶⁰

These questions were quite different from the initial version: They were more detailed, more specific, and engaged directly with the process of proceeding with petroleum activities offshore Mozambique. In contrast, the first set of questions were more open and indicated a

³⁵⁸ «Terms of Reference for a feasibility study regarding assistance in Petroleum Resource Development in Mozambique», p. 1. Attachment to memo from Expert Office to the Legal Office via the Planning Office. Norad Eaa-L0248, 311.1.-311.1.

³⁵⁹ Terms of Reference, p. 1.

³⁶⁰ «Terms of Reference for a feasibility study regarding assistance in Petroleum Resource Development in Mozambique», p. 2. attachment to memo from Expert Office to the Legal Office via the Planning Office. Norad Eaa-L0248, 311.1.-311.1.

potentially negative outcome of the study: “What can meaningfully be done?” This dimension did not come along to the final version. Although the revised Terms of Reference clearly expected gaps and weaknesses in the data, this concern was articulated in a way that took for granted that potential problems could be solved. The purpose of the data work was clearly oriented towards the practical purposes of oil activities; evaluation of the data «must» be done for the purpose of «defining drillable prospects». Clearly, there was quite a lot that could «meaningfully be done».

This move is important to pay attention to: During the time between the two versions of the Terms of Reference, no more data collection or analysis had been done. Yet, a common understanding was clearly emerging between Norway and Mozambique about a possible cooperation in the oil sector. The very process of *preparing* the feasibility study, I will argue, had this effect. The shift from commissioning a *pre*-feasibility study to a feasibility study is significant in this respect: The mission changed from assessing *whether* a project could become feasible to having as its premise that it indeed *was* feasible.

Removing the *pre*- from the title of the feasibility study’s Terms of Reference document might seem an insignificant change, but I will argue that it had a significant effect. The study was no longer something that had to be done *before* anything else could happen, it was *part of* what was going to happen. The oil aid project went from being a potential *future* project to a potential project *in the present*. The *pre*- had inscribed a specific temporality: an extended, open-ended timeline that might at any time be stopped. Removing the *pre*- inscribed a different, but equally specific, temporality: a project beginning to unfold. Indeed, both versions of the Terms of Reference asked the team to prepare a timeline and budget for the potential aid project. In this way, what had up until recently been a hypothetical possibility, was turning into a specified chain of events suggested to take place in the recent future. When asking for a timeline and budget, Norad moved one step closer towards realizing the project.

A key analytical point emerging from the analysis above is the significance of bureaucratic documents in articulating an issue in a specific way. As argued by Asdal, documents are always doing *modifying work*: An issue may be reframed and changed in seemingly small ways, by way of words, phrases, structure, and subject constructions, which in sum may amount to a potentially radical transformation of the issue itself.³⁶¹ Building on this, I will argue that by paying attention to the changing details within and between different documents, we may better understand how the object of the potential oil aid project also changed between and within these texts. The documents did not merely *reflect* an external reality, they took part in *producing* this very reality, by articulating the object in increasingly more specific ways and gradually pulling it closer, from a vague idea in a potential distant future to a specific project to be realized in an expected near future. In this way, the project was becoming increasingly real through the very work of writing. The documents enabled a gradual move from hypothetical possibilities to expected realities. Indeed, the memos and

³⁶¹ Asdal, Kristin 2015.

Terms of Reference documents were written to produce specific effects: they tried to convince, to enable, and to realize elements of the potential project. The specific way in which the documents were produced had the effect of changing the discussion from *whether* to *how* a Norwegian oil aid project in Mozambique could be done.

It is not my intention to exaggerate the extent to which the Norwegian Petroleum Directorate's position differed from that of Norad and the Mozambican government. After all, the NPD had taken part in revising the Terms of Reference document, and one of their staff members were included in the study team. It is unclear who changed which parts of the document, and to what extent Al-Kasim and other NPD staff objected to the changes, if at all. The important point is rather that whereas Norad and the Mozambican ministry made an effort to *speed up* the preparations, the NPD was trying to *slow down* the preparations. The slow motion argument was not a result of the NPD being opposed to the project as such. Indeed, as shown above, the NPD was increasingly engaging in Norad-funded assignments in multiple countries across the world. Rather, the concern was with the handling of *oil data*, and with taking the time necessary to retrieve and analyse these data.

Hence, when the NPD argued for slowing down the process, this was not because they were opposed to the project as such, but because they considered this the best way to actually *do the project*. For this reason, controlling the data was in their view the main task in Mozambique at the current moment. In order to unpack the ramifications of this point, I will in the next section investigate how the Petroleum Directorate, in the words of Farouk Al-Kasim, explained the importance of oil data more in detail.

Versions of evaluation

Taking the necessary time to retrieve and analyze oil data was one of the most important insights the NPD had gained during the early years of Norwegian oil exploration. In the historical literature on the Norwegian oil experience that I referred to above, the importance of data is given less attention than what emerges from my empirical material, where it is repeatedly and explicitly addressed. I will therefore suggest to consider the concerted effort at grasping oil data as a seventh key aspect of the Norwegian oil experience. In this section, I will investigate this point in further detail.

The fact-finding mission to Mozambique was not the only occasion in which NPD's Farouk Al-Kasim stressed the importance of grasping oil data. In giving a lecture to a Norad-sponsored training course for petroleum professionals from developing countries in May, 1981, he explained the importance of firmly grasping oil data.³⁶² During this lecture, he repeatedly pointed to the concern shared by Norwegian policy makers and oil bureaucrats of

³⁶² Al-Kasim, Farouk 1981. "Strategies for the management of petroleum resources. Lecture given at Norad Course in Petroleum Administration 25 May 1981." Stavanger: Oljedirektoratet. The argument was made during a training course in petroleum administration organized by Norad, the NPD, and Rogaland regional college in Stavanger during May 1981. The specific composition of the group is unknown to me, but Mozambican authorities were most likely not present. Ref NPD annual report, 1980 and 1981. Neither is it clear whether the Norad staff partaking in the making of the oil aid project in Mozambique were present.

the importance of “hurrying slowly”: they should move slowly vis-à-vis the international oil companies while hurrying to retrieve and analyze oil data.³⁶³ This had been especially important in the early phase, when the shelf was yet largely unexplored, Al-Kasim explained:

At the start of petroleum activities in Norway in 1963, little was known of the petroleum potential in the Norwegian Shelf. Nor did Norway have the expertise or capacity to investigate the possibility entirely on its own. (...) As drilling proceeded, however, the government was gradually building up a team of geologists, geophysicists and engineers who were gradually compiling data from individual wells into some sort of total assessment of the shelf.³⁶⁴

Here, he used the term *assessment* in a way which seems to overlap with how he used the term *evaluation*: By compiling data and analyzing this in combination, it had been possible to gain “some sort of total assessment” of the Norwegian continental shelf at large. Again, retrieving data was critical, but so was the method with which these data were analyzed. As Al-Kasim here indicates, it had initially not possible to make an assessment of the shelf as a whole because no-one had seen the individual wells in relation to each other. He had himself been one of the government staff to which he referred in quote above, who first started analyzing the shelf as a whole. Being trained in analysing petroleum data, Al-Kasim was given the task of analyzing the data tapes submitted from the companies. While the oil companies had themselves concluded that there was some, but likely not much oil, Al-Kasim reached a different conclusion. By looking for the features of a petroleum system, rather than individual wells, he could see the contours of vast oil fields. After his analysis, Al-Kasim concurred with the companies that the result of this particular oil well was marginal, but he insisted that the findings were nevertheless important: “It showed that oil and gas were produced centrally in the basin, and that it therefore with high probability could be oil on the flanks.”³⁶⁵ After three months, he was offered a full-time position in the Ministry and given the task of assessing the petroleum potential of the Norwegian continental shelf at large. He aligned data from the 13 wells that had been drilled so far. In this way, Al-Kasim investigated not only the individual wells, but gained an understanding of the more comprehensive “petroleum system” of the Northern Sea.³⁶⁶ He was in this way able to see something else than the companies whose data he was analyzing – clear indications of vast oil fields.³⁶⁷

In this way, by combining methods in new ways, Al-Kasim contributed to making it possible to see the oil located far beneath the seabed. The concept of *technologies of seeing*,

³⁶³ Interview, Farouk Al-Kasim, April 2014.

³⁶⁴ Al-Kasim 1981, p. 16.

³⁶⁵ geo.365.no 2010. «En grå eminens». (retrieved 14.03.14). Norwegian quote: “Det viste at olje og gass var dannet sentralt i bassenget, og at det derfor med stor sannsynlighet kunne være olje på flankene.”

³⁶⁶ geo.365.no 2010.

³⁶⁷ geo.365.no 2010. Norwegian quote: “Jeg studerte alle dataene, ikke bare brønndataene, men også de seismiske dataene. Tre brønner hadde spor av hydrokarboner, og den mest interessante var brønn 25/11-1, her var det en overbevisende kolonne. I dag er dette kjent som funnbrønner på Balderfeltet (nå ferdig produsert). Men den gangen ble funnet betraktet som marginalt, man forsto ikke geologien. (...) Det sto klinkende klart for meg at det var stor sannsynlighet for å finne olje i kommersielle mengder. Funnene på Cod og Balder viste at det var dannet hydrokarboner i bassenget. Men plasseringen av letebrønnene var sannsynligvis ikke optimale. Dessuten viste seismikken at det var mange prospekter å bore på. Før eller siden ville vi treffe på olje i store nok mengder. Man trengte ikke være et geni for å forskuttere det.”

which I in the previous chapter employed for analysing tools for aid evaluation, is useful also for understanding a fundamental feature of the Norwegian oil experience: The ability to *see the shelf as a whole* was critical for the Norwegian government's ability to predict the location of the oil and to gain a strong position in negotiations with oil companies. The government actively sought to build a rich data archive and domestic expertise, which in turn enabled so-called "diversified evaluation", that is, detailed analyses of the particular areas (blocks) offered for exploration:

A most significant development since the second [concession] round is the authorities' increased insight in the geology of the shelf, particularly in the North Sea where considerable drilling has taken place. Intimate knowledge of the structures and possible prospective horizons in individual blocks, has made it possible to choose the right blocks to meet the objectives of any given round of licensing. The impressive success of the fourth round is a clear manifestation of this intimate knowledge. During one and a half drilling seasons from 1979 to 1980, the proven reserves in the Norwegian shelf were increased from 1600 to 2400 million tons oil equivalents; a 50% increase within one year. This can not be purely luck. (...) Moreover, this intimate knowledge of the geology enables the authorities to supervise activities more effectively in order to ensure proper mapping and evaluation of prospects in the drilling phase.³⁶⁸

In this way, gaining intimate knowledge of the geological features of the potential oil fields *before* operations commenced, enabled the government to make more precise choices for where to drill and to more effectively supervise the companies' exploration activities.³⁶⁹ This in turn enabled better mapping and new rounds of evaluation of oil data. Indeed, Al-Kasim asserted, "(t)he impressive success of the fourth (concession) round is a clear manifestation of this intimate knowledge".

As Al-Kasim spoke to the Norad training course, he repeatedly asserted that gaining "intimate knowledge" through detailed and comprehensive data analyses were critical for gaining national control over the oil resources, not only because it improved precision in choices of where to drill and increased the government's authority vis-à-vis the oil companies, but also because it enabled better *planning*, both of the Norwegian oil sector as such and of the Norwegian economy and society at large:

To assist central authorities, the NPD makes periodical forecasts for oil and gas production broken down into fields. These forecasts form the basis for the government's annual budget and budget reviews. Traditionally, the NPD's forecasts have differed from those submitted by the licensees, reflecting perhaps, differences between government planning interests and those

³⁶⁸ Al-Kasim 1981, p. 18.

³⁶⁹ Indeed, Al-Kasim stated, when operating offshore "the need for early data should be self-evident", because the potential extra costs of erroneous decisions on where to drill and build platforms would be far more costly than early data collection. Al-Kasim 1981, p. 21. Full quote: "Both in the exploration and delineation phase, the requirement of data has been given a high priority in the NPD. This stems from the conviction that the cost of data in the pursuit of important exploration leads is more than justified when compared to offshore drilling. There can be no doubt that the requirement and justification for adequate and accurate data is considerably increased in the critical phase of delineation. Since offshore exploitation, as distinct from land exploitation, is very much dependent on platforms; and since platforms are excruciantly costly and extremely decisive for further dispositions in a given field; the need for early data should be self-evident. The cost of acquiring reliable and conclusive data, is insignificant when judged in terms of the potential losses or gains arising from erroneous judgement in the original development plan."

of companies. Recently, the authorities in Norway have found it necessary to initiate strategic forecasts in the form of scenarios for possible developments on the shelf. With increasing significance of petroleum activities in the Norwegian economy, it has become essential, for planning purposes, to try and anticipate the effects which various policies and rates of development have on other sectors of Norwegian society. Needless to say, these forecasts are most speculative in detail. They do however provide a tool for planning with a view of formulating a national petroleum strategy. The importance for having such a strategy is obvious.³⁷⁰

In this way, planning was enabled by the intimate knowledge gained through evaluation of oil data. In the NPD's version of evaluation work, accumulating and evaluating oil data was a prerequisite for policy and planning, both of the oil sector and society at large. Speaking in the capacity of Director of Planning, Al-Kasim here articulated the NPD's self-conception of their own key role in the making of the Norwegian oil experience. According to the NPD, the ability to make strategic forecasts based on their analysis of the shelf was fundamental; indeed, in retrospect, the NPD has termed "the strategic forecasts the one most important document in the history of Norwegian oil".³⁷¹ The forecasts enabled politicians to anticipate effects of the oil upon the economy. In this account, the NPD, with its rich archive of oil data and analyses, emerges as the center of the oil sector. By controlling the data, they could also govern the sector. The *technologies of seeing oil*, i.e. the specific technical methods and academic approaches for evaluating the stream of data coming out of the oil wells and seismic testing, thus enabled the creation of a new *technology of oil politics*, the strategic forecast, which was introduced in 1981 and soon became (in NPD's own account) a key governing tool for the Ministry of Oil and Energy.³⁷² In this way, by continuously retrieving, storing, and analyzing oil data, the NPD produced the necessary basis for the democratic, long-term government of the Norwegian oil resources. In this perspective, taking the time needed to firmly grasp the oil data and see the shelf as a whole was fundamental both for locating as much oil as possible and not letting it slip away and into the hands of the oil companies.

Given the account above of the importance of accumulating and evaluating oil data for the Norwegian oil experience, the NPD's advice to Mozambique's government to make this work a priority may be seen as an effort to share with them a key aspect of the Norwegian oil history. It seems that despite Al-Kasim's clear recommendations in this regard, both during and after his fact-finding mission, neither Norad nor the Mozambican ministry fully accepted his argument. In stead, they sought to negotiate alternative solutions which would save time (but only in the short run, the NPD might respond).

³⁷⁰ Al-Kasim 1981, p. 27-28.

³⁷¹ NPD 2012. *Oljedirektoratet 40 år 1972-2012*. Stavanger: Oljedirektoratet, p. 42.

³⁷² NPD 2012, p. 42. Al-Kasim was by colleagues credited with the development of this tool, and of making ministry leadership aware of its potential. according to an NPD's celebratory publication, it made the current Secretary for Oil and Energy «jump in his chair» and acknowledge it as the most valuable governing tool for a national oil policy. Norwegian quote: «Da den første perspektivmeldingen ble presentert for olje- og energiminister Bjartmar Gjerde høsten 1981, hoppet han nærmest i stolen av de høye ressurstallene. Behovet for verftskapasitet og ingeniører var mye større enn før antatt. Etter at ministeren fikk forklart bakgrunnen for tallene, skjønnte han at han hadde fått det styringsverktøyet han trengte for å føre en offensiv og helhetlig nasjonal oljepolitikk.»

This situation serves to highlight the aid administration's view of time and temporality in crucial ways. The Norad staff were interested in moving on, maintaining a high speed, and only obtain the data and analyses necessary to move ahead, whereas the NPD considered data collection and analysis in itself a key first part of a prolonged process. Communicating that this work was not a delay, but in itself a key component, seems to have been a challenge. In this perspective, spending between two and three years to retrieve and analyze data, which was what Al-Kasim suggested during his meetings in Maputo, was not necessarily a long time. For the Mozambican ministry and Norad's staff in Maputo, however, such temporal horizons were very long indeed. The expectations of what to achieve in the near future clearly influenced the actors in Maputo to promote a different approach than what the NPD initially suggested. Perhaps NPD and Al-Kasim did not fully appreciate these differences in perspective; indeed, in his lecture, he had referred to his key points as "self-evident" and "obvious"; this was not clearly necessarily the case.

In this respect, the NPD had more in common with the Evaluation Office than the project staff, in that the latter argued for the importance of accumulating and analyzing data, of building a strong data archive, and of maintaining and mobilizing this archive during aid evaluations. The NPD clearly considered their own handling of data the best way to firmly grasp the oil. The Evaluation Office tried to argue the same point by encouraging all staff to contribute to building the aid archive.

In a similar way, the NPD was seeking to make oil an evaluable object by ensuring to control their access to all data from the Norwegian continental shelf. Only by gaining intimate knowledge of the continental shelf could the oil be made an evaluable object, which in turn was necessary if the oil was to be retrieved and turned into a financial object to the benefit of the Norwegian state and public. The better the NPD controlled the data, the higher the government's share of the profit would be. For aid, there was no such direct relation between controlling data and gaining profit. The Evaluation Office had insisted that their suggested tools and systems would ultimately enable better aid. But the benefit of investing time and effort in data accumulation and evaluation was not as clear for aid as it was for oil. When the question of oil data then became a matter of aid, as was the case in the potential Norwegian oil aid project in Mozambique, the benefit was not obvious. The aid staff's concern for speed and tangible results in establishing the project seems to have trumped the concern for gaining intimate knowledge of the Mozambican continental shelf.

The question of how to handle time was manifested in the writing and circulation of project documents. As I have shown, the documents had the effect of speeding up the process in order to faster realize the potential project. In order to enable this, aid staff were most concerned with document writing and circulation: They were awaiting specific documents to arrive; circulating memos swiftly between offices; drafting and redrafting terms of references; commissioning reports; and funding expensive studies. They were by no means opposed to writing, nor actively avoiding all documents. But they were engaging with documents for reasons that were different from those of the Evaluation Office: Their goal was not

evaluability; they were not concerned with potential retrospective evaluation of their work. Rather, they were concerned with moving forward and landing a formal contract.

In my present analysis of the potential oil aid project in Mozambique, I have sought to show that in Norwegian aid as of 1980, there was clearly a direct contradiction between spending time on data collection and document production and enabling a new project to commence. Aid staff considered data and documents to cause delays and made exceptions to formal demands as a means to moving an issue forward. While the Evaluation Office, as shown in Chapter 2, was envisioning a new and more comprehensive system for documenting aid work, the Norad staff in this particular case found ways to avoid even the existing demands regulating their work. To that extent, the process may serve to explain how a project could come into being in a way that made it a potential object of critique for the Evaluation Office. Maintaining a high speed and accommodating requests became the most important concerns. These concerns were what would enable a good aid project; the aid staff clearly sought to avoid a situation where they did not accommodate the recipient government's request for aid or where they spent too much time on preparations and document production.

This situation was precisely what the Evaluation Office sought to change, as they were convinced that detailed, meticulous planning and implementation were prerequisites for doing good aid work. In their view, the extra time needed to do aid in this way was undoubtedly justified. The process of establishing the oil aid project in Mozambique suggests that this argument might have proven hard to promote: Aid work was not oil work; the building and mobilization of a strong, rich archive did not serve as the foundation of the aid work in the same way as it did for oil work. This entailed that the sequence, timing, and emphasis of the different tasks were gradually altered. The handling of data was the first example. But at the same time, the specificity of oil also directly affected the routines of aid planning in a way that made aid staff oppose how the process was being done. The situation is thus no clear-cut example of neither an oil-driven nor an aid-driven process. This point becomes clearer as the project moved on towards approval and realization.

Extending and expanding a not-yet-existing project

My analysis above of the potentially conflicting temporalities of aid and oil sought to tease out the different conceptions of time, timing, and expectations of linear progress in the two fields. This point is however complicated, or made more nuanced, by what happened next in this particular instance. Gradually, the definition of what the potential project should consist of was made more concise. Indeed, the concern for data was increasingly dominating what was to become the oil aid project. One key detail attests to how the project was changing between the two versions of the Terms of Reference document in a direction more in line with Al-Kasim's initial recommendations from his fact-finding mission.

In the Terms of Reference for the pre-feasibility study, the object of the potential aid was stated to be "petroleum sector development". In the final version, this was changed to "petroleum resource development". This delimited the Norwegian contribution drastically,

from taking part in the making of a sector at large to concentrating on handling the resource, that is, grasping and handling the nature object of oil. The aim of the feasibility study was still to “define the scope of Norad’s engagement”, but clearly, a more narrow definition of the engagement had already been reached through the work of preparing the Terms of Reference document. As seen above, both NPD, the Norad offices in Maputo and Oslo, and the Norconsult and Geco consultants had taken part in the revision of the draft document. The Mozambican ministry was indirectly a part of these discussions through their contact with Norad’s resident representative in Maputo. Their main concern had been to proceed as fast as possible to the negotiation table, and the resident representative both passed this view on and added their support.

Still, the effort to accommodate the Mozambican government’s requests and concerns was continuously balanced against the concern of getting a firmer grasp of the oil itself. Although the NPD’s view was not accepted whole-sale, their arguments were clearly being built into the process of preparing the project. The preparations were being done in documents circulating between offices in Oslo, Stavanger and Maputo: in memos, telex’es, faxes, and letters. Although the Norad office in Maputo was part of the circulation circuit, this was but one of several offices in of one several institutions. In this way, the response to the Mozambican government’s request for assistance in grasping its oil was increasingly being handled *outside* of Mozambique – in Oslo and Stavanger.

By approaching the Norwegian aid office with its informal request, the Mozambican government set in motion a small machinery of Norwegian public and private actors, who in combination articulated a response to their request. These actors were from the outset involved in how the potential project might be defined and realized, and recommended a different trajectory than the government themselves would have preferred. The gradual narrowing of the project’s scope indicates precisely this point. The removal of the initial temporal barriers towards even establishing the project (commissioning a fact-finding mission and removing the *pre-*) made the project gradually more real.³⁷³ What was about to become the project, however, was what initially had been considered preparations and preconditions for a project, that is, the collection and analysis of oil data.

There is no copy of the feasibility study itself in the project files in Norad’s archives. The process of its production in this way repeats the process of the fact-finding mission, in which Norad were concerned with commissioning and handling the report, but, I suggested, delegated the concern for the content to the oil staff. Norad’s concern was for timing and speed, not for the set-up of the project. The feasibility study was indeed prepared; there are multiple traces of it in other documents in the archives. What we may see, is that the team arrived in Maputo on December 4, 1980, prompting the resident representative to telex back to Oslo: “The delegation is arrived in good shape and has started its work. Please contact

³⁷³ Cf. Latour 1996 for an analysis of how protracted planning work gradually realized a French engineering project. Latour suggests the term “technological fictions” to analyze the planning documents as enabling a gradual realization of the project.

wives via employers and report this.”³⁷⁴ 10 days later, the team left Maputo. The next day, the resident representative telexed the Expert Office and stated that the team had wanted to include an additional analysis of the Mozambican continental shelf, a so-called “base map”, which the Geco consultants would need some more time to prepare. The Expert Office contacted the NPD who gave a green light, and Norad accepted to cover the cost.³⁷⁵ The team estimated to finish its report by the end of January, 1981.

The very work of doing the feasibility study – the visiting, meeting, investigating, and writing – had the effect of moving the potential project further towards realization. The team must have spent time with Norad’s resident representative, Arne Dahlen, most likely also with the Mozambican State Secretary for coal and hydrocarbons, Mr. Osman, when assessing the possible futures of the potential cooperation between the two countries. As the team was departing Maputo, Arne Dahlen had already made the decision to visit Stavanger, the main city of Norwegian oil work, in mid-January 1981, as part of a scheduled trip to Oslo.³⁷⁶ He planned to meet with the NPD and Geco to discuss the draft report and hoped to bring the finalized report back to Secretary Osman in Maputo.³⁷⁷ His Stavanger plans surprised the Expert Office, but they promptly accommodated his wishes.³⁷⁸

The ways in which Norad staff members in Maputo and Oslo referred to the potential project at this point indicates that the feasibility study did not only serve as a foundation for a decision on whether to proceed with the project. Rather, they were already thinking of this as something they wished to *continue*: The Expert Office wrote: “Expansion of the work will be discussed the Petroleum Directorate. We are looking forward to discussing extension of the oil cooperation (...)”. Here, the oil aid project was not only a potential object, it was an object to be expanded and extended, and this development was clearly welcomed. This despite there not yet having been made a formal decision actually establishing a project.

Precisely what happened in the meeting in Stavanger on January 20, 1981, is not clear, except that Mr. Dahlen and the Expert Office met with the NPD and Geco and discussed the draft report. Neither is it clear what happened after the meeting. From the project file of the Norad archives, nothing seems to have happened for several months. Was the process stopped? Did something unexpected happen? Not at all; the potential project was indeed increasingly being articulated and formalized. But the action moved increasingly into the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Hence, the MFA also became a main site of document production and archiving.

³⁷⁴ Telex, Maputo Office to Expert Office, 4.12.1980. Norad Eaa-L0248. * Norwegian quote: ”delegasjonen ankommet i fin form og i arbeid. Vg kontakt resp. korer via arbeidsgivere og meddel dette.”

³⁷⁵ Telex, Maputo Office to Expert Office, 15.12.1980. Norad Eaa-L0248. The team estimated the cost to 20-30.000 kr.

³⁷⁶ Telex, Maputo Office to Expert Office, 15.12.1980.

³⁷⁷ Telex, Maputo Office to Expert Office, 23.12.1980. Norad Eaa-L0248.

³⁷⁸ Telex, Expert Office to Maputo Office, 16.12.1980. The surprise was indicated by a question mark in the margins of the telex of 15.12.1980. Norad Eaa-L0248.

Moving through the Ministry and into the Norwegian Royal Castle

In the Mozambique country folders in the archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, I find reference to the oil aid project for the first time in September, 1980. Clearly, important work had been done in Norad in the months before, both in Maputo and in Oslo. During a meeting in late September, Norad's board had decided to grant 4,5 million Norwegian kroner to what was now referred to as an actual project: the "MOZ 032 Oil cooperation with Mozambique."³⁷⁹ Norad had prepared a letter to the Mozambican secretariat for coal and hydrocarbons which would function as a formal agreement, and asked for permission from the Ministry to enter into this agreement on behalf of the Norwegian government. In this document, the formalization of the project is made clear: In April 1981, precisely one year after the first informal inquiry was raised, a new chapter was added to the Mozambique country program: "Clause 8. Petroleum cooperation". This made oil a part of the official aid program,³⁸⁰ which in turn made it possible for the Mozambican secretariat in June 1981 to sign a contract with Geco for work which would be funded in full by Norad.³⁸¹

In this way, the potential oil aid program entered into the formal documents of the Norwegian aid system in April, 1981, two months after the feasibility study was ready and at the first possible occasion. Furthermore, as discussed in the beginning of this chapter, the country program negotiations was the main arena for discussing the Norwegian aid as a whole; hence, being formally included in these negotiations meant that the potential project had been accepted as a part of the whole.

What was the Norad board then going to approve in their September meeting? What was the oil aid project becoming? In the letter prepared by the Norad staff, the specific content of the project was the following:

- 1) Mozambique has entered into two contracts with two seismic companies, the Geophysical Company of Norway (GECO) and the Western Geophysical, dated 27 June 1981, to conduct geophysical surveys in the areas
Maputo and Sofala – 1 and
Sofala – 1 and Pebane
(hereinafter referred to as "the Surveys"). The companies shall also carry out processing of seismic data.
- 2) Norway shall, on the terms and conditions set forth or referred herein and subject to Parliamentary appropriations, within the limit of Norwegian kroner 4,500,000.- (fourmillionfivehundredthousand) (herein after "the Grant")
 - (i) commission consulting firms to undertake quality control during the Surveys
 - (ii) commission consulting firms to undertake the interpretation of the data resulting from the Surveys.³⁸²

³⁷⁹ Memo from Sverre Melsom, office manager in Norad, to MFA's Department of international economic and social development, 30.9.1981. MFA 37-4/187-10.

³⁸⁰ After the country program negotiations in April 1981, oil cooperation had been included as a distinct line in the budget, albeit with no specified financial amount.

³⁸¹ Draft letter, Kingdom of Norway to the People's Republic of Mozambique, 30.09.1981. MFA 37-4/187-10.

³⁸² Draft letter, Norway to Mozambique, 30.09.1981. This quote is retrieved from the finalized version which was approved by the MFA. Norad's draft contained more cross references to other paragraphs in the document, which the MFA did not find necessary to include.

Here, the oil aid project was about to be realized in the form of two specific assignments: The commissioning of two seismic companies to “undertake quality control” of data collection and to “undertake the interpretation” of these same data. Since the Mozambican government had already signed the agreement with Geco, the only thing remaining was to formally grant the funding of these planned activities.

The only articulated link between the project and the surrounding aid strategies and plans of Mozambique and Norway was a formulation in the opening paragraph stating that the “agreement” (i.e. not the project) was “in pursuance of the Agreement between Norway and Mozambique regarding co-operation for the promotion of the economic and social development of Mozambique”³⁸³. In this way, the general aim of the country agreement was also the overall frame of the oil aid. The letter connected the draft agreement directly to this general aim, but did not articulate further how this connection or relation would be made in practice. The letter seems to expect that the connection would seem self-evident to readers; that is, that pursuing the search for oil offshore Mozambique would obviously contribute to the country’s economic and social development. The Norad board approved the draft letter September 29, 1981. Still, the draft letter had yet to be finalized and approved by another key actor: the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The velocity of the project preparation work again intensified during September and October 1981. Memos again moved swiftly through the halls of the aid administration. The potential project was in the close vicinity of being realized; all that was left, was the formal approval from the political leadership in Oslo. The Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs would have to grant the legal authority to finalize the contract between the two countries, and Ministry offices thus became part of the circulation circuit of project documents. The day after the Norad board meeting, a Norad executive forwarded the case to the Ministry’s Department of International Economic and Social Development (from here on: the MFA’s Development Office). Again, Norad emphasized the importance of maintaining high speed: “It is most urgent to have this matter formalized, and one dares therefore request that it is given the necessary priority”.³⁸⁴

In the MFA’s Development Office, staff promptly started the process of transforming Norad’s draft letter into a legal document that vested staff with the authority to sign a contract on behalf of the Norwegian government. The next week, they forwarded the draft letter to the Ministry’s Legal Office, repeating Norad’s concern for maintaining high speed: “It is especially emphasized that the case is urgent.”³⁸⁵ With a red pen, someone underlined the last words of the sentence, further emphasizing the urgency. Two days later, a Legal Office staff member scribbled a note on the bottom of the document, stating that only a minor changes would have had been done in Norad’s draft letter. The authority to sign the agreement, he

³⁸³ Draft letter, Norway to Mozambique, 30.09.1981.

³⁸⁴ Memo, Norad to MFA, 30.9.1981. Norwegian quote: “Det haster svært med å få denne sak formalisert, og en tør derfor anmode om at den gis den nødvendige prioritet.”

³⁸⁵ Memo, MFA’s 4. Development Office, to MFA’s 4. Legal Office 5.10.1981. MFA 37-4/187-10. Norwegian quote: “Det gjøres spesielt oppmerksom på at saken haster.”

noted, would have to be obtained by so-called “royal decree”.³⁸⁶ With that, the Legal Office had prepared the way for the finalized letter to be placed on the desk of the Foreign Minister.

With the Legal Office’s granting of legal authority to sign the agreement, the potential project was yet another step closer to formally becoming a project. The last point on the itinerary was the Council of State (“statsråd”), a weekly meeting between the Norwegian cabinet and the Norwegian king held at the Royal Castle in Oslo, located just across the street from the Ministry. Here, the cabinet members would present numerous issues from their respective departments. Accordingly, the Minister of Foreign Affairs would present the oil aid project, and the cabinet would then formally approve this new agreement between the two nations of Norway and Mozambique. The formal decision was termed a “royal decree” (“kongelig resolusjon”) which was issued by “the King during Council of State” (“Kongen i Statsråd”). Despite the king not having any authority in Norwegian political decisions, the weekly meetings between the government and the king have remained a central institution for formally approving important matters of state; including, as in this case, the signing of a contract between “the Kingdom of Norway” and “the People’s Republic of Mozambique”.

As the oil aid project moved through the halls of the Ministry, most details from the preparatory discussions and reports from the past 18 months were left behind. For all practical purposes, the project had at this point been approved; what remained was to formally grant Norad staff the authority to sign the contract on behalf of the Norwegian government. What was presented to the Minister of Foreign Affairs by his staff were two documents: a three-page manuscript titled “Presentation to Council of State” summarizing the background and purpose of the agreement and a half-page memo summarizing the manuscript. Both documents were ready for circulation on October 28, 1981. Two days later, on October 30, 1981, the Minister presented them to Council of State.

The short memo had the following title: “Signing of an agreement between Norway and Mozambique regarding quality control and interpretation work in relation to a larger seismic mapping of Mozambique’s continental shelf.”³⁸⁷ The memo was articulated in such a way that it in effect assumed that it had already been approved:

During the country program negotiations in Maputo in April Mozambique requested Norwegian aid to the oil sector in relation to a larger seismic mapping of Mozambique’s continental shelf. The investigation is a part of Mozambique’s strategy for localizing and exploitation of possible oil and gas resources.

Two companies, the Norwegian GECO and the American Western Geophysical have been given the assignment of collecting seismic data offshore. There will not be any need for Norwegian financial aid for this work as the interested oil companies will pay for the resulting data.

Mozambique wishes however to have their own unbiased interpretation of the seismic data and have quality controllers onboard the ships during the seismic collection and has requested

³⁸⁶ Handwritten remark by Legal Office staff member, dated 7.10.1981, in upper-right corner of memo from MFA’s 4. Development Office to Legal Office.

³⁸⁷ Memo, MFA Dept. of international economic and social development, 28.10.1981. MFA 37-4/187-10. Norwegian title: “Undertegning av en avtale mellom Norge og Mosambik vedrørende kvalitetskontroll og tolkningsarbeid i forbindelse med en større seismisk kartlegging av Mosambiks kontinentalsokkel.”

Norwegian aid for this. The agreement has a financial frame of 4,5 mill. kr. and covers the years of 1981 and 1982.³⁸⁸

In this text, several formulations had the effect of establishing the project as an already existing object: It “is a part of” Mozambique’s overall strategy for the oil sector; the assignment “had [already] been given” to two companies; the oil companies “will pay for” the data collection; and the financial frame and timeline of the agreement was already set. There were no points of confusion or contestation. Furthermore, the process itself was clear-cut: Mozambique had recently requested aid for a specific task, having already taken care of other aspects. As shown by my analysis above, the process had indeed started a whole year before, at the previous country program negotiations, and Norwegian aid staff and oil staff had been deeply involved in articulating the project that was now being presented as the Mozambican government’s request. In this way, the history of the project preparations was retold as a narrative of the correct procedure being followed – first Mozambique’s clear request, then Norad’s clear response, then the MFA’s clear approval.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs brought the two documents – the short memo and the longer manuscript – with him to Council of State together with a number of other matters from his Ministry, all to be approved alongside a whole range of matters from the other ministries. During the meeting, he might have read the manuscript out loud, in full or in part. The manuscript is identical to the short memo, only having been expanded with a few additional paragraphs briefly describing the previous missions by the NPD and the consultants – both concluding that more data would have to be found and more analysis would have to be done. The second half of the manuscript included specific comments explaining the different points of the proposed agreement. The manuscript ended with the following recommendation:

The Directorate of development aid recommends that an agreement, largely in correspondence with the attached draft, is made.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs endorses the Directorate’s recommendation. The agreement is not of a kind such that it according to §26 of the Constitution is necessary with the consent of Parliament.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs
r e c o m m e n d s:

An agreement between Norway and Mozambique about financial aid regarding quality control and interpretation work in relation to a larger seismic mapping of Mozambique’s continental shelf, in large in correspondence with a presented draft, is signed.³⁸⁹

³⁸⁸ Memo, MFA Dept. of international economic and social development, 28.10.1981. Norwegian quote: “Under landprogramforhandlingene i Maputo i april anmodet Mosambik om norsk bistand til oljesektoren i forbindelse med en større seismisk kartlegging av Mosambiks kontinentalsokkel. Undersøkelsen er et ledd i Mosambiks strategi for lokalisering og utnyttelse av eventuelle olje- og gassforekomster. To selskaper, det norske GECO og det amerikanske Western Geophysical, har fått i oppdrag å samle inn seismiske data offshore. Det vil ikke være behov for norsk finansiell bistand til dette arbeidet da interesserte oljeselskaper betaler for de fremkomne data. Mosambik ønsker imidlertid en egen uhildet tolkning av de seismiske data samt å ha kvalitetskontrollører om bord på fartøyene under den seismiske innsamling og har anmodet om norsk bistand til dette. Avtalen har en finansiell ramme på 4,5 mill. kr. og omfatter årene 1981 og 1982.”

Hence, at the point where the project reached the Council of State, the Ministry had a clear opinion about how to proceed. It was crucial for the further life of the project that it was indeed presented and approved at this particular meeting, but the project's content and form was already firmly established at this point. The last part of the manuscript, quoted above, shows that this was not merely a list of talking points for the Minister. The formulations and layout of the document was in itself of great importance. The whole authority of the Ministry was vested in the word "recommends", which was prominently centered alone and double spaced. The document culminated with this formulation: The specific decision which both Norad and the Ministry had endorsed.

The Council of State followed the Ministry's recommendation. Whether there were any questions, discussions, or controversies surrounding the decision, the material does not say; what it does show, is that the first page of the manuscript was given the stamp "Royal Decree" (Kgl. Resolusjon"), with an adjoining signature and date. Numerous other small stamps and signatures from Ministry staff covers the first page. In combination, they make the document far more official and authoritative than the word *manuscript* first suggested: To present before the Council of State clearly involved not only an oral presentation, but also turning the object of the presentation into a document which could be given the literal stamp of approval.

Shortly after Council of State was adjourned, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a short press release, only two sentences long (albeit two long sentences), describing the newly approved oil aid project. The text resembled the formal memo, but with some alterations:

During today's Council of State authority was granted to the signing of a contract between Norway and Mozambique about Norwegian aid to the oil sector on the occasion of seismic investigations which Mozambique now wishes to undertake on the continental shelf as a part of the localizing and exploitation of possible oil and gas resources. According to the agreement Norway shall commission quality controllers who will be present on board the ships during the seismic data collection and furthermore contribute with expert assistance regarding the analysis of the collected data.³⁹⁰

In this press release, the project gained a dimension which had not been present in any of its other document forms: The text conveyed a concrete image of what this particular aid amounted to in practice, that of Norwegian experts "who will be present on board the ships".

³⁸⁹ Presentation for Council of State [Foredrag til Statsråd], dated 28.10.1981, held 30.10.1981. Norwegian quote: «Direktoratet for utviklingshjelp anbefaler at en avtale, i det vesentlige i samsvar med det vedlagte utkast, inngås. // Utenriksdepartementet slutter seg til Direktoratets anbefaling. Avtalen er ikke av den art at den etter Grunnlovens §26 er nødvendig å innehente Stortingets samtykke. // Utenriksdepartementet // t i l r å r: // En avtale mellom Norge og Mosambik om finansiell bistand vedrørende kvalitetskontroll og tolkningsarbeider i forbindelse med en større seismisk kartlegging av Mosambiks kontinentalsokkel, i hovedsak i overensstemmelse med et fremlagt utkast, undertegnes.» MFA 37-4/187-10.

³⁹⁰ Press release from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 30.10.1981. MFA 37-4/187-10. Norwegian quote: "Det ble i Statsråd i dag gitt fullmakt til å undertegne en avtale mellom Norge og Mosambik om norsk bistand på oljesektoren i forbindelse med seismiske undersøkelser Mosambik nå ønsker utført på kontinentalsokkelen som et ledd i lokalisering og utnyttelse av eventuelle olje- og gassforekomster. // I følge avtalen skal Norge engasjere kvalitetskontrollører som skal stå om bord i fartøyene under selve den seismiske innsamlingen samt bistå med ekspertbistand i forbindelse med tolkningen av de innsamlede data. // Avtalen som har en ramme på 4,5 mill. kr omfatter årene 1981 og 1982. // Utenriksdepartementet, 30. oktober 1981.»

The phrase spurs associations of Norwegian oil experts entering exploration vessels in a Mozambican harbor, venturing out to the tropical seas, wind in their hair, peeking over the shoulders of the data collectors and later hovering over the seismic data tapes, looking for traces of oil.

In this last translation in the long chain of documents building upon each other to produce the oil aid project, the intended reader was the general public, not staff or officials within Norad or the Ministry. The image is striking: the Norwegian oil experts, having built their own magnificent oil industry to the benefit of the entire Norwegian society, were now crossing new frontiers and mapping new oceans, all for assisting a newly independent nation in its endeavor to grasp its own oil. The Norwegians' role was that of quality controller and expert analyst. It was the specific experience with grasping offshore oil through the clever handling of oil data that was to be shared.

With that, the Norwegian oil aid project in Mozambique could make the final move from potential to real. Within the Ministry in Oslo, the Development Office notified the Department of Protocol of the new agreement that was about to be signed in Maputo. The agreement was thereby expected by the Protocol staff, who would include it in the exclusive archive of legal agreements entered into by the Kingdom of Norway.³⁹¹ In this way, everything was ready for Norad's resident representative in Maputo, Arne Dahlen, to meet with the Secretary of Coal and Hydrocarbons, Mr. Osman, and sign the formal agreement establishing the MOZ 032 project. With that, the activities that had been planned for the past 18 months were could begin.

Chapter conclusions

In this chapter, I have analyzed how a new Norwegian aid project in Mozambique came into being during 1980-81. The project, titled "MOZ 032 Oil cooperation", was part of a whole new, expanding field of Norwegian aid, *oil aid*, where the aim was to share Norwegian experiences from building an oil sector with developing nations. When the MOZ 032 project was formally approved in October 1981, staff from Norad and the Norwegian Petroleum Directorate had worked for 18 months to make it happen. The approved project would fund the work of Norwegian petroleum experts commissioned to assist the Mozambican Secretariat for Coal and Hydrocarbons in analyzing data from investigations into whether there were oil and natural gas resources offshore Mozambique. As I have shown, a key concern for the NPD staff involved in preparing the project was that the Mozambican government should first spend time retrieving and analysing oil data, *before* making political decisions and negotiating with international oil companies. This point, I showed, had been of major importance in the building of the Norwegian public oil administration. Yet this position was not fully accepted by the Mozambican government, who rather sought to move ahead to negotiations. While obtaining Norwegian aid funds for securing proper analysis of existing data, the government went elsewhere for advice on how to proceed with drafting legal regulations.

³⁹¹ Memo, MFA's 4. Development Office to the Protocol Services, 3.11.1981. MFA 37-4/187-10.

What had the Norwegian oil aid project to Mozambique become on its route from the initial informal inquiry to the signed version of the final agreement? The approved agreement was clearly delineated to only concerning the collection and analysis of data. What the agreement specifically would enable, was to hire petroleum geologists who would oversee the data collection work. The experts funded by Norad would thus be the eyes and ears of the Mozambican government, working to ensure that their interests were being secured. This entailed ensuring that their own standard was being followed. In addition, the experts would function as the government's direct advisors, analysing the data in parallel to the work done by the oil companies and submitting their analysis directly to the government. By supplying the Mozambican government with independent analyses of oil data, the foreign experts would ideally enable the same kind of national control over the oil data, and thus the oil exploitation and revenues, as the Norwegian oil administration had itself strived to achieve.

This chapter's concern has not merely been to investigate what the project as such was made to involve. Rather, I have wanted to understand how an aid project came into being at the point in time when the Evaluation Office was beginning to promote their new system of aid assessment. In the previous chapter, I noted that the Evaluation Office was dissatisfied with how aid projects were being planned and suggested new planning tools for enabling projects both to be better linked to its surroundings and to be possible to evaluate. I have therefore sought to use the making of the MOZ 032 chapter as material for analyzing how projects at the time were planned. What were the staff's concerns and what kind of assessments were they doing? As I have argued in this chapter, aid staff involved in enabling this project was most concerned with moving the project through the aid system, from the initial informal request through multiple moments of assessment until the formal agreement was signed. They were clearly goal-oriented and had a concrete result in mind – to realize the project – but their pursuit of goals and results differed in important ways from the way these were conceptualized by the evaluation staff. The aid staff were forward-looking, engaged in making the project happen, and not concerned about potential future evaluators.

A main argument emerging from my analysis is the importance of documents in the making of the project. While evaluation staff had asserted that aid staff were not writing enough, my analysis has shown that the aid staff were indeed doing a concerted effort at writing and circulating documents, but not in the way the evaluation staff was beginning to demand. Through my detailed analysis of the chain of documents which in combination enabled the project to be realized, I have shown how the project was gradually gaining reality within the documents. The documents was what made things happen and helped to establish the project as something real long before it was formally approved.

At what moment during this prolonged process of articulation did Norad and the Norwegian government explicitly make the decision to support the project? Clearly, this happened long before the formal approval by Council of State in October, 1981. In April, 1981, the project had been integrated into the country program during the country program negotiations in Maputo. In January, 1981, the involved staff from Norad and the NPD

conceived of the project as ongoing and on the verge of being extended and expanded. This had been the case even before the feasibility study had been finalized: During the fall of 1980, after the fact-finding mission and during the preparation of the feasibility study, the hypothetical possibility of *not* realizing the project diminished. The initial hesitation in Norad during spring 1980, when staff in Oslo noted that project documents were incomplete, was accompanied, and soon replaced, by the willingness to move the inquiry swiftly through the system. The initial questions about *whether* to grant the project, raised in May 1980, were soon replaced by questions of *how*.

This gradual move from *whether* to *how*, which I have located within and between the project documents of the aid administration, makes it difficult to pinpoint exactly who approved of the project, when, and how. The project just seems to emerge, document by document, meeting by meeting. From the very first instance in April 1980, it is there, in some form or the other, and as it moved through the aid system during the next 18 months it gradually shifted from an informal inquiry into a formal agreement, mobilizing 4,5 million kroner from the Norwegian foreign aid budget. For every document, the project gained more detail and was less likely to be abandoned. Although the Norad staff in Oslo insisted on producing more documents to make possible a more informed decision about whether or not to approve the project, they also accepted documents to be less specific than they would have liked. When the NPD urged the Mozambican government to spend time on data collection and analysis, the aid staff sided with the government and made sure that the process went as smoothly and swiftly as possible. Based on this, I argued that the Norad staff's willingness to accommodate requests and their concern for enabling new projects may explain how Norwegian projects came to be planned in the precise manner criticized by the evaluation staff.

The gradual realization of the project had the effect of blurring the boundaries between the potential project and the approved project. As my analysis has shown, just starting the planning process itself involved envisioning a project idea as real, and the planning was done for the purpose of materializing the idea. The very process of preparing the project involved articulating it in further detail. The option of deciding not to fund the project after reviewing Mozambique's request seems not to have been considered in practice. My analysis of this particular project suggests that there was a direct relation between the concern for speed and the concern for documentation: If aid staff made speed a priority, they produced less documents; if they made documents a priority, they allowed for slower progress. Precisely this concern for linear progress, for moving forward and getting started with the project, entailed that documentation work was interpreted as unfortunate delays. And if the concern was to maintain high speed ahead, then delays were to be minimized.

The concern for time and the role of documents serves to accentuate differences both between aid work and oil work and between aid work and evaluation work. The aid staff worked to realize the project as swiftly as possible through establishing the necessary chain of project documents; in doing so, they relied on NPD staff, who gave the advice of taking the time needed to compile and evaluate oil data, yet they tried also to accommodate the

Mozambican government's requests for keeping high speed ahead. In doing so, they established a chain of documents that differed from what the evaluation staff would have wanted: Rather than enabling traceability and evaluability, that is, the possibility to retrace the project backwards in time, the document chain enabled a forward-looking move towards the realization of the project.

In this way, the aid staff diverged from both oil staff and evaluation staff, who all argued for the importance of building strong archives of data and analysis. The oil staff, notably the NPD's Director of Planning Farouk Al-Kasim, argued strongly for the direct relation between a strong and thoroughly analyzed archive of oil data and the ability to actively govern the sector. I argued that the NPD's role in enabling the Norwegian system of democratic control over the oil revenues was founded upon their rich archive and strong analytical capacity. In Al-Kasim's words, "intimate knowledge" of the geology through thorough evaluation of oil data was the foundation upon which to base both technical decisions and political planning. Hence, in NPD's terminology, evaluation was a prerequisite for planning. This diverged from Norad's evaluation staff, who argued that more detailed planning was necessary for enabling evaluation.

Based on the analysis summarized above, I suggest that we may distinguish three versions of evaluation in the empirical material: The Evaluation Office's visions of evaluability investigated in the previous chapter is but one of several possible ways of engaging in evaluation work. As I have shown in this chapter, the project staff were constantly considering whether to support the potential oil aid project; their concern for accommodating requests and moving the project swiftly towards realization trumped other concerns for documentation and strict alignment to Norwegian aid priorities. Furthermore, the NPD's version of evaluation was concerned with analyzing the potential oil resources so thoroughly that they would both gain an advantage vis-à-vis the oil companies and enable well-informed political decisions. The NPD therefore made the building and maintaining of an oil archive a main priority, as was the building of evaluation expertise who could enable intimate knowledge of the shelf as a whole.³⁹² Hence, the oil evaluation work was done at the heart of the oil administration. In contrast, Norad's evaluation office envisioned aid evaluation to be done at a distance, by external actors. Other forms of assessments done within Norad during planning and implementation of projects were by them not considered evaluation, but something less objective and comprehensive. Hence, the building of the rih project archive was to be done by those who would be evaluated, not by those who would do the evaluations. This is why I have suggested to consider the evaluation staff and the oil staff's different way of working as *versions of evaluation*.

Incidentally, the NPD's version of evaluation was what ultimately became the aid project: By funding visits from Norwegian geology experts, the aid project would help the

³⁹² Hanisch and Nerheim also point to this: «Fra seismiske/geologiske undersøkelser og boring strømmet et vell av data og fysiske prøver. Undersøkelsesavdelingen skulle lagre og analysere denne datamengden. Hvor mye olje/gass fantes i vedkommende reservoar, og hvor mye kunne utnyttes? For OD ble det en prioritert oppgave å utvikle den nødvendige ekspertise for en selvstendig evaluering.» Hanisch and Nerheim 1992, p. 291.

Mozambican government gain more intimate knowledge of their continental shelf. This was, as I have argued, a core feature of the Norwegian oil experience. Yet, the very making of this experience into an aid project had the effect of transforming this experience into something that differed in critical ways from the Norwegian experience upon which it was built: The evaluation work was being done abroad, far away from the offices of the Mozambican government. Indeed, the Mozambican Secretary of Coal and Oil was instrumental in initiating the project in cooperation with Norad's Maputo office, who forwarded and amplified his request; yet the very work of articulating a Mozambican oil future, of building an oil administration memo by memo, data tape by data tape, was done elsewhere and by external experts. Hence, the Norwegian aid funds made possible a situation where Mozambique embarked on a route very different from what had been the Norwegian route. Given that the NPD emphasized the direct relation between intimate knowledge of the geology and national, democratic control over the resources, would this even be possible if the intimate knowledge of the shelf was not gained by the government staff themselves? In short, what would the Norwegian experience become in a context that different in fundamental ways from its point of departure?

Translating the Norwegian oil experience into an aid project clearly did not simply transfer the complete historical specificity of the Norwegian experience. Rather, it helped establish a whole different approach to building an oil administration. To that end, I will argue that the very process of articulating the aid project in and of itself changed the Norwegian experience. To paraphrase John Law, as the Norwegian experience moved, it changed.³⁹³ The Mozambican experience would become different indeed from what had been the Norwegian experience – and the aid system, with its specific routines and circuits of documentation and formalization, clearly contributed to expanding this difference. While the Norwegian Petroleum Directorate deliberately built its ability to employ and combine new ways of analyzing oil data, and was able see the oil in increasing detail, the Mozambican oil office had no such hands-on engagement with evaluation of the oil fields. The Norwegian aid project was initiated upon the government's request, and tailored to support their position. Yet the oil experts would come from abroad, retrieve their data, and do their analyses elsewhere, all funded by Norwegian aid funds. In this way, the aid project made the emerging Mozambican oil experience even more different than the different contexts would suggest.

In sum, what I have argued in this chapter is that my analysis of the specific oil aid project established by Norad in Mozambique in 1981 demonstrates that there were several versions of evaluation operating within Norwegian aid. The aid staff were constantly in routine, every-day assessments of unfolding aid projects, in effect evaluating the potential oil aid project at every step through its realization. The evaluation staff were seeking to build a system in which all aid staff produced data on planned and ongoing projects in a way that would enable future evaluations. The oil staff of the NPD were constantly evaluating oil data to gain a best possible picture of the continental shelf as a whole. In this way, both evaluation

³⁹³ Law 2006 [1997], p. 49.

staff and oil staff were employing technologies of seeing as a means to gain intimate knowledge - whether of the aid field or the oil fields. Yet while the NPD's data were geochemical and geophysical test results, the Evaluation Office's data were documents written by aid staff across the aid administration. While envisioning rich archives of project documents, the evaluation staff were far away from gaining the strong information infrastructure of the NPD.

In this chapter, I have concentrated on how the MOZ 032 oil aid project came into being. In the next chapters, I will turn to analyze how the project unfolded during the coming decade. Above, I argued that the very making of a project changed the Norwegian oil experience in important ways. Hence, the tools of aid served to transform the object of aid, that is, the oil experience. In the next two chapters, I will investigate how this in turn was affected by the new tools for doing aid, which was implemented during the ensuing decade. What happened to the project as new tools and systems for project management and evaluation were introduced in Norad? As I will show, what happened to the project was not merely determined on how the object was being handled, but also on the object itself: More specifically, on the properties of the *oil*. The main concern of the NPD – evaluation of oil data – would become a key question: Was there enough oil to justify an aid project?

Chapter 4: Employing optics of evaluation

Introduction

What happened with the Norwegian oil aid project in Mozambique after its initiation in 1980-81? What did it amount to and what did it enable? And how did aid staff and evaluators go about answering these questions? In the next two chapters, I will turn to analyzing precisely these issues. While I in the next chapter will investigate documents written by aid staff as part of their daily project administration, I will in the present chapter investigate two efforts at grasping the project from the outside during the years 1989-1991: first, a major study of all Norwegian aid given to Mozambique, written by an external evaluation team, then an annual report prepared by the Norwegian Petroleum Directorate describing all their Norad-funded aid work. In both of these, the oil aid project are but one of many projects covered. Employing the concept of *evaluation optics*, which I have developed during the previous chapters of this thesis, I will tease out how the Country Study and the Annual Report grasp the particular oil aid project in different ways and establish it as part of different contexts.

The relation between optics, objects, and contexts will be a crucial concern in this chapter. Furthermore, as I will show, these three (objects, optics, and contexts) were all changing during the 1980s. The object of the oil aid project was unfolding in Mozambique with experts visiting from Norway, accumulation of oil data and analyses, negotiations with international oil companies, and the establishment of a state oil company. Meanwhile, the evaluation staff in Oslo were establishing systems and routines for evaluation work and also developing a completely new optic, the “Country Study and Norwegian Aid Review”, which I will investigate in detail in this chapter. Finally, during the decade of the 1980s, the contexts of both the object and the optic were changing in fundamental ways: In Mozambique, a devastating civil war was paralyzing the country; in Norway, the aid administration was undergoing a major reform which in turn enabled a new optic, the NPD’s annual report. In what ways did these changes interrelate, and with what consequences?

In this chapter, I will organize my analysis of these changes around the two evaluation optics introduced above, the Mozambique Country Study and Norwegian Aid Review from 1990 and the Norwegian Petroleum Directorate’s Annual Report to Norad for 1991. The question of what, precisely, were the relations between objects, optics, and contexts will be a recurring concern, on several levels: What did the oil aid project become when seen through these specific optics? Secondly, what contexts did the optics establish around the projects? Thirdly, how were the optics themselves materializations of these specific contexts? Finally, what may the optics tell us about the ongoing transformations of Norwegian aid?

In asking these questions, I take methodological cues from Asdal and Moser, who argue that context should never be taken for granted as an explanation for that which is being

analyzed; rather, how contexts are established must in itself be explained.³⁹⁴ In the case of this thesis, this argument serves to emphasize that the grand narratives of the 1980s and early 1990s as the era of the audit society, neoliberal policies, and New Public Management are, precisely, grand narratives describing a fundamental transformation of the North-Western European welfare states during these years. While their existence and importance have been demonstrated in multiple countries and sectors, it remains to be shown whether, and if so, how, they became notable features also of Norwegian foreign aid administration and evaluation around 1990. If there are connections between the larger shifts and what happens in my empirical material, what precisely were these connections? What specific parts, if any, of the audit society and New Public Management may be found here?

In analyzing the material, I will therefore look for how contexts are established within the specific empirical material. The many details of the documents then become most significant: How, specifically, are the documents establishing their own context? How do they integrate multiple contexts, and how do they themselves work to intervene in these contexts? How did the documents themselves both embody and enable transformations of Norwegian foreign aid at large?

Evaluation Optic 1: The Mozambique Country Study and Norwegian Aid Review

In May 1989, a team of Norwegian researchers from the Christian Michelsen's Institute (CMI), an independent institute for development research in the city of Bergen on the Norwegian western coast, started the comprehensive task of writing a so-called *Country Study and Norwegian Aid Review* of Mozambique.³⁹⁵ During the next year, the Bergen team, led by researchers Grete Brochmann and Arve Ofstad, and including additional external consultants commissioned by CMI, travelled to Mozambique on multiple missions, investigating documents and archives; interviewing staff members of Mozambican state agencies and departments; interviewing Norwegian aid staff in Maputo and Oslo; and going on field visits across the country. Turning their analyses into writing, they sought to respond to the declared purpose of the Country Studies: «evaluating the long-term orientation and volume of Norwegian aid in relation to overall needs and effects of such aid.»³⁹⁶

In July 1990, the research team leaders finalized the Country Study and submitted it to the Ministry, stating in its Preface: “This has been a difficult and challenging task. We hope

³⁹⁴ Asdal and Moser 2012, Asdal 2012a.

³⁹⁵ The development research unit at the Chr. Michelsen Institute (Development Research and Action Programme, DERAP) had since its establishment in 1961 had a direct connection to Norad; during the first 15 years, Norad funded parts of DERAP's core activities while DERAP provided staff for expert missions and undertook commissioned research. From 1976, Norad gained a seat in DERAP's board. From the 1980s, the core funding was replaced by project funding. Cf. Reinertsen 2008 for an historical analysis of the relation between DERAP and Norad during 1960-1980.

³⁹⁶ Brochmann, Grete and Arve Ofstad 1990a. *Mozambique. Norwegian Assistance in a Context of Crisis. Country Study and Norwegian Aid Review*. CMI Report R 1990:4. Bergen: Christian Michelsen Institute, Department of Social Science and Development, p. ix.

that the outcome will satisfy the expectations of our readers, and induce constructive action by the relevant authorities”.³⁹⁷ The study consisted of seven individual yet interrelated reports: the so-called Main Study, 173 pages long, titled *Mozambique. Norwegian Assistance in a Context of Crisis. Country Study and Norwegian Aid Review*; the Short Version written in Norwegian, 32 pages long, with the same title (only translated);³⁹⁸ and five so-called “Special Studies” addressing the specific issues of politics and economy in Mozambique;³⁹⁹ the major aid donors present in the country;⁴⁰⁰ the state of the environment;⁴⁰¹ the so-called non-project assistance, i.e. aid given in addition to the approved aid program;⁴⁰² and a bibliography of available research literature and governmental documents.⁴⁰³

In the following, I will investigate how the seven documents of the Country Study built on and referred to each other in a specific way: The Short Version built upon the Main Study, which in turn referred extensively to the Special Studies. I will argue that they in combination enabled a chain of translations in which each move from field, through special studies, to the Main Study and Short Version. This involved major reductions and amplifications: the documents attained fewer pages, less details, less discussions, larger text font, and ultimately the local language of the Norwegian aid administration and public. The further away from the Short Version, the more specialized questions, the more detailed descriptions, the more academic discussions, and the more references to documents beyond the study itself. My main concern in this chapter will not only be to assert that the documents amounted to a translation chain, but furthermore to consider what effects these translations, with its reductions and amplifications, might have had. I will begin by investigating how the oil aid project was handled, before moving on to analyzing the Country Study as such. As stated above, the Country Study’s concern for context will be a key point also in my analysis. But before I embark on analyzing the documents, I will first establish the context of the Country Study itself: The new institutional setting of the aid administration’s evaluation work as of 1990 and its earlier attempts at evaluating Norwegian aid to Mozambique.

An office on the move

During the decade that had passed between the publication of the Country Study of Mozambique in 1990 and the publication of the *Handbook of Evaluation Questions* in 1981,

³⁹⁷ Mozambique Country Study 1990, p. xi.

³⁹⁸ Brochmann, Grete and Arve Ofstad 1990b. *Mosambik. Norsk bistand til et land i krise. Landstudie og analyse av norsk bistand. Kortversjon*. Rapport R1990:5. Bergen: Christian Michelsen Institute, Department of Social Science and Development.

³⁹⁹ Hermele, Kenneth 1990. *Mozambican crossroads. Economics and politics in the era of structural adjustment*. Report R1990:3. Bergen: Christian Michelsen Institute, Department of Social Science and Development.

⁴⁰⁰ Adam, Yussuf 1990. *Foreign aid to Mozambique. Needs and effects (A preliminary study)*. Rapport D 1990:15. Bergen: Christian Michelsen Institute, Department of Social Science and Development.

⁴⁰¹ Cherrett, I. et.al. 1990. *Norwegian aid and the environment in Mozambique. An identification of the issues*. Report D 1990: 16. Bergen: Christian Michelsen Institute, Department of Social Science and Development.

⁴⁰² O’Brien, Peter et.al. 1990. *An evaluation of Norway’s non-project financial assistance to Mozambique*. Evaluation Report 7.90. Bergen/Oslo: Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

⁴⁰³ Eriksen, Tore Linné and Arve Ofstad 1990. *Bibliography on Mozambique*. Report R 1990:6. Bergen: Christian Michelsen Institute, Department of Social Science and Development.

the landscape of the Norwegian aid administration had shifted in important ways. Firstly, a new Ministry had been established on January 1, 1984, initiated by the newly appointed Minister for Development Cooperation. Having a minister and a ministry for this particular field of government were both novelties within Norwegian politics.⁴⁰⁴ The new Ministry took over all development-related matters from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and, importantly for my analysis, Norad's evaluation staff, which moved from Norad and into the new Ministry's so-called 2. Planning Office. Their new location involved being closer to the political leadership of Ministry and its discussions of priorities, planning, and future directions for Norwegian aid and further away from the day-to-day administration of the aid projects. In this way, they moved closer to domestic Norwegian concerns and further away from the concerns of the recipient countries.

Before moving, the evaluation staff had strived to secure that their evaluation mandate would be maintained also in their new setting.⁴⁰⁵ Whereas the evaluation staff had an office of their own in Norad, directly under the Norad Director, from January 1, 1984, they became a separate division under the Planning Office. From their new location, the evaluation staff could continue their efforts at making Norwegian aid an evaluable object: They kept their own budget, maintained their routines of preparing annual evaluation programs, and commissioned individual project evaluations and larger sectoral evaluations, which combined several individual project evaluations. Of these, some gained widespread attention because of their substantiated critique of prominent Norwegian aid projects.⁴⁰⁶ Furthermore, they participated in international evaluation fora, notably the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC), which established a so-called Expert Group on Aid Evaluation in 1984. Both within this group and beyond, the evaluation staff circulated its *Handbook of Evaluation Questions* and participated in the work of the expert group. Among the tasks the expert group took on, was a mapping the "evaluation capacity" both among the DAC members (i.e. aid donors) and aid recipients and articulating a standardized vocabulary of aid evaluation.⁴⁰⁷ Within the DAC, the Expert Group on Aid Evaluation was consistently trying to push their concerns onto the agenda of the high-level meetings, in which all the member states' ministers were participating. During the first years, the issue rarely made it onto the agenda, and when it did, it was postponed to a future meeting; then, during the last years of the 1980s, DAC's

⁴⁰⁴ Ruud and Kjerland argue that the establishment of the Ministry of Development Cooperation (MDC) in 1984 fostered "a stronger political management of Norwegian aid, and a new set of principles underpinning the aid". Ruud and Kjerland 2003, p. 154.

⁴⁰⁵ Memo, Evaluation Office to Acting Director, "Forslag til foreløpige retningslinjer for evaluering", 4.11.1983. The Evaluation Office here argued that their current mandate (as formalized in the Director's Instruction from 1981, DI-2/81) needed strengthening with respect to enabling evaluations: "During aid projects' planning stage preconditions for later evaluations should be built in through clear definition of goal for the project, formulation of indicators and plan for collection of baseline data and later investigations. Furthermore the right to evaluation of projects should be made part of the agreement before the start-up of projects." In Norwegian: "Under planleggingsfasen av bistandstiltak bør forutsetninger for senere evaluering bygges inn bl.a. ved klar definisjon av målsetting for prosjektet, formulering av indikatorer og plan for innsamling av baslinjedata og senere undersøkelser. Videre bør retten til evaluering av prosjekter avtales før oppstartning av prosjektene."

⁴⁰⁶ Interview, Jarle Haarstad, June 2014. Cf. also Ruud and Kjerland 2003, pp. 57-64.

⁴⁰⁷ MFA 44.35/1D.76.

highlevel meetings were virtually lifting the issue of evaluation higher on the agenda and made part of their discussions on “aid effectiveness”, which DAC was paying increasing attention to as part of their strategy for the 1990s.⁴⁰⁸

During the mid-1980s, Norad’s evaluation staff develop a whole new optic of evaluation: The so-called *Country Study and Norwegian Aid Review*, in which an external evaluation team would analyze the recipient country and the Norwegian aid portfolio in combination. While having envisioned such an optic already in 1981,⁴⁰⁹ it was realized from within the Ministry and turned onto all Norway’s main cooperation countries, beginning with Bangladesh in 1984-85. According to Haarstad, the country studies were widely recognized, also in the OECD-DAC, as the first reviews of its kind by a bilateral agency.⁴¹⁰ In the case of Mozambique, the comprehensive work of employing this optic would potentially enable both the country as a whole and the specific Norwegian projects to attain far higher resolution than before. The evaluation staff started planning a Country Study of Mozambique in 1987. Starting up in 1989, the commissioned team presented its finalized study in July 1990, making it the tenth, and incidently also the last, in the series of country studies.⁴¹¹

Prior to the Country Study, little had been written within the Norwegian aid system about either the country of Mozambique or the Norwegian aid portfolio. An important document, which was not referred to in the Country Study, was a so-called “pre-analysis” of the country, published in 1977. Following Parliament’s decision in 1976 to consider Mozambique as a new main cooperation country for Norwegian aid, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs commissioned researcher Tertit Aasland at the Norwegian Institute of Foreign Policy (NUPI) in Oslo to give an overview of the country’s current state of affairs.⁴¹² While Aasland in her report gave a brief introduction to the country’s history; politics; state administration; demographics; and the population’s situation, she emphasized multiple times the difficulty of saying anything certain about these issues due to a critical lack of data:

The African peoples’ traditional cultures has been little explored, partly because few external anthropologists have had the opportunity to work in Mozambique, and the Portuguese themselves did little. “No colonial system was ever based on a greater degree of self deception

⁴⁰⁸ These processes are thoroughly documented in the MFA archives, 44.35/1D.74-83.

⁴⁰⁹ Memo, Evaluation Office to Director General, 1.10.1981, p.

⁴¹⁰ Interview, Jarle Haarstad, June 2014; Ruud and Kjerland 2003, p. 63.

⁴¹¹ The country studies were done for all of Norway’s so-called main cooperation countries: Pakistan in 1985; Bangladesh and Zambia in 1986; India, Sri Lanka, and Kenya in 1987; Tanzania and Botswana in 1988; Zimbabwe in 1989; and Mozambique in 1990.

⁴¹² Aasland, Tertit 1977. *Mosambik*. NUPI-rapport nr 33. Oslo: Norsk utenrikspolitisk institutt. The Norwegian Institute of Foreign Policy (NUPI) was established as an independent research institute in 1951 for the purpose of supplying the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with commissioned studies. It was independent from the Ministry, yet financed mostly by assignments from MFA and Norad. Cf. Fonn and Elvebakk 2003. The specific assignment undertaken by Tertit Aasland was commissioned by the MFA November 19, 1976. NUPI and the MFA signed the contract December 7, 1976. The task was defined in the following way (cited on p. 1 of the study): «Utenriksdepartementet ønsket at bl.a. følgende problemfelter skulle belyses: -Etniske, språklige og kulturelle hovedtrekk i landet. -Utviklingen innenfor landets rettsvesen; de alminnelige menneskerettigheters stilling. -Det politiske og administrative systemet. -Situasjonen når det gjelder utviklingsplanene for jordbruket; etablering av såkalte integrerte sosial og økonomiske lokalsamfunn (‘kommunale landsbyer’). – Kvinnens deltakelse i beslutnings- og utviklingsprosessen.»

and misinformation” (Harris, s. 158). Due to the Portuguese censorship and the hindrances that were produced for foreign journalists and social scientists wanting to visit Mozambique, the knowledge of colonial times is also limited. (...)

As for the present situation the reports are divergent and to an extent uncertain and incomplete. (...) As for the value of statistical information, precautions must be taken. Firstly, there is great uncertainty surrounding statistical data for countries such as Mozambique, where the apparatus for collection and handling is poorly developed. Furthermore the Portuguese statistics from colonial times are riddled with several systematic mistakes related to

- withholding of information from colonial warfare,
- lack of information from the areas the Portuguese no longer controlled,
- withholding of information about the transactions with Rhodesia [colonial Zimbabwe]⁴¹³

The pre-study here attests to how there was also in 1977 a routine for collecting information on potential new aid recipients. Hence, the aid administration were employing technologies of seeing also before the Evaluation Office’s initiatives from 1981. Yet, in this specific study, a recurring concern of Aaslands’ was, as quoted above, the challenge of seeing Mozambique *as a whole* since little had been done to map the country’s economy and population. Indeed, the former colonial rule had actively obstructed any efforts of data production and accumulation, leaving the young nation without reliable statistics. The transition period between colonial and independent rule had complicated the statistical situation further:

The statistics from the past two-three years are notably bad due to the transition problems, while there at the same time is a great need for new calculations in relation to the preparation of new and different development plans. Since one lacks exact statistics, different organizations have undertaken estimations. This makes it difficult to undertake comparisons.⁴¹⁴

Indeed, improving the national statistics was identified as a key task by the new government.⁴¹⁵ Four years after Aasland’s report, in May 1980, the first edition of Mozambican statistics were issued.⁴¹⁶ Norad’s resident representative in Maputo forwarded

⁴¹³ Aasland 1977, pp. 2-3. Norwegian quote: «De afrikanske folkegruppene tradisjonelle kultur har vært lite utforsket, bl.a. fordi få utenforstående antropologer har fått anledning til å arbeide i Mosambik, og portugiserne selv gjorde lite. ‘No colonial system was ever based on a greater degree of self deception and misinformation». (Harris, s. 158.). P.g.a. portugisernes sensur og de vanskeligheter som ble lagt i veien for utenlandske journalister, og samfunnsvitere som ville besøke Mosambik, er også kjennskapet til kolonitiden begrenset. (...) Når det gjelder den aktuelle situasjon er rapportene avvikende og til dels usikre og ufullstendige. (...) Når det gjelder verdien av statistiske opplysninger, må det tas forbehold. For det første er det stor usikkerhet ved statistiske data for land som Mosambik, hvor apparatet for innsamling og bearbeiding er dårlig utbygd. Dessuten var den portugisiske statistikk fra kolonitiden beheftet med flere systematiske feil i forbindelse med tilbakeholdelse av opplysninger om krigføringen, mangel på opplysninger fra de områder portugiserne ikke lenger hadde kontroll over, [og] tilbakeholdelse av opplysninger om transaksjonene med Rhodesia.»

⁴¹⁴ Aasland 1977, p. 3. Norwegian quote: «Statistikken for de to-tre siste årene er spesielt dårlig p.g.a. overgangsproblemene, samtidig som behovet for nye beregninger er stort i forbindelse med utarbeidelse av nye og annerledes utviklingsplaner. Siden en mangler eksakt statistikk, har ulike organisasjoner foretatt beregninger. Dette gjør det vanskelig å foreta sammenlikninger.»

⁴¹⁵ The III Frelimo Congress in February, 1977 decided to reorganize the national statistical system. Cf. The opening paragraph of *Informação Estatística. Alguns indicadores económicos e sociais*. No 1, Maputo, May 1980.

⁴¹⁶ *Informação Estatística. Alguns indicadores económicos e sociais*. No 1, Maputo, May 1980. República Popular de Moçambique. Comissão Nacional do Plano. Unpaginated; contained 14 tables. Cf. Jerven 2013 for an analysis of the history of statistics in African countries. Jerven shows how postcolonial statistics have critical weaknesses because they build upon the statistical categories used by the colonial administration, which mainly concentrated on economic activities (e.g. import/export statistics from keeping control of the harbors). Given that

the one copy he was able to obtain and asked the Country office to make them more copies. He pointed out that the published statistics “probably included a considerable amount of weaknesses/ mistakes”.⁴¹⁷ This very first set of statistics was crude; the most detailed data concerned imported and exported goods, while access to health services and school attendance only to a limited extent made the country and its population come sharper into view. My point here is not to analyse the statistical production of Mozambique as of 1980 as such, but rather to highlight how grasping Mozambique by means of technologies of seeing (and by extension technologies of politics) was in itself difficult at the time. Gaining clear answers about the effects of aid would then by necessity also be hard, as the context was itself unstable and uncertain. Rather than having a firm foundation upon which to build aid projects, Mozambique remained opaque for the outside observer.

Mozambique’s opacity was reflected by the opacity of the Norwegian aid activities. From 1977, when the program was initiated, and during the next decade, few optics were employed to better see the object of Norwegian aid in Mozambique. Of the total of 14 reports available about aid in Mozambique, the evaluation staff in the Ministry of Development Cooperation had commissioned one evaluation report and taken part in one joint Nordic evaluation.⁴¹⁸ The 13 other reports were of different kinds; planning documents, internal reviews, commissioned reports, and desk studies. Hence, after 12 years as a main cooperation country, only small spots of the aid to Mozambique were possible to grasp for readers on the outside. The ensuing low resolution of both the country and the aid projects made it difficult to grasp either of them, and even harder to grasp them in combination.

I have compiled the above list of reports on Mozambique from a bibliography titled “Norwegian Development Aid Evaluations 1980-1989”, which was published in 1990.⁴¹⁹ The bibliography, mapping aid evaluations done by both Norad, the Ministry, and other aid donors, was commissioned by the evaluation staff and undertaken by researchers affiliated with CMI (the same research institute that was doing the Country Study of Mozambique). The report in itself attests to how the Norwegian evaluation staff tried to gain an overview of the increasing number of available evaluation reports. The bibliography was organized alphabetically, both according to aid-receiving country and according to sector. In this way, each evaluation report was categorized both according to their *site* and to their *topic*. The bibliography also contained a detailed index with a complex cross-referencing system, enabling readers to find specific evaluation reports in multiple ways. Hence, while the report itself attests to Mozambique being offered little attention prior to the Country Study, it is also a materialization of a situation in which the evaluation staff was experiencing a need for making their own and others’ evaluation

statistics relies upon longer time series, past colonial priorities continue to determine what may be seen of a country’s economic activity.

⁴¹⁷ Letter, Maputo Office to Country Office, “Statistiske opplysninger om Mosambik”, 17.7.1980. Norwegian quote: «Den publiserte statistikk er antakelig beheftet med atskillige mangler/feil.»

⁴¹⁸ The MDC’s evaluation: Evaluation report on stock fish as food aid. DUH Evaluation report 1.86. Oslo: DUH, 1986 (unpaginated). The joint Nordic evaluation: Mozambique Nordic Agricultural Programme (MONAP): report of the Nordic evaluation groups. Carl Thomsen (et al.). Maputo: MONAP, 1980 (47 pages).

⁴¹⁹ Tvedt et.al 1990.

work searchable and navigable. Putting together such a bibliography in itself required meticulous work. Furthermore, as shown in the paragraph above, the bibliography worked with a broad definition of evaluation. It included multiple kinds of what I have suggested to call *evaluation optics*; this combination in turn enabled multiple *versions of evaluation* to qualify for inclusion into the bibliography. In the case of Mozambique, the combination of reports enabled only a limited grasp of the ongoing Norwegian aid activities in the country.

The Norwegian aid to the oil sector, which I in the previous chapter showed was an expanding field in the early 1980s, had not been made the object of any evaluations or other studies during the 1980s, according to the bibliography. The closest it got was to be included in a list of *potential* evaluation objects. This happened when the Evaluation Office in the fall of 1983, following their by now well-established routines, invited all Norad offices to suggest projects for the coming year's evaluation program. The Expert Office suggested five projects, including TAN 051 – the oil aid program in Tanzania. The evaluation staff were positive to the idea, yet in the process of selecting, the project was not included in the final program.⁴²⁰ It may seem that the evaluation idea, which would have involved an external team commissioned by the evaluation staff, was reworked into a project review commissioned by the project staff. Regardless of how this shift came about, the Norwegian Petroleum Directorate undertook a "reviewing evaluation" of the exploration office of the Tanzanian state oil company in 1985.⁴²¹

In the next chapter of this thesis, I will revisit this specific review, and investigate in more detail the differences between a project review and an evaluation. For now, suffice to say that the field of oil aid had only to a most limited extent been made an object of evaluation, and that the oil aid project in Mozambique had not been investigated by any kind of optic. With the Country Study, this was about to change.

Retracing the oil aid project: "Under the current circumstances"

How was the oil aid project described and assessed in the Country Study? In this section, I will follow the Country Study's chain of translation: Beginning with the the conclusions of the Short Version, I will retrace the oil aid project backwards through the Short Version, into the summary and conclusions of the Main Study, from there into the chapters of the Main Study, and from there into the Special Studies. In doing so, I will move backwards through

⁴²⁰ The Expert Office explained their suggestion this way: "TAN 051 Oljesamarbeid. Det kan bli aktuelt å evaluere prosjektet i slutten av 1985. Dette er det største programmet vi har hatt på sektoren, og evaluering kan gi godt grunnlag for å vurdere fortsettelse eller tilsvarende prosjekt i andre hovedsamarbeidsland." Copy of Expert Office's quarterly report, pp. 24-25. Norad A-4429-840. In a summary of all the incoming suggestions, the evaluation staff wrote: "Towards the end of 1985 TAN 051 oil cooperation seems interesting." Norwegian quote: "Mot slutten av 1985 synes TAN 051 oljesamarbeid interessant." The project was not included in the evaluation program for 1984, but listed under the heading "the following are tentatively listed in 1985". Norwegian quote: "Følgende foreslås tentativt oppført i 1985". Memo, Bjordal to avd.dir. PRO, "Evaluering 1984 – forslag fra fagkontorene", 7.11.83, p. 2. Norad A-4429-840.

⁴²¹ NPD Annual Report for 1985, p. 104. Norwegian quote: "En gjennomgående evaluering av utforskningsavdelingen i Tanzanias nasjonale oljeselskap ble utført av Oljedirektoratet. Dette gjorde det mulig å lage et program for å forbedre arbeidseffektiviteten i selskapet. Dette programmet vil bli iverksatt med støtte fra NORAD i 1986.»

the reductions and amplifications enabled by these documents. Opening the Short Version, I find the following statement in its final, concluding chapter:

The oil and gas sector: The support should be made contingent on larger probability for commercial exploitation of the resources, and should probably be reduced.⁴²²

The support “should probably be reduced”: Such was the conclusion of the Country Study, according to the Short Version. How did it reach this conclusion? The Short Version listed four categories of recommendations for what to do with the many different programs and projects that in combination made up the Norwegian aid portfolio in Mozambique: consolidation, reorganization, expansion, or reduction. The oil aid was listed under the last of these four, hence, it was recommended to be reduced in scope from its current level of funding and activities. On the page prior to this list, the Short Version included a more detailed explanation, beginning by summarizing the content of the project:

It has mainly consisted of institutional support with training components to ENH, geological and geophysical investigations first and foremost for oil exploration, and practical matters. Mozambique today does not exploit neither oil nor gas, but has exploitable gas reserves, and oil reserves which are yet not exploitable. Under the current circumstances it can hardly be justified to continue explorations etc. after very uncertain resources, while it is important to be able to exploit resources that give good and secure profits. Continued Norwegian support should be assessed based on such criteria. ENH is most pleased with the Norwegian support, and emphasizes the importance of this being given without any affiliation to commercial interests.⁴²³

This statement creates a certain confusion: Was the oil aid project worth supporting or not? The Short Study asserted that the staff of Mozambique’s newly established national oil company was “most pleased with the Norwegian support”. Nevertheless, in the quote above, the Short Version maintained that “under the current circumstances it can hardly be justified” to continue the project. Hence, it recommended reducing the support.

This seemingly contradictory assessment is intriguing: Although the recipient government was “most pleased” with the support, the Country Study considered it “not justified” to continue “under the current circumstances”. In other words, the project *itself* was working to the satisfaction of its specific recipients, but this concern was given less weight than concerns *outside* the project as such: the lack of commercially exploitable oil and gas reserves. The Short Version emphasized that the Norwegian support should be based on the criteria of “exploit[ing] resources that give good and secure profits,” as opposed to explorations “after very uncertain resources”, which it asserted currently was the case in Mozambique. Hence, the Short Version argued that both the potential existence of the nature

⁴²² *Mozambique Country Study* (short version) 1990, p. 25.

⁴²³ *Mozambique Country Study* (short version) 1990, p. 22. Full Norwegian quote: «Den har i hovedsak bestått i institusjonell støtte med opplæringskomponenter til ENH, geologiske og geofysiske undersøkelser i første rekke for oljeleting, og praktiske tiltak. Mosambik utvinner i dag verken olje eller gass, men har drivverdige gassreserver, og oljereserver som foreløpig ikke er drivverdige. Under nåværende forhold kan det neppe være forsvarlig å fortsette undersøkelser m.m. etter meget usikre ressurser, men derimot er det viktig å kunne utnytte ressurser som gir gode og sikre avkastninger. Fortsatt norsk støtte bør vurderes ut fra slike kriterier. ENH er godt fornøyd med den norske støtten, og understreker betydningen av at denne gis uten tilknytning til kommersielle interesser.»

objects of oil and gas was too uncertain and, furthermore, that the ability to turn these uncertain resources into a financial object that might give “good and secure” profits was also too uncertain. What were the “current circumstances” that made the Country Study reach this conclusion?

In order to answer this question, it is necessary to move from the Short Version to the Main Study, which was almost ten times as long and thus far more detailed in its descriptions and arguments. In its executive summary, the Main Study concluded in the same way as did the Short Version:

*Reductions are advisable for: (...) 4) Oil and gas project: Oil explorations seem so uncertain that they cannot be justified at the moment.*⁴²⁴

Using slightly different words than the Short Version, the Main Study here asserted that oil explorations “seem so uncertain” that “at the moment” the project “cannot be justified” and should therefore be reduced in scope. This point was elaborated some pages earlier in the final concluding chapter, where the relation between uncertainty and temporality was repeatedly emphasized:

*Oil and gas project: Natural gas has been identified to be commercially exploitable, and several investors are negotiating for contracts. If aid can be utilized to support this process, or to protect the Mozambican interests in this venture, it might be considered as a viable investment to ensure economic benefits and increased independence for Mozambique in a near future. But if the commercial interests turn out to be uncertain also for the gas fields, further efforts in this area should be postponed until Mozambique can afford to take risks. As regards the oil exploration it seems that finding and developing these potential fields will take years; the prospects are so uncertain that it does not appear justified to continue committing scarce resources for the time being.*⁴²⁵

Here, Mozambican natural gas was established as *potentially* commercially exploitable “in the near future”, but this was yet to be firmly established. Therefore, if the commercial interests would “turn out to be uncertain”, aid efforts “should be postponed”. As for oil, finding and developing fields “would take years”, and the prospects were “so uncertain” that it did “not appear justified to continue” the oil aid project “for the time being.” Clearly, oil and gas’ inability to promise immediate results in the present or in the near future turned it into a less valuable aid object. Ten years after NPD’s director of planning went to Maputo on a fact-finding mission, far more data had been gathered and analyzed, but the nature object itself did not emerge with the necessary force.

How did the Country Study reach this conclusion? In an earlier chapter, the Main Study described the oil aid project and articulated its assessment in somewhat more detail. It

⁴²⁴ *Mozambique Country Study* 1990, p. xxi-xxii. Emphasis in original. The Country Study recommended reduction for the power sector, commodity aid, rehabilitations grants, and oil and gas project; consolidation for coastal transport, emergency assistance, and personell fund; changes or reorganisations for import support and regional projects; and noted that «expansion could be possible for» fisheries; health; agriculture; environmental monitoring; and education. The study further emphasized that Norway would have to make stronger priorities, stating that: «However, with limited funds available, and limited capacity to organize, implement and monitor an aid programme, Norway can contribute meaningfully only by concentrating on relatively few projects and programmes. Norway is already over-extended.»

⁴²⁵ *Mozambique Country Study* 1990, p. 147-8.

started by categorized the oil aid as one of several “additional programs” outside the main sectors of Norwegian aid. Hence, already at the outset, the Main Study defined the oil aid project as something slightly outside the core of what Norway was doing (and should be doing) in Mozambique. Then, it briefly described the project’s establishment and further life:

The assistance to oil and gas development started very rapidly in 1980 at the request of Mozambique, and without any lengthy studies, discussions, or other considerations. The level of assistance in this sector has been continuously higher than for fisheries [one of the main aid sectors], and clearly reflects a mutual interest of both Norway and Mozambique.⁴²⁶

This short statement succinctly stated that the oil aid “started very rapidly”, and links the high speed directly to the two countries’ “mutual interest” in oil. The text asserted that there had been no “lengthy studies, discussions, or other considerations” – but that the level of assistance had been higher than that of an actual main sector of Norwegian aid. Did the Main Study consider this diagnosis a problem? This is unclear; it establishes the high speed as a matter of fact, but does not make any explicit judgements. Rather, by also stating that the assistance started “at the request of Mozambique” and that it “clearly reflects a mutual interest” between the two countries, it refrained from making it a matter of bad planning; rather, it linked the high speed to high priority. There seems to have been something about the *oil* that made the project a priority aid object. This point echoes my argument in the previous chapter of this thesis: The relative priority given to the project enabled higher speed and higher level of assistance – that is, more aid funds than to one of the main aid sectors – but also fewer and shorter documents.

What precisely had the aid amounted to during the decade following its inception? The Main Study summarized this as follows:

The Norwegian assistance to the oil sector has covered three main areas: organization of a national oil company; geophysical and geological studies; and support to practical efforts. The Norwegian support has mainly been aimed at institution building and data analysing, and no drilling has received Norwegian support.⁴²⁷

Clearly, the initial project had been expanded since the initial agreement of 1981, when quality assurance of data collection and analyses of seismic data had been the only components. In 1983, the Main Study stated, the project had been expanded into a full 4-year petroleum sector program, which was renewed ahead of time in 1986 because the funds by then already «had been fully utilized».⁴²⁸ In other words, the budget had been spent faster than expected, and Norad’s response was to renew and expand the agreement. But during 1988, both the speed and the spending slowed down: The expected budget increase had not been spent, and the timeframe of the agreement was therefore expanded.⁴²⁹ «The reductions were

⁴²⁶ Mozambique Country Study 1990, p. 63.

⁴²⁷ Mozambique Country Study 1990, p. 100.

⁴²⁸ *Mozambique Country Study* 1990, p. 100. The first sector agreement for 1983-1987 had a budget of NOK 20 million for four years. The renewed agreement for 1986-1990 had the total budget frame of NOK 50 million.

⁴²⁹ *Mozambique Country Study* 1990, p. 100. In 1988, the sector agreement timeframe was expanded from 1990 to 1992, and annual spending reduced from NOK 12 million to NOK 8 million.

made because of the general depression in the international market, and because of the negative findings so far»,⁴³⁰ the main study stated.

The reasons why the project activities slowed down during 1988, then, was both that the oil price was falling and that the amount of oil that had been found was limited. The investigations funded by Norwegian aid had simply not found much oil offshore, while some of the identified gas fields on-shore might prove commercially viable. These two reasons made the prospect of revenues from Mozambican oil fairly low, while the prospects of revenues from natural gas were slightly better. “There are still a number of uncertainties, however, both with regards to the commercial interests and the security situation”, the Main Study noted. Without specifying what it meant by the *security situation*, the quote pointed to something going on beyond the sphere of oil which would have to be taken into consideration. I will soon expand on this aspect, but for now, it remained one of several “uncertainties”.

As could be expected from reading the Short Version, the Main Study also put more emphasis upon this “number of uncertainties” than upon the favorable judgement made by the staff involved from Mozambique’s national oil company. The Main Study’s account of their viewpoints was even more unequivocally positive than the account given in the Short Version:

ENH considers the Norwegian support as very positive in the role of neutral adviser without any self-interest in the commercial aspects. The support has enabled ENH to negotiate favourably with the foreign companies, monitor their activities, and analyse the data they have submitted. The support has also promoted aeromagnetic and seismic surveys, especially for potential oil resources, and provided training and institutional support to the company itself.

“Very positive” is surely an unambiguous statement; the Mozambican staff pointed to a number of issues which the Norwegian aid had contributed to enable. Surely, the extent to which they spoke their honest opinion is an open question, and the Main Study does not include any methodological discussions about such matters. On any occasion, it summarized the recipients’ view as “very positive”, but nevertheless concluded with the following:

If Mozambique succeeds in obtaining favorable agreements for the exploitation of its gas fields, with potential investments up to USD 200 million, support for ensuring maximum benefits for Mozambique can be justified. But considering the uncertainties involved as regards finding commercially exploitable oil fields, there should be some reticence about spending too much money on this under the present economic crisis, unless there is a high chance of good returns.⁴³¹

The question of whether the Norwegian oil aid could be «justified», also had to be seen in relation to Mozambique’s present economic crisis. “Spending too much money” on this sector should be avoided unless there were “a high chance of good returns”. The oil aid itself was of good quality, the question was whether it was *relevant* in the *current context*. This had to be further assessed, the Main Study concluded:

We would therefore recommend that an assessment is undertaken of the Norad support to ENH, in order to relate the support to the probability of commercially exploitable discoveries in the near future. Norwegian support should then be concentrated on activities of more

⁴³⁰ Mozambique Country Study 1990, p. 100.

⁴³¹ Mozambique Country Study 1990, p. 101.

immediate relevance. It is probably necessary and very valuable to continue support to ensure Mozambique's interests and benefits from any exploitation and development of the gas fields. However, studies and pre-investments in uncertain or long-term resources should be postponed.⁴³²

Here, the Main Study again presented a favorable conclusion about the project itself – it was “probably necessary and very valuable” – but this was not enough in and of itself, it had to be seen in direct relation to the “probability of commercially exploitable *in the near future*” (my emphasis). For this reason, the study team recommended undertaking a specific assessment of the Norwegian support to the Mozambican state oil company (ENH), and postponing all studies and pre-investments in “uncertain and long-term resources”.

How did the Main Study reach this seemingly contradictory conclusion – that the project was “very valuable” and “very positive” in and of itself, but still not sufficiently relevant to be continued? In this section, I have identified a concern for the uncertainty of the oil prices, the international market, and lack of major discoveries. In the two quotes above, new external factors were included: “the present economic crisis” and “the security situation”. This leads the Main Study to recommend stopping activities which are too “long-term” and not of “immediate relevance”. Here, the Main Study helped unpack the phrase “under the current circumstances”, which the Short Version had used to argue why the oil aid should be reduced.

The trace of the oil aid project stopped with the Main Study. In the Special Studies, it was nowhere to be found. Hence, oil was not an important aspect of the issues which the Country Study intended to investigate. When it expanded its translation chain in these directions, other issues than the Norwegian oil was made the core concern. The Norwegian oil aid then emerged as a smaller issue, less significant relative to these other, expanded concerns. The Country Study wrote nothing more about the oil aid project than what I have included in my discussion in this section. In order to understand why the Country Study recommended it be reduced, it is necessary to consider in more detail what the “current circumstances” were, and why they were given such strong weight. This, I will show, was directly related to how the optic of the Country Study itself was made to work.

Making the context a part of the optic

How did the Country Study reach its conclusions? Incomplete and uncertain data made the basis upon which to build the conclusions unstable; the Short Version, in presenting a full-page table of statistics, cautioned the reader: «All numbers carry great insecurity.»⁴³³ In the Main Study, the evaluation team described its data material and methods in general terms: «This appraisal is mostly based on existing evaluations, monitoring reviews, reports and the

⁴³² Mozambique Country Study 1990, p. 101.

⁴³³ *Mozambique Country Study* (short version) 1990, p. vii. Norwegian quote: «Alle tall er beheftet med stor usikkerhet.» The list included number of inhabitants, BNP, income, child mortality, illiteracy, foreign export, financial deficit, key export products, and short descriptions of political system, economic system, ethnic groups and religious groups.

opinions of those involved on both sides of the programmes.»⁴³⁴ The document did not include list of interviews or internal documents, but stated about the latter that: “The written sources consulted (...) are numerous and include published as well as internal documents. The main sources available to the public are included in Appendix 2.»⁴³⁵ In addition came the comprehensive bibliography that was published as a special study: Here, collection and organization of existing research literature and published governmental documents was made a specific work task in itself. Nevertheless, this lack of specificity about the data material makes it harder to retrace the translation chain of the Country Study itself; the circular reference is incomplete, numerous traces do not continue beyond the Country Study documents, and the readers are left to trust the judgements and arguments of the document writers.

In describing their practical methods, the team also discussed how they approached their object. Their main concern was not to make “a detailed assessment at project level,” but rather to concentrate on “general policy issues” and “major lines in the programmes”, which would enable them to draw conclusions “as to the totality” of the Norwegian aid.⁴³⁶ In this way, the focus of this evaluation optic was calibrated to make visible the *aid as a whole*, as opposed to its many particularities. Rather than zooming in on selected details and thereby enabling fine resolution of otherwise invisible features of Norwegian aid to Mozambique, the Country Study zoomed in half-way, seeking rather to grasp «the totality».

In operationalizing the evaluation optic’s double purpose, as it was articulated in the title Country Study *and* Norwegian Aid Review, the study sought to grasp both the context and the aid, in combination. But the two were clearly not granted equal weight. In describing how it would assess aid projects, the Main Study made a clear distinction between *project-specific* assessment criteria – the relation between project objectives, output, impact, and timing – and assessment criteria for the *project’s relation to its context*:

The results and experiences of the programmes will be assessed in terms of *their own objectives*, i.e. whether the output/impact is in accordance with the intentions; whether the pace is as planned, whether the cooperation between the partners is functioning, etc. (...) But more important for this study is the *relevance* of the programmes in relation to a broader *context*. This context includes first and foremost the situation in Mozambique – the war and the crisis ridden economy. Has the Norwegian aid been well adjusted to the conditions in the country in a broad sense? What has been Norway’s role in terms of developing sustainable structures and institutions that can support the efforts of Mozambique to control its own destiny?⁴³⁷

Here, the Main Study established context as “more important” than the individual aid projects: context was not merely an important aspect of an aid project nor equally important, but

⁴³⁴ Mozambique Country Study 1990, p. 65.

⁴³⁵ Mozambique Country Study 1990, p. 120.

⁴³⁶ *Mozambique Country Study* 1990, p. 71. Full quote: “Considering the scope of the study, we will not make a detailed assessment at project level. Primary attention will be paid to general policy issues and the major lines in the programmes, enabling us to draw conclusions as to the totality of the Norwegian involvement in Mozambique.”

⁴³⁷ *Mozambique Country Study* 1990, p. 65-66 (italics in original).

simply *more important*. The concept of *relevance* was what linked individual aid projects to their broader contexts. For this reason, while internal coherence between objectives and results was important for assessing an aid project in itself, it was not enough for earning a favorable assessment in the Country Study, since the relevance of the project in relation to its specific context was more important. This explains the seemingly contradicting conclusions about the oil aid project: It was deemed favorable on its own terms, but not when seen in relation to its context. Since the context of both the general Mozambican economic crisis and the oil-specific uncertainties of the international market and the lack of domestic discoveries, the Country Study recommended reducing the scope of the project.

In this way, the optic of the Country Study operationalized a main concern of the evaluation staff: to see an aid project as always situated within its specific project site. The Country Study did exactly this, by establishing multiple contexts and persistently integrating these into the assessments of the individual aid projects. Indeed, the Country Study literally wrote aid projects and contexts together. This explains how a project could be assessed as both positive and negative at the same time: *It was a matter of optics*. When employing a project-specific optic, the assessment of the oil aid became favorable; when employing a context-sensitive optic, the assessment became *unfavorable*. Hence, a project's success was relative to the scale of the evaluation optic employed: Did it take in the project alone or the context as well? Echoing the evaluation staff, the Country Study asserted that a favorable assessment of the project as such was not enough: it would always have to be seen *in relation to* the site into which it intervened.

The Country Study here developed a method I will suggest to call *contexting*, a concept developed by Asdal and Moser to describe the active work of producing contexts around an issue. They hold that “contexts are made and performed” and that contexting “take part in enacting versions of reality, of worlds in progress, and of making some possibilities more real and others less so”.⁴³⁸ When the Country Study made the context of the oil aid project an integral part of the evaluation optic, it was engaging in contexting. The Country Study's contexting work was not only site-specific, it was also explicitly *time-specific*: as shown in the previous section of the present chapter, the Country Study was deeply concerned with the *current* context. According to the Country Study, the crisis in Mozambique meant that Norwegian aid should be of «immediate relevance» with results materializing «in the near future». The *now* of the evaluation overshadowed the concerns of the future. But what, more precisely, were the properties of this “now”? As I will show in the next sections, the “current context” of the Country Study must be understood as contexts in the plural: Both the current context in Mozambique and the current context in Norway.

⁴³⁸ Asdal and Moser 2012, p. 299 and 303. For Asdal and Moser, this is also a methodological point about how researchers, and specifically historians, are building contexts around the objects and documents they study: “In order to grasp these processes [of how contexts are made], we call for a radical openness to the richness in our research objects and materials, and for recognition that contexts tend to come in the plural, working to draw things together in potentially conflicting and overlapping ways.” For more on this, see the Introduction to this thesis. Ref also Asdal 2012a on the same topic.

Current context 1: Mozambique's civil war and economic crisis

As I showed in the section above, two contextual factors made the Country Study conclude that the oil and gas resources were too uncertain to justify extended Norwegian aid to the sector: “the security situation” and “the economic crisis”. These were referred only in passing in the chapters dealing with the specific projects. Elsewhere, the Country Study explicated how these two concerns were part of a larger, all-encompassing context:

First and foremost Mozambique is in an emergency situation, with millions of people in dire need of direct support. (...) Secondly Mozambique is at war. This means that many areas are insecure or under attack, and that both social and economic infrastructures are liable to be destroyed by military actions. (...) Thirdly, Mozambique is in an economic crisis, where both the general economy and the state has extremely limited funds generated internally. (...) Fourthly, the Mozambican state has been weakened to an extent that it is not able to maintain central state functions and institutions that are required in any nation-building process. (...) And finally, Mozambique must prepare itself for the post-war development period, for which it requires to concentrate on developing its human resources and institutions that can act quickly once conditions improve to allow for more ‘normal’ development efforts.⁴³⁹

This context of crisis had indeed been articulated in the very title of the Country Study: *Mozambique. Norwegian Assistance in a Context of Crisis*. Yet this context not only functioned as a title, it was made the very premise of the study’s methodology. The crisis created such an extraordinary situation that normal assessment criteria for aid projects simply did not apply:

The situation in Mozambique is not ‘normal’ and ‘normal’ criteria for aid assessment and aid policies do not necessarily apply. First and foremost, Mozambique is in an emergency situation, with millions of people in dire need of direct support. But the emergency support must have the objective of making people self-supporting as soon as possible. This means that considerably more efforts than ‘normal’ must be dedicated to tackle the immediate needs of the population.⁴⁴⁰

Again, the temporal context was made particularly relevant: this was an “emergency situation”, aid should be dedicated to tackle “immediate needs of the population” for the purpose of making them self-reliant “as soon as possible”. The attention to the present over the future consequently meant that short-term results should trump long-term results.

This articulation of the current context had effects not only for the future of Norwegian aid, but also for the aid’s past. The multiple contexts described above were all different from when the oil aid project had first been initiated. As I showed in Chapter 3 of this thesis, during 1980 and 1981 optimism was strong and ambitions were high within the Mozambican administration. This was reflected in the Norwegian aid programs, including the oil aid, which experienced continuous budget expansions. In noting that the Norwegian aid portfolio as a whole had been established between 1977 and 1982, it noted that the portfolio had barely been changed since then, “despite the rather far-reaching changes that have taken place in Mozambique itself”.⁴⁴¹ By 1990, the context had changed: oil prices were falling,

⁴³⁹ Mozambique Country Study 1990, p. 66-67.

⁴⁴⁰ Mozambique Country Study 1990, p. 66.

⁴⁴¹ Mozambique Country Study 1990, p. 64.

resources were yet to be found, and, moreover, the country was experiencing a devastating civil war which produced new pressing humanitarian and economic emergencies. When seen through the optic of the Country Study, the present context of 1990 was made more relevant than the past context of 1980-81. This meant that projects initiated in the past, when the context had been different, were no longer considered relevant, since their relevance was relative to the *current context*.

Indeed, the “now” of the Country Study meant that the criteria for assessment was very different than upon preparation of the oil aid project. The war had created a situation of crisis which demanded something else than during times of peace. The Country Study’s concern for the current context was translated into a set of criteria for aid policies under the current «semi-permanent emergency»:⁴⁴²

1. A substantial part of the aid must be targeted directly to the most affected parts of the population (...).
 2. Practically all *education and training programmes* that will improve the Mozambicans’ capability and skills to fill positions, take control over their own institutions, and eventually over their own future, can be justified. (...)
 3. Similarly, projects that contribute to *institution-building* are also required under the present circumstances, to provide a basis for further development in the future. (...)
 4. Investments in rehabilitation or new ventures should be supported *only if they promise certain or long-term benefits* for the country. (...)
 5. Under present conditions, there is a real and justifiable need for *flexible funds* (...).
- We see the above criteria as essential for Mozambique at the present, and shall apply them in the following analysis of the Norwegian aid programme.⁴⁴³

In the quote above, five assessment criteria were deduced directly from the Main Study’s analysis of the current context. In doing so, I will argue, the Country Study built the context itself into the evaluation optic and turned this onto the object of Norwegian aid. This happened through the very structure of the Main Study (a structure which was also repeated in the Short Version): First, it described Mozambique’s history from pre-colonial times to the present; then, it analyzed the multiple aspects of the contemporary situation (politics, economy, social conditions, and aid donor policies), before it summarized the contexting exercise and translated it into the five assessment criteria quoted above. In the latter half of the document, the Main Study turned its specially designed optic onto all components of the Norwegian aid program, including the oil aid. The optic was turned both onto the past and the future, enabling assessments of both «past performance» and recommendations for «future reorientation».⁴⁴⁴ In this way, the Country Study and Norwegian Aid Review was an optic which made the context itself into a tool for seeing aid. With this optic, long-term aid with uncertain results and not directly benefitting the population became difficult to prioritize.

⁴⁴² Mozambique Country Study 1990, p. 66.

⁴⁴³ *Mozambique Country Study* 1990, p. 67-68. (Emphasis in original.)

⁴⁴⁴ *Mozambique Country Study* 1990, p. 66. Full quote: “In the subsequent chapters we shall use these criteria for our appraisal of past performance of the Norwegian aid programme, as well as for our recommendations for a future reorientation of the programme, since it must be expected that the conditions of crisis and emergency will remain and dominate the scene for at least the next five years, even if the war is stopped and positive developments take place.”

Yet, one could clearly argue that the oil aid project fulfilled two of the non-normal assessment criteria: it was seeking to strengthen institutions and it involved a training program. Even though Mozambican staff who benefited from precisely such work were reportedly “very positive” to the Norwegian oil aid, these contradictions were not explicitly discussed. In order to understand how the Country Study reached its conclusion of reducing this part of the aid portfolio, it is necessary to investigate a different context: That of shifting Norwegian aid policies.

Current context 2: Norway’s shifting aid policies amidst scarcity and over-extension

In addition to the Mozambican context, there was also another context that was made relevant and important by the Country Study: the contemporary Norwegian context. What in Norway was considered good aid, was changing. The Short Version stated this point:

Under other circumstances the weak features of the Norwegian aid program would, based on the normal objectives of Norwegian aid, be a more critical point of concern. This especially concerns the program’s weak target group orientation and its lack of geographical balance. Target group orientation was not taken into consideration when the aid program was prepared in the late 1970s and beginning of the 1980s. The program rather aimed at giving economic and institutional support to sectors which were important for nation building in Mozambique, to enable the country to develop the economy and build social services for the benefit of the entire population.⁴⁴⁵

Hence, changing Norwegian aid priorities, among them the introduction of the *target group* as a category, meant that the existing aid program had become less relevant and than upon its initiation. The oil aid project had been justified by the potential benefit for state revenues and thus economic growth. The nation state was the main beneficiary, and by extension the general population through ambitious programs of welfare and development. In this way, the effect of the oil aid upon the general population or specific target groups was assumed, but remained indirect. The project looked very different when seen through this combination of contexts, as opposed to being assessed in and of itself. Furthermore, the project’s temporal context was clearly important for how it was being assessed. What had seemed a good project in the past did not qualify as a good project at present just because it had been good in the past.

The changing Norwegian context had consequences for how the team saw the oil aid project. As shown in the previous section, the Main Study had concluded in the following way about the further life of the oil aid project: “the prospects are so uncertain that it does not appear justified to continue committing scarce resources for the time being”.⁴⁴⁶ Above, I concentrated my analysis of this quote on the phrases ”uncertain” and ”for the time being”, but, as I will now show, the notion of ”scarce resources” was also of utmost importance. This

⁴⁴⁵ *Mozambique Country Study* (short version) 1990, p. 18-19. Full Norwegian quote: «Under andre forhold ville de svake sidene i det norske bistandsprogrammet ut fra de normale kriteriene for norsk bistand, være et mer alvorlig ankepunkt. Spesielt gjelder dette programmets svake målgruppeorientering og dets mangel på geografisk balanse. Målgruppeorientering ble ikke tatt i betraktning da bistandsprogrammet ble utformet på slutten av 1970- og begynnelsen av 1980-tallet. Programmet tok snarere sikte på å gi økonomisk og institusjonell støtte til sektorer som var viktige for nasjonsbygging i Mosambik, for å sette landet i stand til å utvikle økonomien og bygge sosiale tjenester til fordel for hele befolkningen.»

⁴⁴⁶ *Mozambique Country Study* 1990, p. 147-8.

phrase referred to the overall Norwegian aid budget, and demonstrated that the context of Norwegian aid funding had indeed also changed since the oil aid project was started in 1980-81.⁴⁴⁷ The total aid budget was decreasing, and the Country Study explained that Norway had informed Mozambique and its other aid recipients about this change already in 1986 (although the Main Study's own numbers show that there had in fact been an actual increase in aid funds also after 1986).⁴⁴⁸ From the premise that aid funds were a «scarce resource», the Country Study asserted that the Norwegian aid portfolio at large was in need of clearer prioritization:

However, with limited funds available, and limited capacity to organize, implement and monitor an aid programme, Norway can contribute meaningfully only by concentrating on relatively few projects and programmes. Norway is already over-extended.⁴⁴⁹

“Limited funds”, “limited capacity”, and “over-extended”: These were indeed different descriptions of the Norwegian aid portfolio than what had been used in 1980-81. Within this new context of scarcity, the oil aid project emerged as far less relevant and promising.

While the Country Study embraced the evaluation staff's concern for context and itself engaged actively in contexting work, it did not follow all of the evaluation staff's prescriptions. As seen above, the Main Study's concern for context meant that it did not go into very much detail on the individual projects. It had noted that the oil aid project was swiftly initiated without detailed document production. The Main Study did not make much of this specific point, but it did discuss in general terms the role of documents and documentation under the subheading «Control and Monitoring» in its final chapter. Here, the Country Study called for more comprehensive documentation work within the Norwegian aid administration:

The system of reporting and monitoring of Norwegian aid projects is generally weak, and there are few guidelines. There is a need for stronger guidelines, and a policy of assisting Mozambique's own capacity of monitoring, reporting, and evaluating progress and results. Elements of this already exist, and the Mozambican government has been very concerned when allegations of corruption or misuse of funds have been made, and many cases of arrests and other measures have been reported. Misuse or 'leakage' of funds is widespread in many countries, including Norway, and Mozambique is probably not among the worst cases. Still, we recommend that a separate study is undertaken suggesting ways and means by which this can be addressed.⁴⁵⁰

During the course of this paragraph, the evaluation team's call for intensified “monitoring, reporting, and evaluating progress and results” was made into an issue of control with how aid funds were being spent. When the Country Study deemed the existing Norwegian system “generally weak” with “few guidelines”, it seems not to have been concerned with making aid an evaluable object, in the sense promoted by the evaluation staff, but rather with combating

⁴⁴⁷ Indeed, the Main Study stated that its own context “naturally included” Norwegian development policies: “The context within which we make these assessments naturally included the Mozambican and Norwegian development aid objectives.” *Mozambique Country Study* 1990, p. 66.

⁴⁴⁸ *Mozambique Country Study* 1990, p. 59.

⁴⁴⁹ *Mozambique Country Study* 1990, p. xxii.

⁴⁵⁰ *Mozambique Country Study* 1990, p. 144.

“corruption and misuse of funds”. This was not merely a question of controlling how Norwegian aid staff were doing their job; rather, the Country Study referred to the Mozambican government’s own ability to implement such systems and routines. Indeed, granting the Mozambican government more responsibility should in and of itself be an aim of Norwegian aid, the Country Study team argued:

We are arguing in this study that the Norwegian policy of working within the Mozambican institutions should continue and be strengthened. We are also arguing for the allocation of flexible funding, and that the Mozambican institutions should be made responsible for implementation of projects and programmes. These are standard debating issues in Norway, and two main counter-arguments are normally given; that the recipient country does not have the capacity to implement projects, with the consequence of considerable delays and other problems; and that there are risks for misallocations or misuse of funds because of inadequate controls. Both arguments are valid in Mozambique.⁴⁵¹

Here, the Country Study intervened into an ongoing debate: should the responsibility for the implementation of the Norwegian aid projects be transferred to the recipient? The principle of so-called *recipient responsibility* was at this point being discussed in Norway as a means for avoiding donor dominance on how decisions were being made and how projects were being run.⁴⁵² In the quote above, the Country Study referred the main counter-arguments to such a reform: Firstly, that by transferring the responsibility, Norway might lose control of its aid funds by making them more difficult to trace; secondly, that the shift might produce “considerable delays” when the recipient country was in charge.

This was indeed a core dilemma: Projects might proceed faster and be easier to monitor when Norwegian actors were responsible for the aid projects. But, as the evaluation office had argued ten years before in *its Handbook of Evaluation Questions*, if a project was not firmly established within the project site and the target group, the project might not be as useful and valuable as donors might assume. Indeed, the contexting work of the Country Study in effect enabled precisely this analysis: the oil aid project was positive and valuable in isolation, but not within the broader context. The Country Study also echoed another dilemma that had been articulated also in the *Handbook of Evaluation Questions* from ten years back: Might the aid donors’ wishes for detailed control and management of projects in fact have negative consequences for the recipients’ ability to learn, make mistakes, and take responsibility themselves? If they were not *granted* more responsibility, how might they *take* more responsibility? The Country Study concluded that regardless of the counter-arguments quoted above, the drawbacks of keeping Norwegian control over the aid funds were larger than those of transferring it:

But detailed Norwegian control and management of projects also at times leads to delays and supplies of inappropriate equipment. More important, however, is the negative consequence that the Mozambican institution is not given the opportunity of learning from its experience, even of making mistakes, and that its capacity and authority to take responsibility is

⁴⁵¹ Mozambique Country Study 1990, p. 144.

⁴⁵² The principle of recipient responsibility was first described in Norad’s new strategy from 1990 (Norad 1990a) and formalized in a white paper in 1992 (St.Meld. 51 (1991-92), the so-called “North/South report”, in Norwegian: Nord/Sør-meldingen). Cf. Liland and Kjerland 2003, pp. 137-40 and Tamnes 1997, pp. 408-409.

undermined. We are strongly opposed to the paternalistic and neo-colonial attitudes prevailing among many donors, and which also exist within the Norwegian aid establishment.⁴⁵³

Finishing with stating to be “strongly opposed” to what they perceived as “paternalistic and neo-colonial attitudes prevailing among many donors”, the “we” of the Country Study team took a clear stance in this debate, distancing themselves from a notion of the recipient countries not being ready or capable to take on this responsibility.⁴⁵⁴ Clearly, the Country Study considered financial control and close monitoring of a project’s progress as critical to maintain, but made this a general concern – relevant also for Norway itself, as seen above – and argued for the principle of recipient responsibility.

The Country Study’s stance on the issue of documentation remained ambiguous: It noted, but did not emphasize, that the documentation of planning and monitoring of the oil aid project was limited. Furthermore, it had noted that the monitoring of the Norwegian aid projects in Mozambique were “generally weak” – but in making this point, it seems to have been referring to systems and routines of *financial* monitoring, that is, systems for accounting and auditing of how aid funds were being spent, rather than a comprehensive system for making aid evaluable following the visions of the evaluation staff. The Country Study did indeed call for stronger guidelines and more comprehensive systems, but explicitly refrained from endorsing a donor-centered perspective in this matter; rather, it emphasized the importance of letting Mozambique take responsibility for the implementation and monitoring of aid projects.

In this way, the Country Study argued for increasing both recipient responsibility and financial accountability. Yet it did also strongly oppose giving the donor’s concerns too much weight. This ambiguous position, in part operationalizing Norwegian aid policies while opposing aspects of these same policies, was reflected also in how the Country Study handled its intended audience: While hoping that it would be useful, they also seemed to have maintained a distance to this part of its mandate. This point becomes prevalent in two instances which I will now turn to analyze: Firstly, the Country Study’s resistance to making a Short Version of its analysis, secondly, its resistance towards including one of the special studies – the only document with the term “evaluation” in its title – as part of its overall work.

Resisting the final translation

As I have argued, evaluation optics were expected not only to function as a technology of *seeing*, like a scientific instrument, but also a technology of *politics*, a tool for enabling governmental action. The Country Study team did indeed acknowledge this purpose, stating in its preface to the Main Study that they hoped their work would “induce constructive action by the relevant authorities”.⁴⁵⁵ In the Short Version, they explained that the study should “provide a basis for the authorities’ planning”:

⁴⁵³ Mozambique Study, p. 144.

⁴⁵⁴ The *Handbook of Evaluation Questions* from 1981 made a similar point, but nevertheless promoted more rigorous routines and systems for articulation and documentation of all aspects of aid work. Cf. Chapter 2.

⁴⁵⁵ Mozambique Country Study 1990, p. xi.

The main study amounts to the tenth of the ‘country studies’ which the Ministry of Development Aid (now part of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) have had prepared for the main cooperation countries for Norwegian aid. The study is undertaken by the authors on an independent basis, and the viewpoints therefore do not reflect official views, neither Mozambican nor Norwegian. The study shall nevertheless provide a basis for the authorities’ planning of further aid, and we hope that the study will give a constructive contribution to this work. We furthermore hope that this study, like the earlier country studies, will be of interest to and a starting point for a debate among a wider audience.⁴⁵⁶

In this way, the Country Study team established their work as the result of an external gaze, undertaken by professional researchers at a firm distance from the aid administration. The Country Study of Mozambique was in this sense an ideal example of the external, comprehensive, systematic, and independent evaluation work envisioned by the evaluation staff in the early 1980s. As discussed above, it operationalized the call for embedding aid projects in their surroundings, and it did so by making the context *part of* the optic, not just a background for the aid assessment. In this way, it engaged in active *contexting*, as opposed to more static *contextualizing*.⁴⁵⁷ The Country Study vigorously expanded its analysis outwards and established multiple contexts through the five special studies. These multiple contexts were then brought in and written together in the Main Study, in which the contexts were concentrated and translated into five concise assessment criteria. As shown above, the context was in this way made more important than the individual projects in addition to changing the format from report to book.

The very structure of the Main Study enabled this move (cf. table 4.X): The first half was dedicated to chapters on Mozambique’s history, its current situation, and the current aid landscape. These analyses all led to the articulation of the “non-normal assessment criteria” on pages 65-68, which were then employed to analyze the Norwegian aid portfolio at large, sector by sector, but without going into detail on individual projects. The final chapter discussed possible changes to the country program and summarized the sector-specific conclusions and recommendations. These were then again compressed and listed in the Main Study’s “Executive Summary”. In this way, the Main Study adhered to the genre prescriptions of an evaluation report, as they were articulated in the *Handbook of Evaluation Questions* (see Chapter 2), in that it gradually translated its analysis into specific conclusions and recommendations which were ultimately placed upfront at the start of the document to enable quick reading of the main points.

⁴⁵⁶ *Mozambique Country Study* (short version) 1990, p. v. Norwegian quote: «Hovedstudien utgjør den tiende av de ‘landstudier’ som Departementet for Utviklingshjelp (nå del av Utenriksdepartementet) har fått utarbeidet om hovedsamarbeidslandene for norsk bistand. Studien er gjennomført av forfatterne på uavhengig basis, og synspunktene reflekterer derfor ikke offisielle holdninger, verken fra mosambikansk eller norsk side. Studien skal imidlertid gi et grunnlag for myndighetenes planlegging av den videre bistand, og vi håper at studien gir et konstruktivt bidrag til dette. Vi håper videre at denne studien, i likhet med de tidligere landstudier, vil være av interesse for og danne utgangspunkt for en debatt blant et bredere publikum».

⁴⁵⁷ Cf. Asdal and Moser 2012 for a discussion of this distinction.

Chapter structure, Mozambique Country Study and Norwegian Aid Review (1990)	
1	The heritage
2	The first independence period
3	Mozambican emergencies
4	The Nkomati/IMF option
5	Prospects of reform. On the eve of PRE II
6	Aid as development assistance?
7	Norwegian development assistance to Mozambique 1975-89
8	Review of aid programmes and projects
9	Major aid objectives and policy issues: The experience
10	Future options: perspectives and recommendations

Table 4.1. Table of Contents for Mozambique Country Study and Norwegian Aid Review.

The Short Version adopted the same document structure, with an even more meticulous balance between context and projects. Of its 28 pages, there was a two page introduction, ten pages on the Mozambican context, two pages on the aid context, ten pages on the Norwegian aid portfolio (including descriptions, assessments, conclusions, and recommendations), and a one page bibliography referencing the main study and the five special studies. Hence, the text reflected in its very structure the evaluation optic's combined ambition of being a study of a country at large *and* a review of the complete Norwegian aid portfolio in this country. From this, it may seem that the research team both endorsed and enabled the potential of this evaluation optic.

When investigated in combination, the seven documents of the Country Study emerge as very different from each other, not only in their content, but also their form. The five special studies were precisely specialized; they were going into depth in one specific topic. They were written in a more technical and academic style, adopting a standard report structure with specialized terminology and complicated sentence structures. In contrast, the Main Study had the narrative and argument of a non-fiction popularized science book; it was written in engaging, readily available prose; the authors were present in the text; there was hardly any specialized terminology; and the format was that of a published book, not a full-page leaflet. To that end, the translation process from the special studies to the Main Study also involved translating specialized language and analysis into popularized prose. The team thus made an effort at making their work available to not just a small group of specialists and affected government staff, but also to a wider audience, the public at large.

In one important respect, however, the team resisted the Country Study's genre prescriptions: They seem to have been reluctant to undertake the final translation from Main Study to Short Version. Drawing on the works of Latour, I have in the previous chapters argued that a key feature of the evaluation report genre was the continuous *reductions and amplifications* of findings and analyses in order to enable an increasingly compressed and shortened text about the object under evaluation. In effect, I argued in Chapter 2, the very structure of the evaluation report would enable the reader to read as little and as quickly as possible and still be able to firmly grasp the evaluated object. As shown above, the Main

Study adhered to this structure, but in the Short Version, the Country Study team expressed their discontent with the size and scope of the Short Version. To them, the Short Version was far from a desired end-point of a translation chain, the culmination of their work; rather, it was a “strongly abridged version” with which they were clearly not comfortable:

This report is a strongly abridged version of our analysis of the main features of development in Mozambique since 1975, how the Norwegian aid has been working, and the extent to which the Norwegian aid goals have been realized in relation to this development. We will in the following refer to the more comprehensive analysis as «the main study». This study is available in original in English and in Portuguese translation. We will recommend those interested to read the whole main study, as this abridged version may give neither a full nor nuanced account of the questions and issues we are handling in the analysis.⁴⁵⁸

Here, the team used its very first opportunity in the Short Version, the introductory paragraph of the Preface, to point the reader out of the present document and into the Main Study: “We will recommend those interested to read the whole main study”. The team clearly considered the Main Study to be precisely the *main* document of the Country Study endeavor, while the Short Version was an unfortunate document which would give “neither a full nor nuanced account” of their comprehensive analysis. The form of the Short Version emphasizes this reluctance: It enabled both reduction and amplification of the Main Study by being much shorter, employing a larger font size, and being written in Norwegian. These features would all make it accessible to a non-specialized Norwegian audience, but also to busy politicians and staff members seeking to find concrete recommendations on what to do next. Yet the Country Study team were not content with what the format of the Short Version could enable. They used the first possible moment to undermine the purpose, importance, and authority of the Short Version by pointing “interested readers” to the Main Study. By extension, would then only the un-interested readers read the Short Version? This leaves the document in a peculiar state: both written and read in reluctance, while the Main Study was written and would be read with interest.

Why this reluctance to exploit the potential of the Short Version? Why did they insist on making the readers put down the Short Version and move to the Main Study? In doing so, the research team refused to encourage non-reading of their work; rather, they promoted the opposite, to read the full and nuanced version of their analysis – *the whole main study*, as encouraged in the quote above. It may seem that the team considered this part indispensable and irreducible. In their perspective, reduction meant cutting away and decreasing precision, and not amplification and mobility. To that end, they did not accept to limit contexting to being only their method and process, which the readers could disregard; on the contrary, they considered their contexting work the most important part of the Country Study. What they

⁴⁵⁸ *Mozambique Country Study* (short version) 1990, p. v. Norwegian quote: «Denne rapporten er en sterkt forkortet versjon av vår analyse av hovedtrekk ved utviklingen i Mosambik siden 1975, hvordan den norske hjelpen har fungert, og hvorvidt de norske bistandsmålene har blitt realisert i forhold til denne utviklingen. Vi vil i det følgende referere til den mer omfattende analysen som «hovedstudien». Denne foreligger i original på engelsk og i portugisisk oversettelse. Vi vil anbefale interesserte å lese hele hovedstudien, ettersom denne kortversjon ikke kan gi noen fullgod eller nyansert framstilling av de problemstillinger vi behandler i analysen.»

wanted to grasp was the *relevance* of the projects *in relation to* their “broader context”. For this reason, it was necessary to urge the readers to themselves see this context and not just move directly to the final translation. Contexting was important in itself.

In its very structure, the Short Version and the Main Study sought to make their readers first read the contexting, then the aid assessment. The steps of their argument are reflected in the sequence of the chapters, which move through Mozambique’s history to the contemporary crisis, then on to the aid context and then into the Norwegian aid portfolio. In fact, the Main Study’s executive summary itself adopted this structure. Hence, rather than being formatted as the summary of an evaluation report, which would foreground the team’s conclusions and recommendations, it in short, succinct subchapters moved through Mozambique’s history to the present society, the war and economic crisis, the current aid landscape, and then discussed the Norwegian portfolio with its specific conclusions and recommendations. The Short Version, in contrast, had no executive summary; the document as a whole followed the structure just described, with conclusions and recommendations included in the last few pages of the document. In this way, the team, I will suggest, were trying to make the reader follow their argument, seeing the context first and the aid portfolio second, and always in relation to this context.

What effect might this resistance have had for the way the Country Study was used? We must assume that the Short Version was expected by the evaluation staff to increase the usability and usefulness of the whole endeavor. Indeed, staff in Norad and the Ministry might very well have concentrated on the executive summary of the Main Study, in effect not taking in any context at all. But the team’s reluctance to undertake the final translation indicates that the researchers and the evaluation staff, despite being aligned in their concern for context, did not see eye-to-eye on how the evaluation was to be read and used. If the evaluation genre was going to enable readers to grasp the whole report by reading the summary, and an evaluation team refused to commit to this principle, did this jeopardize the usefulness of the whole endeavor? Could the team’s opposition to non-reading paradoxically make their work less read?

My material does not provide answers to these questions, but given that the Mozambique study was the last in the series of Country Studies, it is relevant to reflect upon the purposes and effects of this particular evaluation optic. Its ambition of seeing the Norwegian aid “in relation to its broader context” and of grasping “the totality” of the situation were ambitious indeed. Did this ambition make the Country Study less of an evaluation process and more of a research process? Was this an evaluation at all, or something else? And if so, what was it?

An ambiguous technology: What kind of document?

The unclear status of the Country Study documents was reflected by the terminology the team employed to describe their work. The word “evaluation” did not occur in the Main Study. Rather, they used the terms “appraisal”, “study,” “review”, and, most often, the noun “assessment” and verb “assessing” to describe its work. Indeed, the optic itself did not include

the word evaluation – as shown by the title, it employed the terms “study” (of the country in question) and “review” (of the aid Norwegian portfolio): *Country Study and Norwegian Aid Review*. The term “evaluation” was employed only for one of the special studies: *An evaluation of Norway’s non-project financial assistance to Mozambique*.⁴⁵⁹ This means that the team used concepts interchangeably which the evaluation staff had, in their Handbook from 1981, conceptualized as distinctly different: As I showed in Chapter 2, for the evaluation staff, *assessment* was the wider term used to describe all forms of work that involved looking at an aid project and deciding what to do about it. In their words, *appraisals* were done during planning, when aid staff were to decide whether to support a new project idea or not; *reviews* were done of existing projects, they were often commissioned by the staff working on or near the project in question; and *evaluations* were commissioned by the evaluation staff, done by external teams, and were more comprehensive than reviews. Hence, when the *Country Study and Norwegian Aid Review* employed all these terms in overlapping ways, except for the term *evaluation*, the status of the optic – what kind of tool it was – becomes increasingly fuzzy.

Where the different documents of the Country Study was published also attests to this unclear status of the Country Study endeavor. Out of the seven documents that made up the Country Study, only the one with the word “evaluation” in its title was published in the Ministry’s Evaluation Report Series. The other six documents were all published by the Christian Michelsen Institute, the institutional home of the research team doing the work, as part of its own research report series. Although this document referred to as an evaluation did adopt the structure of the evaluation report, it adhered from other parts of the evaluation genre prescriptions, notably the demand to make visible its methods and discuss the reliability and validity of its data and analysis.

Indeed, internal disagreements between the Country Study team leaders and consultants taking part in doing the special studies emerged in the evaluation’s Foreword. Here, Arve Ofstad, who coordinated the Country Study at CMI, pointed to a certain tension between this special study and the main report, and thus within the Country Study at large:

It will be noticed that in some respects the conclusions and recommendations of this evaluation report do not fully coincide with those of the main report. (...) The report submitted by the consultants has later been revised and edited by the project coordinator. The main conclusions and recommendations are those of the team, however.⁴⁶⁰

In this way, the research team distanced themselves from the evaluation, which had been undertaken by *consultants*, whose conclusions diverged from the team’s overall views, and whose work was unsatisfactory to the extent that it had been “revised and edited” by the team coordinator, who had also written the Foreword quoted above. As in the case of the Short Version, the Preface pointed outwards from its own document to the Main Study (here called the main report). The present document, Ofstad emphasized, was but “one of many special studies part of the larger exercise”. In this way, Ofstad established a hierarchy of documents

⁴⁵⁹ O’Brien, Peter et.al. 1990. *An evaluation of Norway’s non-project financial assistance to Mozambique*. Evaluation Report 7.90. Oslo: Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

⁴⁶⁰ O’Brien et.al. 1990, p. vii (preface by Arve Ofstad).

in which the main report was the most important and to which the foreword swiftly pointed when explaining the context of the evaluation at hand. Hence, the foreword effectively did two things: it downplayed the importance of the evaluation report and pointed to the *main* report, located outside the text at hand, where the proper, comprehensive analyses were taking place. This effort to build a distance between the specific Evaluation and the overall Country Study both rhetorically (in the foreword), institutionally (through separate publishing), and materially (through the different layout and categorization) indicates that the research team sought to downplay the importance and relevance of this particular special study.

Paradoxically, by being published in the Ministry's Evaluation Study Series, this evaluation report was the one document out of the seven Country Study documents that was kept the longest in circulation. The Mozambique Country Study was, as noted above, the last of its kind. No more country studies were commissioned after this one. After a few years had passed, the genre of the country studies faded from view: They stopped being included in lists of evaluation publications. The edited evaluation report, on the other hand, which attained a spot in the evaluation report series, kept its place in the Ministry's publication lists for the decade to come.

Was the Mozambique Country Study an evaluation at all? This question quickly leads us to the fundamental questions of what defines an evaluation. One might argue that the optic of the Country Study had all the formal traits of an evaluation: It was an optic of evaluation developed by the evaluation staff of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; the optic operationalized the evaluation staff's dual concern for contexting and for making aid an evaluable object; the individual studies were commissioned by this evaluation staff and funded over their budgets; the ten country studies combined covered the majority of the Norwegian aid budget; they were initially included in the ministry's list over published evaluations (although under its own sub-heading); they were undertaken by external, independent researchers; and they combined comprehensive investigations of the past with specific recommendations for the future.

Still, something was clearly not quite right. Might the Mozambique Country Study have pushed their degree of distance and independence too far, making it in effect less usable? Recall a quote from the *Handbook of Evaluation Questions*: "An evaluation report – no matter how good it might be – has little value if it is not being used".⁴⁶¹ Did the concern for context, totality, and distance in effect make the Country Study less valuable? Did it make it less of an evaluation – despite that these were the very features which the evaluation staff had promoted for the past decade? Perhaps the Mozambique Country Study team, by reluctantly doing the final reduction and amplification of its work and by struggling to make the Main Study circulate instead of the Short Version, in effect demonstrated that research work and evaluation work, despite overlapping in many respects, were in practice two different concerns which were indeed *too* different to be reconciled without in effect abandoning key features of one more than the other. In this way, this optic demonstrates a potentially

⁴⁶¹ Norad 1981, *Handbook of Evaluation Questions*, p. 30. (Cf. Chapter 2.)

unresolvable contradiction of a tool being both a technology of seeing and a technology of politics.

My material gives few answers to the specifics of why the optic of the Country Study and Norwegian Aid Review was abandoned, but my analysis above does give some indications. Employing this optic was indeed a comprehensive task that required much time and must have had considerable costs. If it was not considered useful enough by aid staff and Ministry managers, it might have been hard to argue that they should be continued. Without support in budget negotiations, the country studies might have lost relative to other pressing concerns. On any occasion, the initial ambition of continuously updating the country studies was abandoned after all the main cooperation countries had been covered. As the years passed, the studies would gradually become outdated and obsolete.

My analysis suggests that there were significant features of the optic itself that caused the complications. Both the concern for contexting and the independence of the research team might have had the effect of making the optic less useful for the aid administration. The optic made the context and the “totality” emerge in clear view whereas the specificity of the multiple aid projects and the details of the portfolio were given less attention. This entailed that the optic perhaps did not enable the staff to grasp their specific projects in a new or better way. Perhaps the evaluation staff lost faith in the initial promise of the optic – that the contexting exercise, however valuable in itself in the eyes of the researchers and evaluation staff, did not produce the envisioned clear and concise results the evaluation staff needed to convince their colleagues and superiors of their legitimacy. If this interpretation is valid, then the evaluation optic of the Country Study and Norwegian Aid Review suffered the same fate as it itself recommended for the oil aid project in Mozambique: it was reduced, down-scaled, and not made a priority since it could not “under the current circumstances” be “justified” to allocate “scarce resources” for this particular purpose.

The Mozambique Country Study’s insistence on the *current* context might also have contributed to making it less relevant. There was clearly a tension between the current context and the long-term perspective, as demonstrated by the study’s conclusion in the case of the oil aid program. By making the “now” such a dominating category, might the Country Study have run the risk of becoming less important? If the readers did not accept privileging present needs over future potentials, then the team’s recommendations would be far less convincing. Furthermore, there would be a delay between the “now” of writing and the “now” of reading. As the Main Study itself acknowledged, the civil war and humanitarian crisis might come to an end, resolving the extraordinary emergency and gradually restoring normalcy – although clearly not overnight. What if, hypothetically, this Country Study had been undertaken earlier – or later? What would the current context then have been, and what consequences would this have for the assessment criteria, and what would the ensuing conclusions be about the components of the Norwegian aid portfolio?

The end point for contexting?

During the 14 months while the Mozambique Country Study was being done, the institutional landscape of Norwegian aid changed yet again. On January 1, 1990, the Ministry of Development Cooperation ceased to exist: It was merged with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Minister of Development Cooperation continued to function as a distinct minister, from 1990 titled Minister of Foreign Aid, yet now without her own Ministry to govern. The evaluation staff, who had moved from Norad into the new Ministry in 1984, moved along with the 2. Planning Office and became employees in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

With the country studies out of the tool box, the evaluation staff's efforts at pulling the context into the evaluation objects may seem to have reached an end point. Their routine evaluation activities were also reduced; the number of evaluations published annually dropped from between 5-6 between 1984-1990 to between 2-3 from 1990 onwards. Yet the staff continued their transnational work within the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC). In 1991, DAC approved a standardized vocabulary and published guidelines for aid evaluation.⁴⁶² During the next year, the Norwegian evaluation staff worked to bring these new standards back into Norwegian foreign aid in most specific terms: By reworking their 1981 *Handbook of Evaluation Questions* into a far more extensive manual on how to do aid evaluations. The revised handbook, titled *Evaluation and results assessment in aid. Handbook for practitioners and decision makers*, was published in Norwegian in 1992 and soon also translated into English.⁴⁶³

In the new Handbook, evaluation was referred to as a distinct field of expertise. This articulation of evaluation work as being its own profession was reflected by the Handbook itself: It was three times longer and far more detailed than its predecessor; moreover, it was typeset and published as a book, as opposed to being written on a typewriter and mimeographed internally, as the 1980 Handbook had been. This clear delineation of the field of aid evaluation is notable also for what it left out: for one, country studies were not mentioned in the new Norwegian handbook. Neither was the fundamental critique of aid which permeated the 1980 Handbook prevalent. While the 1992 Handbook certainly discussed difficult sides of aid evaluation, it presented them as manageable – as something that could be practically done.

The evaluation staff experienced extensive internal and external support for the handbook; they circulated it within the OECD-DAC Expert Group and were contacted by evaluation staff elsewhere for copies. Versions of the Handbook were published in Spanish and Japanese.⁴⁶⁴ While I have not sought to document the precise reach of the Handbook, it is notable how it itself built upon transnational exchanges and itself was made an object of new

⁴⁶² OECD 1991. *DAC Principles for the Evaluation of Development Assistance*.

⁴⁶³ Jarle Haarstad, at this point principal officer (head of office; in Norwegian: byråsjef) in the MFA, was responsible for the revision and publication of the handbook. Utenriksdepartementet [Ministry of Foreign Affairs] 1992. *Evaluering og resultatvurdering i bistanden. Håndbok for utøvere og beslutningstakere*. [Evaluation and results assessment in foreign aid. Handbook for practitioners and decision makers.] Oslo: Hestholms boktrykkeri.

⁴⁶⁴ Interviews, Jarle Haarstad June 2014, Eli Sletten May 2014.

exchanges. This observation serves to reinforce a point I made also in my analysis of the Handbook of 1981: That aid evaluation from the outset was a transnational field, and, I will now add, the degree of contact and connections was increasing further during the 1980s. A lengthy appendix to the 1992 Handbook included evaluation literature from across the world; this showed how aid evaluation was stabilizing as a transnational field, with guidelines and handbooks being issued by numerous national donors and international organizations. Distinguishing precisely which aspects were Norwegian and which came from elsewhere are of less interest than noting the many historical layers of travels and exchanges – both of people, tools, methods, and documents – which in sum make Norwegian aid evaluation an integrated part of a transnational field in the full sense of the term.

In this way, by 1992, evaluation work was stabilized as a well-established, yet not highly prioritized or authoritative field of expertise within the Norwegian aid administration. The major visions of evaluability which evaluation staff had voiced ten years before had clearly been tampered; their major endeavor of the *Country Study and Norwegian Aid Review* was not continued. Yet elsewhere in the aid administration, other efforts at making Norwegian aid an evaluable object was gaining momentum. These concerned precisely what the Mozambique Country Study team had argued in favor of: enhancing *recipient responsibility* and *financial accountability*. In the following second half of this chapter, I will turn to investigate how these two principles were introduced to the administration of the Norwegian oil aid projects. The new principles enabled new optics, and thus new ways of seeing aid. What happened to the object of oil aid when it was investigated through these new optics amidst new contexts?

Evaluation Optic 2: The NPD's new Annual Report on Norad Projects

What had the Norwegian oil aid project in Mozambique amounted to during the decade it had existed? What had the visiting Norwegian experts been doing during their decade of involvement with the Mozambican state? From the Country Study, it was possible to see that Norwegian aid enabled travels, visits, data collection, and data analysis. But what had they been doing, more specifically?

In this second part of the chapter, I will investigate a document that was the first of its kind in a new line of reports, titled *Norad Projects 1991. The Norwegian Petroleum Directorate's Annual Report*.⁴⁶⁵ In this report, the NPD presented its work done with Norad funding during the year of 1991. I will analyze this document as an evaluation optic, in parallel to my analysis of the *Mozambique Country Study and Norwegian Aid Review*. In doing so, I will begin by looking for traces of the oil aid project in Mozambique and investigate how the object of oil aid is constituted by this particular optic: What does oil aid become when seen through the optic of the NPD's new annual report? Based on this, I will investigate

⁴⁶⁵ Norwegian Petroleum Directorate (undated). *Noradprosjekter 1991. Oljedirektoratets årsrapport*. [Norad projects 1991. The Petroleum Directorate's annual report.] Undated publication, but must have been published during spring 1992. Given me by Øystein Kristiansen, head of NPD's international department, during interview in Stavanger in April, 2014.

what kind of context this optic is operationalizing, and finally discuss what this optic and its context may tell us about the changes in the Norwegian aid administration in the early 1990s.

The expanding field of Norwegian oil aid

Let me first recall the role of the Norwegian Petroleum Directorate (NPD) in enabling the Norwegian oil aid project in Mozambique. As shown in Chapter 3, Norad had in 1980 received a request from Mozambique's government for help with handling potential petroleum resources. Around the same time, the NPD and Norad entered into a formal, long-term framework agreement, agreeing that the NPD would make available staff for Norad assignments (such as the one in Mozambique) equivalent to two man-years annually. In order to accommodate the request from Mozambique, Norad commissioned staff from the NPD, who during the next year partook in developing the initial idea into a formally approved project. Starting in 1982, Norad, with guidance from NPD, commissioned Norwegian experts to assist in collecting and analyzing data from offshore oil explorations. The project soon expanded, and, as shown in the first part of this chapter, was made into a full-fledged "petroleum sector program" in 1983, which was renewed ahead of time in 1986.

Meanwhile, the total amount of the NPD's Norad-funded work also increased. During the 1980s, the agreement between the two agencies gradually expanded from two to four man-years annually.⁴⁶⁶ In their annual reports to the Ministry of Oil and Energy, in which they described all activities on the Norwegian continental shelf during the past year, the NPD also described their aid-funded work.⁴⁶⁷ In these reports, Mozambique is described as one of two main cooperation countries between 1982 and 1986 (together with Tanzania). Hence, work in Mozambique constituted a major part of the NPD's international work during the mid-1980s.⁴⁶⁸ In its annual report for 1986, the NPD described its aid work in the following way:

In 1986 the Petroleum Directorate's involvement through NORAD was mainly concentrated in Tanzania, Mozambique and to a lesser extent the Seychelles. In these countries the Petroleum Directorate was primarily engaged in (1) general data processing, (2) handling and storage of seismic data tapes, (3) data interpretation, (4) assistance to consultancy firms doing interpretive assignments/seismic reprocessing, (5) help with establishing an archival system (6) guidance to the Norad-supported advisors in Mozambique and Tanzania. (...) The Petroleum Directorate has during the past years been the main storage space for geological data for Tanzania. The data bank was transferred to Tanzania in 1986.⁴⁶⁹

⁴⁶⁶ NPD's annual reports 1976-1990.

⁴⁶⁷ During the first years, 1976-1980, the NPD summarized their Norad-funded work in a short chapter titled "Aid to foreign states". From 1981 onwards, the Norad-funded work was made into a subsection with the same title ("Aid to foreign states") under a larger chapter titled "International cooperation", which also included descriptions of the NPD's participation in numerous transnational networks and umbrella organizations.

⁴⁶⁸ NPD's annual reports 1976-1990. The NPD issued its first annual report for 1973, the year after its establishment. Aid-related work was included for the first time in the report for 1976, in a short chapter titled "Aid to foreign states". During the next years, the chapter expanded in scope. From 1981 onwards, the Norad-funded work was made into a subsection with the same title ("Aid to foreign states") under a larger chapter titled "International cooperation", which also included descriptions of the NPD's participation in numerous transnational networks and umbrella organizations.

⁴⁶⁹ NPD annual report 1986, p. 105. Norwegian quote: "I 1986 var Oljedirektoratets engasjement gjennom NORAD hovedsakelig konsentrert i Tanzania, Mozambique og i en mindre grad Seychellene. I disse landene var Oljedirektoratet primært beskjeftiget med (1) generell databehandling, (2) behandling og lagring av seismiske

In describing what their work in Mozambique had entailed during the year of 1986, the hands-on work with oil data was prevalent: the NPD were handling, storing, and interpreting data, both themselves and indirectly through assisting consultants and advisors working on Norad funds. Hence, they were in part doing what they themselves termed evaluation work (see previous chapter), and in part building archives for storing the evaluated data. Notably, the Tanzanian oil archives had during the year been moved to Tanzania from their first home in the NPD's offices in Stavanger, indicating that a core function of the Tanzanian oil aid experience had been realized: Being in control of the nation's oil archive. For Mozambique, presumably, the archive was still being kept in Stavanger.

The Norwegian Petroleum Directorate's general engagement with foreign aid was further expanded in 1987, when the NPD and Norad agreed to initiate a three-year pilot project of training courses in petroleum administration for government staff from developing countries.⁴⁷⁰ The idea was reportedly developed in the Ministry of Development Cooperation, who in the mid-1980s started discussing whether the Norwegian oil experience might be the object of a more comprehensive aid program. While the proposal gained support from the minister of foreign aid, Reidun Brusletten, she reportedly needed convincing that oil aid would benefit the poorest of the poor, which in 1985 had been established as the overarching Norwegian aid policy. The minister, eventually agreeing to the proposal, demanded that it should contribute to making oil "a blessing and not a curse" for developing countries.⁴⁷¹ The program, which came to be titled "International Programme for Petroleum Management and Administration" (Petrad), clearly resembled the 6-week training course organized in 1981, during which NPD's Resource Director Farouk Al-Kasim had given a lecture on the management of petroleum resources (cf. Chapter 3). Petrad was constituted as a distinct unit within the NPD, with three staff members, responsible for developing and organizing a series of eight-week long training courses.⁴⁷² Al-Kasim was part of Petrad's first advisory board, and reportedly also designed Petrad's logo.⁴⁷³

The issue of expanding the object of Norwegian oil aid was not only a matter of public administration. As I showed in Chapter 3, and as also the quote above stated, private consultants were also expanding their involvement. Indeed, the potential of international expansion for the Norwegian oil industry was increasingly becoming a topic of domestic

databånd, (3) datatolkning, (4) veiledning til konsulentfirma som utfører tolkningsoppdrag/seismisk repressering, (5) hjelp til å etablere arkivsystem (Tanzania), og (6) veiledning til NORAD-støttede rådgivere i Mozambique og Tanzania. (...) Oljedirektoratet har i de siste årene vært hovedlagringsplass for geologiske data for Tanzania. Databanken ble overført til Tanzania i 1986."

⁴⁷⁰ NPD annual reports 1987, p. 109.

⁴⁷¹ Petrad 2009, p. 5. Reaching "the poorest of the poor" was made the overarching goal for both international and national aid policy during the early 1980s, including Norway, where the policy was formalized in a white paper in 1984: St.meld.nr. 36 (1984-95) "Om enkelte hovedspørsmål i norsk utviklingshjelp" [On certain main questions in Norwegian foreign aid], also called "the Principle White Paper", in Norwegian: "Prinsippmeldingen". Cf. Ruud and Kjerland 2003, pp. 155-156.

⁴⁷² NPD annual reports 1987-1992. Cf. Petrad 2009 for retrospective accounts of Petrad's first years.

⁴⁷³ Interviews, Øyvind Berg and Farouk Al-Kasim, Stavanger 2014.

political debates.⁴⁷⁴ Actors within both government and industry were considering possible ways of expanding abroad, in which expert assignments, technology transfer, and business expansion were seen in direct relation.⁴⁷⁵ This would potentially increase the participation of the Norwegian private sector in the aid activities, which from the mid-1980s was an outspoken goal of Norwegian aid policy.⁴⁷⁶ During the years 1984-1987, a research center located in Stavanger (Rogalandsforskning) wrote a string of reports analyzing both the potential of transferring Norwegian oil experience abroad and for expanding the Norwegian oil industry internationally.⁴⁷⁷ The report *Norwegian oil competence in developing countries* took as its point of departure that Norway in the course of 20 years had moved from being “a developing country with regards to oil” to becoming a full-worthy oil nation.⁴⁷⁸ The researchers explicitly discussed whether the Norwegian oil experience might be applicable also in other countries:

During the past years Norwegian oil companies have slowly started making themselves noticeable in the Third World. Norway may offer capital, technology, and competence, but have we in addition gained experiences with the integration of the oil activities in Norwegian economy and society which may benefit the developing countries? We may not necessarily transfer our experiences to a fundamentally different context. The *solution* to the integration problems must be adapted to the specific affairs in each country. Yet the *problematics* we may assume may attain a more general validity.⁴⁷⁹

Emphasizing the need for adapting the Norwegian experience to the specific new context into which it was brought, the researchers separated between the challenges which the Norwegian actors had experienced and the solutions they had chosen. Key in this, they wrote, was to build a strong local and regional industry.⁴⁸⁰

⁴⁷⁴ Notably in the white paper St.meld. 32 (1984-85), “Om petroleumsvirksomhetens fremtid” [On the future of the petroleum activities].

⁴⁷⁵ The first major example of Norwegian oil industry going abroad was in Benin in 1980. The company Saga Petroleum, at the time the only all-private Norwegian oil company, was granted the licence to be operator of an oil field. The task proved both difficult and expensive; Saga had not held the similar degree of responsibility on the Norwegian shelf, and the amount of oil found offshore Benin was limited. The agreement ended with a loss both for Saga and for the government of Benin. Cf. Ruud and Kjerland 2003, p. 35; Ryggvik 2000.

⁴⁷⁶ The white paper that established “the poorest of the poor” as the main target group for Norwegian aid (St.meld.nr. 36 (1984/85)) also established increased private sector engagement as a key goal. Cf. Ruud and Kjerland 2003, pp. 23-46.

⁴⁷⁷ Aase, Tor H. and Odd Einar F. Olsen 1985. *Norsk oljekompetanse i utviklingsland*. [Norwegian oil competence in developing countries] (commissioned report); Aase, Tor H. 1987. *Norges rolle som bistandsyter på petroleumsektoren*. [Norway’s role as aid donor on the petroleum sector] (conference minutes); Nødland, Svein Ingve and Odd Einar Olsen 1984. *Tilpasningsstrategier for norsk oljevirksomhet i u-land*. [Adaptation strategies for Norwegian oil activities in developing countries] (project draft).

⁴⁷⁸ Aase and Olsen 1985 (quote from abstract on the report’s front page). Norwegian quote: «I løpet av 20 år har Norge gått fra å være et u-land i petroleumssammenheng til å bli en fullverdig oljenasjon.»

⁴⁷⁹ Aase and Olsen 1985, p. 1. Italics in original. Norwegian quote: ” I de siste par årene har norske oljeselskap så smått begynt å gjøre seg gjeldende i den tredje verden. Norge kan tilby kapital, teknologi og kompetanse, men har vi i tillegg gjort oss erfaringer med integreringa av oljevirksomheten i norsk økonomi og samfunnsliv som kan komme utviklingslandene til gode? Vi kan ikke uten videre overføre våre erfaringer til en fundamentalt forskjellig kontekst. Løsningen på integreringsproblemene må tilpasses de spesifikke forholdene i hvert enkelt land. Men problemstillingene kan vi anta har mer allmen gyldighet.”

⁴⁸⁰ Aase and Olsen analyzed the Norwegian oil sector according to a life cycle model, that is, the dynamics of how businesses were established and expanded within the oil sector. A key part of this was the government’s concerns to ensure national ownership, integration of the oil sector into the overall economy and society, the

In combination, these initiatives attest to how, at the turn of the decade, the Norwegian oil experience was both expanding and consolidating as an object of Norwegian aid: politically, through interest and commitment on ministry level within both the aid sector and the oil sector, and administratively, through the NPD's expanding activities and Norad's expanding budgets.

Yet other concerns were also gaining momentum within the aid administration around 1990. As I will show in the next sections, these new concerns would change the relation between the two agencies in important ways. The new optic of the NPD's Annual Report on Norad projects, in which the NPD described their aid-funded work done during the year of 1991, must, I will argue, be seen as a materialization of this shift, which in turn attests to a major transformation of Norwegian aid during the early 1990s. I will begin by retracing the oil aid project in Mozambique – with the project code MOZ 032 – before expanding the analysis to the optic of the Annual Report and how it was a response to the shifting contexts.

Retracing MOZ 032

On December 31, 1990, the agreement between Norad and NPD was about to expire.⁴⁸¹ Since its inception in 1980, the agreement had never been made permanent, but neither had it been terminated; the expiration date was most likely conceived of as a formality. From 1991, this changed: Norad now made the renewal of the agreement explicitly contingent on more detailed reports from NPD. Up until then, the NPD had sent reports to Norad on their aid-related work twice a year. Starting in 1991, the NPD was requested to double the amount of reports (from two to four during each year) and to start specifying not only how they spent their *funds*, but also calculate more precisely how they spent their *time*. In addition, NPD should submit an annual report comprising the information of the four quarterly reports and calculating the total amount of time spent by the NPD on Norad-funded projects. It is this annual report, comprising the numbers from the four quarterly reports, that is my concern in this chapter.

I will begin the analysis of the NPD's new annual report by investigating what the report said about NPD's work in Mozambique during the year of 1991. Mozambique was designated the first of a string of subchapters under a chapter titled "Aid Countries 1991", which was the last (and longest) chapter of the document. Each subchapter, eleven in total,

build-up of local expertise, increasing domestic deliveries to the international companies, and a regional dispersion of the business activities. In this way, the Norwegian experience as presented by NPD gained another dimension, that of the build-up of a vital domestic private sector able to partake in and benefit from the oil industry, without becoming a bubble isolated from its economic and social surroundings. This came to be critical aspect of the «Norwegianization» of the Norwegian oil industry.

⁴⁸¹ *Norad projects 1991*, p. 2: "The cooperation agreement between NPD and NORAD expired 31/12-90. The agreement was renewed in 1991 and has a validity of three years." Norwegian quote: «Samarbeidsavtalen mellom OD og NORAD utløp 31/12-90. Avtalen ble fornyet i 1991 og har en gyldighet på 3 år.»

summarized the work done by NPD staff in one specific country.⁴⁸² The opening page of the Mozambique chapter looked as follows (illustration 4.1):

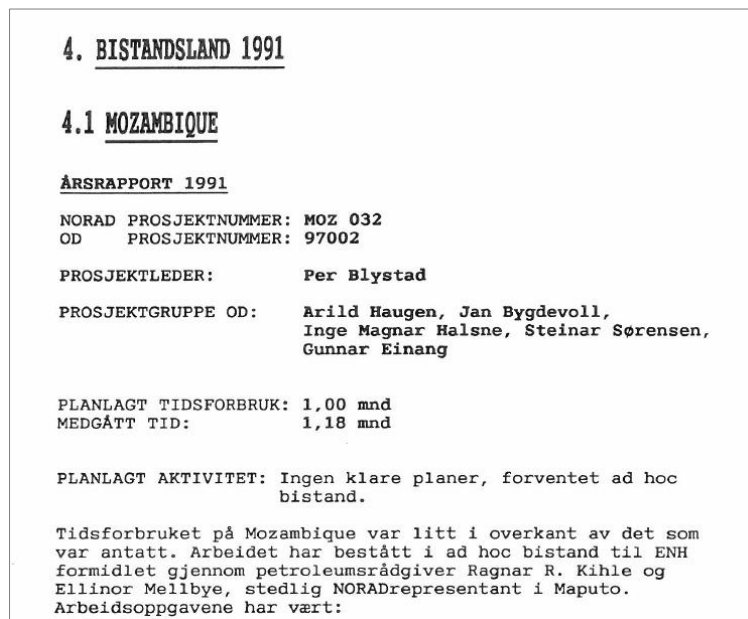


Illustration 4.1: Annual report for NPD's work in Mozambique in 1991 (upper part of the page).⁴⁸³

As the excerpt of the subchapter above shows (illustration 4.1), time use was given a prominent position in the Annual Report. With capital letters and bold font, the report contrasted the “planned time use” on Mozambique (1,00 month) with the “time spent” (1,18 months). These numbers were presented as part of the key pieces of information delineating the project: the project code; NPD’s project leader and project group; planned time use; actual time spent; and planned activities. The discrepancy between “planned time use” and “time spent” prompted the report to comment: «Time use on Mozambique was slightly above what was expected.»⁴⁸⁴ Finally, as the last of the highlighted points, it summarized the “planned activities” with the words “no clear plans, expected ad hoc aid”.

From here, the report went on to describe what kind of work the NPD staff had been doing, that is, how they had spent their time «on Mozambique». According to the report, the NPD’s work on Mozambique had been «ad hoc aid» to the Mozambican state oil company (ENH). This work involved analysis of seismic data, calculations of potential oil fields, and a review of a study analyzing possible routes for pipelines transporting natural gas to potential markets. NPD staff had not themselves worked directly with ENH staff; as stated in the quote above, the Norwegian assistance had been «facilitated by» two other Norwegians: an adviser working for ENH (the geologist Ragnar Kihle) and Norad’s resident representative in Maputo (Ellinor Melbye, who was on leave from her position in Statoil’s department for natural

⁴⁸² As seen from fig.1, one project concerned the intergovernmental organization CCOP (Committee for Coordination of Joint Prospecting for Mineral Resources in Asian Offshore Areas), to which NPD served as technical advisor.

⁴⁸³ Norad projects 1991, p. 5.

⁴⁸⁴ *Norad projects 1991*, p. 5. Norwegian quote: «Tidsforbruket på Mozambique var litt i overkant av det som var antatt.»

gas).⁴⁸⁵ Kihle and Melbye's salaries were both funded directly by Norad, thus they were not part of the NPD's reporting as such. A notable feature of the Mozambican oil aid project was the shift of weight from oil to natural gas, following what the Country Study had summarized as a lack of promising oil discoveries and a pursuit of the potential of natural gas resources. Hence, what had started as oil aid was now turning into a program for mainly enabling production of natural gas.

The subchapter on Mozambique amounted to one full page and one line on the second page. It was short and succinct, listing the concrete tasks undertaken by the NPD during the past year. The style of writing was impersonal, merely stating the concrete tasks without entering into any discussions, reflections or more elaborate descriptions. All the country subchapters followed the same format, first stating the planned time use and the time spent, then listing the planned activities and the activities done. Some of the chapters were longer and more detailed, other shorter and less detailed. While the format was the same for all, their content were not completely symmetric; some subchapters included more detailed work plans and more detailed descriptions of the work done. The degree of NPD involvement also varied; while their work in Mozambique was reported to be "ad-hoc" and just slightly more than a month's worth of time, there were other countries where NPD staff had been working on-site during the whole year. Hence, the seemingly strict genre of the Annual Report comprised multiple kinds of NPD engagement. What they all had in common, was the concern for *time*. In the next section, I will go further into this feature.

Translating work done into funds spent

In all the country subchapters, the Annual Report contrasted what NPD had planned to do and what they had done. They also contrasted how much time the NPD had planned to spend on these activities and how much time they had spent doing it. As shown above, the numbers stating the planned time use and the actual time spent were given a prominent position at the start of each subchapter. These numbers were then compiled in a table presented in the report's second chapter (titled "Workload"). In this table, titled "Table 1. Time use Norad work (man-months) 1991", the NPD listed the months "planned" and "spent" on each country, and calculated the relative size of the projects by turning the hours spent into percentages of the NPD's total work for Norad (ill. 4.2.).

When seen in relation to the NPD's other Norad projects, the Mozambican project – the MOZ 032 – emerged as one of the smallest projects. According to the table, only 2,48% of NPD's total Norad-time was spent on Mozambique. As seen from the total sum in the bottom line, the total time the NPD had planned to spend was 48 man-months, which equalled four years of work. In the lines above the total sum, the countries were presented in the manner of

⁴⁸⁵ *Norad projects 1991*, p. 5-6. The report listed four tasks which the NPD had undertaken: Considered a possible reprocessing of seismic data for the major gas field Pande, upon request from Ragnar Kihle; evaluated a report written by a consultants from the USSR which calculated the amount of gas in the Pande reserves; assisted in evaluating tenders for transporting gas from Pande; and helping Ragnar Kihle procuring microscopes and other equipment to ENH.

TABELL 1. Tidsforbruk NORAD-arbeid (månedsværk) 1991

Land	Prosjekt NORAD/OD	Plan	Brukt	% Sum
Mozambique	MOZ 031/97002	1,00	1,18	2,48
Tanzania	TAN 051/97003	5,00	3,93	8,27
Angola	AGO 001/97001	3,00	0,10	0,21
Namibia	NAM 001/97004	6,00	5,85	12,32
Seychellene	SYC 002/97005	3,50	2,78	5,86
India	IND 042/97006	1,00	0,00	0,00
Bangladesh	BGD 023/97007	10,00	12,97	27,29
Nicaragua/ Costa Rica	NIC 010/97008 CAM 090/97008	5,00	4,30	9,05
Jemen	YEM 002/97009	4,00	5,40	11,36
CCOP	GLO 008/97010	1,50	1,16	2,44
Admin./Div.	/97100	8,00	9,77	20,56
Total		48,00	47,54	100,00

Illustration 4.2: Time spent («tidsforbruk») by NPD on Norad projects in 1991 (calculated in man-months)⁴⁸⁶

financial accounting: An object (“country” and “project”), a budget (“plan”), and the accounts (“use”). In addition came the column calculating each country’s percentage point relative to the whole (“% sum”).

In this way, counting hours spent on individual projects enabled an overall calculation of the NPD’s total work for Norad. The projects were established as parts of a whole, they were percentages of something larger than themselves. The Mozambique project emerged as small relative to the other country projects, without any clear plan, and with a slight overspending. These juxtapositions of “planned” and “spent” dominated both the subchapters and the calculation of the whole. As seen in the table above, the total time spending amounted to 47,54 man-months, which was 0,46 man-months less than planned. Below the table, the text explained the reasons for the discrepancy, labelling it «divergence» from the work plan. This move served to establish *the plan* as the dominant, stable unit, to which the actual work was expected to adhere. In doing so, any unexpected changes came across as unfortunate diversions which should ideally be avoided.

Calculating hours was however only one part of the calculations. Norad’s new accounting routines in Norad was requiring a more detailed account of the NPD’s *spending* – not only hours, but also, by extension, money. After having calculated the relative amount of hours spent on each project, the NPD translated these temporal units into financial units by calculating precisely the amount of salaries paid to NPD staff for their time spent on Norad projects. The salary numbers for each country were then included in a table presenting the total accounts of the NPD’s Norad portfolio (illustration 4.3.).

For the year of 1991, the Annual Report explained, no specific budget had existed for NPD’s Norad work; what they had, were work plans for the individual countries and the lump sum of four man-years, or 48 man-months. The report asserted that the lack of a budget had

⁴⁸⁶ *Norad projects 1991*, p. 3. Note that Norad’s project number was «MOZ 032», not «MOZ 031».

Land	Reiser	Lønn	Annet
Mozambique		45 644,73	720,30
Tanzania	136 743,20	160 268,48	228 680,40
Angola	2 425,80	3 866,77	
Namibia	130 671,30	242 055,48	2 926 756,00
Seychellene	59 941,31	107 901,34	150 281,49
*Bangladesh	243 416,80	686 017,56	50 679,05
Nicaragua/ Costa Rica	39 183,50	170 126,27	867 062,02
Jemen	221 803,80	212 472,79	
CCOP		44 928,21	
Admin./Div.		378 575,37	
Generelt	109 254,00		45 603,02
Delsum	943 439,71	2 051 856,70	4 269 782,10
Sum delsum			7 345 478,50
Bruk av EDB			80 400,00
Totalt			7 425 878,50

* Omfatter også lønnsutgifter for Atle Austegard.

Illustration 4.3: "Accounts Norad projects", broken down by Country, Travels, Salaries, Other.⁴⁸⁷

made it difficult to produce even the crude estimations of spending given in Tables I and II. The situation would be different in the coming year, now that the NPD had established the new internal reporting system for producing the numbers in the first place. This would enable more detailed calculations for the year of 1992.⁴⁸⁸

The genre of the Annual Report in this way enabled a different kind of translation process than did the Country Study: Whereas the Country Study was building multiple contexts around the Norwegian aid portfolio and translating these contexts into specific criteria for assessing the aid portfolio, the Annual Report was quantifying and calculating the Norwegian expert's time use. The document's structure is important for enabling the translation of staff activities into precise numbers. Following the front matter, table of contents, and a short introductory chapter (titled "General") came Chapter 2, titled "Work load", which included the table calculating time spent (ill. 4.2); this was followed by Chapter 3, titled "Accounts", which included the table calculating funds spent (ill. 4.3). These three chapters in combination amounted to little over three pages. While the Accounts chapter built upon the Workload chapter, the Workload chapter built upon the individual country entries, including the one on Mozambique, which in combination constituted the fourth and final

⁴⁸⁷ *Norad projects 1991*, p. 4. The total sum («Totalt») was arrived at by summarizing financial expenses (travels, equipment, etc) and salaries (calculated by estimating the time spent by staff in each country, then adding fees (16,7% arbeidsgiveravgift) and administrative costs (30%).

⁴⁸⁸ *Norad projects 1991*, p. 4. Norwegian quote: «Ytterligere detaljering vil være enklere med det nye regnskapssystem som vil nyttes fra 1992.»

Chapter 4.⁴⁸⁹ There was no conclusion; all main points were stated in the second and third chapters. In sum, the report amounted to 21 pages.

In this way, the structure of the report enabled retracing the numbers presented in the tables back to the individual country entries. A reader would thereby only have to read chapters 2 and 3, each of just over one page long, to get an overview of the NPD's work. By looking at the tables, readers would gain an understanding of the "totality" at-a-glance. In this way, within the structure of the report, the individual country entries functioned more as appendices to the introduction than as independent chapters. The contents of the NPD's work – what its staff had been doing – was surely included in the country entries, but the report's main concern was to enable the contrast between planned work and work done. This was enabled by juxtaposing the numbers of planned man-months with used man-months, both in the country entries and in the table. In this way, through a particular translation process with a set of reductions and amplifications, the quantification of hours spent was made a central feature of the new Annual Report.

These amplified numbers in turn made visible the degree of NPD's adherence to their own plan and budget. Furthermore, they made visible the work on individual projects in relation to the NPD's Norad work as a whole. The optic of the Annual Report in this way enabled Norad to better see a specific aspect of the NPD's aid work at-a-glance and from a distance. The Annual Report enabled higher resolution of how the NPD spent their time, and to what extent this time use adhered to their agreed-upon plan. Why was this important for Norad? Why did the aid administration require the NPD to employ this optic and undertake these calculations?

"A visible sign" of Norad's new accounting routines

Following my analysis above, the optic of the Annual Report might be considered the opposite of the Country Study: Whereas the latter transformed aid into *narratives* by means of contexting and arguments, the former transformed aid into *numbers* by means of quantification and calculation. Indeed, this way of juxtaposing narratives and numbers has been common in the research literature on the effects and practices of accounting. Here, a key argument has been that numbers are never objective representations of reality, although they claim to be; rather, numbers are powerful devices enabling governmental interventions.⁴⁹⁰ If this is the case, what kind of intervention was made possible by the numbers produced for Norad by the Norwegian Petroleum Directorate? What did it mean that 2,48% of NPD's time had been spent on MOZ 032?

The country subchapters in the Annual Report included calculations of time use and brief descriptions of project plans followed by stating what work had been done. In contrast to the Country Study, there was no discussion of the projects' background, content, context, or relevance, nor any assessment of its effects and value apart from the financial cost and the

⁴⁸⁹ Chapter 1 was titled "General", and amounted to a little less than one page; chapter 2, titled "Work load", amounted to one page; chapter 3, titled "Accounts", amounted to one page and one paragraph.

⁴⁹⁰ Miller 1994; Porter 1994; Power 1997; Rose and Miller 1992.

relative adherence. But rather than concluding that the Annual Report simply disregards context, I will suggest that this exclusive concern for time use and adherence to plans was in itself a materialization of a changing Norwegian context.

Indeed, the Annual Report referred explicitly to such a contextual shift. In the opening paragraph of its introduction, the Annual Report stated that it itself was «a visible sign» of change within the Norwegian aid administration to which the NPD was trying to accommodate:

The Norwegian Petroleum Directorate (NPD) has also in 1991 undertaken assignments for NORAD within the frame of the cooperation agreement between NPD and NORAD. The year has been affected by a certain degree of adjustment and adaptation in the cooperation between NPD and Norad, caused by (...) [staff changes and] the reworking of NORAD's accounting routines and implementation of NORAD's new strategy. A visible sign of this is the present annual report which is an attempt at reporting in a format which gives the main information about the project together with the budget for NPD's efforts and the project accounts where NPD has such responsibility. This report format will also be used for quarterly reports to NORAD.⁴⁹¹

This quote explicitly points to fundamental changes taking place within Norwegian aid administration during 1990-91: A new strategy and a new accounting system. Furthermore, the quote above established the Annual Report as a materialization, a “visible sign”, of this double transformation. The quoted paragraph connected the specific format of the new Annual Report directly to a “reworking of Norad's accounting routines”: The new optic would make it possible to report “in a format which gives the main information about the project”. What was this “main information” made to be? As argued above, *time spent* was given a prominent role. Hence, the major change in how NPD was reporting to Norad, was that it would from here on provide Norad with updated information on how the staff was spending their time. The Annual Report itself explained the shift in the following way:

The cooperation agreement commits NPD to quarterly reporting to NORAD. This report shall, in contrast to previous years' reports which were biannual, also contain updated information about NPD's time spending within the individual projects, NORAD-travels etc. This system has not come entirely into function as it has demanded several changes with regards to reporting on time spent and for accounting of the NORAD expenses. This is now settled and internal systems are made to accommodate the requirements of the agreement.⁴⁹²

⁴⁹¹ *Norad projects 1991*, p. 2. Full Norwegian quote: «Oljedirektoratet (OD) har også i 1991 utført oppdrag for NORAD innenfor rammene av samarbeidsavtalen mellom OD og NORAD. Året har vært preget av en viss grad av omstilling og tilpasning i samarbeidet mellom OD og NORAD, forårsaket av skifte av NORADkoordinator i OD, opphør av Narayanans engasjement og dermed en reduksjon av totalinnsatsen, samt omlegging av NORADs regnskapsrutiner og implementering av NORADs nye strategi. Et synlig tegn på dette er foreliggende årsrapport som er et forsøk på å rapportere i en form som gir hovedinformasjon om prosjektet sammen med budsjett for ODs innsats og prosjektregnskap der OD har ansvar for dette. Denne rapportform vil også bli nyttet ved kvartalsrapportering til NORAD.»

⁴⁹² *Norad projects 1991*, p. 2. Full Norwegian quote: «Samarbeidsavtalen mellom OD og NORAD utløp 31/12-90. Avtalen ble fornyet i 1991 og har en gyldighet på 3 år. Samarbeidsavtalen pålegger OD en kvartalsvis rapportering til NORAD. Denne rapporten skal, i motsetning til tidligere års rapporter som var halvårlige, også inneholde oppdatert informasjon om ODs tidsbruk på de enkelte prosjekter, NORADreiser etc. Dette systemet er ikke kommet riktig i funksjon da det har krevet en del endringer mht rapportering av tidsforbruk samt for regnskapsføring av NORADutgiftene. Dette er nå avklart og interne systemer er opprettet for å etterkomme avtalens krav.»

Norad's new accounting routines thus forced the NPD through the renewed cooperation agreement to change how they accounted for their work in several ways: They had to report *more often* on work undertaken on the specific projects – both double the amount of monitoring reports from two to four a year and in addition prepare an annual report based on the calculations in the quarterly reports. It was by means of the quarterly reports that the NPD was expected to produce the steady stream of temporal units, which might then be combined to enable calculations of annual spending. Moreover, they had to change *how* they prepared these reports. The new routine did not merely require more of the same, but also a completely new way of counting, calculating, and reporting. Indeed, according to the quote above, Norad's new requirements had produced new internal systems in NPD.

As seen from the quotes above, doing the calculations required in the new Annual Report was no straight-forward task for the NPD. Translating NPD's activities into financial terms in itself required much work, starting with figuring out how it might be done. From the Annual Report, then, we may understand the year of 1991 as a year of change for the relation between Norad and the Norwegian Petroleum Directorate: the NPD was required by Norad to provide a new set of numbers, more precise calculations, more reports, and adopt a new format. To accommodate these requests, NPD had to change their internal systems of accounting for how staff spent their time on Norad projects, which in effect involved spending Norad funds. These changes were in themselves time-consuming, and thereby also costly in financial terms: "The administrative part of the work has in 1991 increased relative to previous years. It is now expected that the scope of administration will continue to stay at a high level."⁴⁹³ The precise hours spent calculating time use were not listed, but was most likely made part of the the work categorized as "Adm/misc.", which according to Table 1 amounted to 20% of the work done by the NPD for Norad (see fig. 2). In this way, Norad's new accounting system had the effect, according to the Annual Report itself, that more time was spent administering the projects than what had earlier been the case. Indeed, counting costs in itself constituted a cost.

The specific document of the NPD's Annual Report must therefore, I will argue, be considered a direct response to Norad's new accounting routines. These new routines made the NPD change their genre of Norad reporting in order to include precise calculations of time and funds spent. Given that the continuation of NPD's Norad-funding explicitly relied on the submission of this specific document, there was no room for resistance to the genre requirements. This makes the Annual Report different in important ways from the Country Study analyzed above: In that case, the research team was independent and distanced from the aid administration; all though they might have relied on further cooperation with Norad and the Ministry for assignments, they did not refrain from making explicit their resistance to the demands for reduction and amplification of findings. The NPD's comments in the Annual Report's introduction indicated that changing their accounting routines had been time-

⁴⁹³ *Norad projects 1991*, p. 2. Full Norwegian quote: «Den administrative del av arbeidet har i 1991 økt i forhold til foregående år. Det er forventet at omfanget av administrasjon fortsatt vil ligge på et høyt nivå.»

consuming and frustrating, but they also assured that “[t]his is now settled and internal systems are made to accommodate the requirements of the agreement”. In this way, they complied with the intensified reporting demands and had changed their routines to accommodate Norad’s new requirements.

What did the new Annual Report enable Norad to see? What was being amplified by the new evaluation optic? Norad’s new accounting routines had made visible that the information which NPD up until then had provided, was now deemed insufficient: budgets were non-existing, categories were left unfilled, numbers were too imprecise. By receiving more precise numbers and more comprehensive and detailed calculations, Norad would be able to see the NPD’s work in a different way. The optic of the Annual Report had much higher resolution than previous reporting systems. The Annual Report thereby enabled Norad to see, at-a-glance, the relation between NPD’s plans and their actual work, between their time-budget and their time-accounts, and between their financial budgeting and accounting.

The new aid archive: Accumulating receipts of time

Norad’s concern for making the NPD staff’s time an accountable object is important, since accessing their time had been the very purpose of the oil aid agreement in the first place. When the joint agreement between Norad the NPD was established in 1980, the whole point was to use Norad funds to enable NPD staff to spend their time on something else than their daily work within the Norwegian public oil administration.⁴⁹⁴ This was a well-established model within both Norwegian aid and internationally: Compensating public agencies and private companies for making their staff available for aid assignments had since the 1950s been a key tool for both aid agencies and international organizations. In Norway, encouraging employers to provide manpower for aid missions had been no easy task; compensating their salaries with aid funds had been a prerequisite for making it possible.⁴⁹⁵

This form of aid, commonly referred to as “technical assistance” in the international terminology (literally *expert aid* (“ekspertbistand”) in Norwegian), was precisely the kind of arrangement NPD and Norad had formalized in 1980: Their cooperation agreement compensated NPD financially for allowing their staff to spend time assisting governmental agencies in countries receiving Norwegian aid. That same year, NPD had started supporting the government of Mozambique, beginning with the NPD’s fact-finding mission to Maputo in August 1980. Ten years later, technical assistance was increasingly experiencing public scrutiny and critique. Devising optics for making visible the cost of expert aid may be seen as a response to this critique, but I will suggest that it also contributed to enabling this critique, as it turned the Norwegian expert missions into financial calculations. The numbers made

⁴⁹⁴ This had been the foundation of so-called technical assistance, in Norwegian commonly referred to as “expert aid” (*ekspertbistand*) since the 1950s, which goal was to enable Norwegian professionals from both the public and private sectors to travel to developing countries to assist on specific assignments. This form of aid was the materialization of a general intention of transferring expertise and technologies to developing countries in order to enable them to catch up with the industrialized world (whether the Liberal Democracies of the West or the Communist States of the East). Cf. Simensen 2003 and Reinertsen 2008, 2010.

⁴⁹⁵ Reinertsen 2008, 2010. Administering these agreements was the task of Norad’s Expert Office (cf. chapter 3).

visible that substantial parts of the Norwegian aid funds was used to pay the salaries of Norwegian experts. While this had been the exact purpose of the technical assistance as a means to making available expertise for developing countries, the issue was seen differently during the Norwegian aid debates of the early 1990s. The numbers made it possible to see how much the Norwegian experts cost relative to other kinds of aid, which in turn enabled the question of why Norwegian aid was spent funding Norwegians, not the poor in developing countries. Hence, as of 1990, it was no longer taken for granted that technical assistance was a valuable form of aid; rather, to the contrary, it was increasingly considered a costly form of aid. This in turn increased the attention to what the funds in fact did produce: Did technical assistance give the expected results?⁴⁹⁶

The new forms of reporting must therefore also be considered a means of ensuring closer monitoring of Norad's technical assistance programs. The quotes from the NPD's new Annual Report, referred in the above sections, attest to this shift and to the effects these changes had for the NPD. Norad's new accounting routines demanded more specific details on how the commissioned experts had spent their time: Clearly, Norad wanted to monitor more closely how Norwegian aid funds were spent by gaining more detailed documentation. In effect, by changing its accounting routines, Norad created new categories to which NPD's staff would have to attend. Moreover, the new accounting system produced new rhythms for NPD's reporting on their aid work. These changes were institutionalized by the new cooperation agreement between NPD and Norad. New numbers should be provided more often: When the contract between the two agencies expired at the end of 1990, the new categories and rhythms of aid reporting were made a requirement of the new agreement. For the activities to continue, the NPD would have to change their reporting routines and make visible in much more detail how they spent their funds and their time.

This, I will argue, is how the relation between Norad and NPD had changed between 1980 and 1991: In 1980, Norad had functioned as a facilitator enabling Norwegian expertise to assist aid-receiving governments upon these governments' request. Norad hardly had to argue that oil aid was a good idea or that NPD staff would spend their time as planned. This seems to have been taken for granted. In 1991, Norad was demanding detailed accounts of the NPD's activities. In this way, NPD attained the role of an *aid recipient*, applying for funds and submitting plans and accounts, while Norad attained the role of an *aid auditor*, comparing plans and accounts to approve how the funds had been spent. The genre of accounting – as employed by the Annual Report – became Norad's preferred mode of communication.

This situation amounted to a surprising reversal of roles. When preparing the project in Mozambique in 1980-81, NPD staff had encouraged to slow down the process while Norad

⁴⁹⁶ *Norad projects 1991*. I have not seen the NPD's previous reports to Norad. These were most likely submitted to the Expert Office (SIO), whose archive I have not investigated. Although they most likely reported on specific activities in specific countries, this information was clearly not copied into the project archives, and has therefore not been part of my empirical material. Had I known of these biannual reports during the archival search, I would have tried to retrieve them, as an analysis of these and how they did (or did not) change during the decade 1980-1990 would have been most interesting for what became my main research question.

had encouraged speeding it up. Norad's main concern had been to accommodate Mozambique's request and had not prioritized to produce all the documents formally required. Clearly, the project might well be realized without the specific sequence of documents in place. Ten years later, Norad demanded far more documentation from the NPD. In this way, I will argue, Norad had shifted from *accommodating requests* to *requesting accountability*. Rather than responding swiftly and generously in the present, Norad was increasingly concerned about the accountability of aid in the future. The evaluation optic of the Annual Report, and the accounting system of which it was a part, was in this way enabling an external gaze upon aid, a way of grasping the aid activities while being far away. By demanding more detailed documentation, Norad's new accounting system may be said to institutionalize doubt or even mistrust about how the NPD spent their funds: the new accounting system demanded documentation which had not previously been necessary.

It must be noted that these new routines were not made for monitoring NPD exclusively; they covered all funds spent over Norad's budget, out of which only a small proportion was channeled to the NPD.⁴⁹⁷ Hence, the accounting system made the NPD align their reporting system with everyone else receiving funds from Norad. Norad's new accounting system asked all aid recipients the same set of questions, and made sure (in theory at least) that all aid projects adhered to the same categories and rhythms. It would require all recipients of Norwegian aid funds to prepare the same kind of document – to employ the same inscription devices every three months to produce numbers that would be possible to combine across sectors and countries. This makes the NPD's new Annual Report on Norad projects but one of many instances in which continuous monitoring was institutionalized across Norwegian foreign aid during 1991-92. Every three months, updated numbers from all Norad-funded activities across the globe would arrive at the Norad headquarters in Oslo, mimicking the temporal cycles of a private business' quarterly account statements to its board and owners. Hence, the new Annual Report submitted from the NPD to Norad was but one of an unknown amount of such reports travelling from all cooperating agencies to Norad's headquarters in Oslo. Then, once a year, Norad would receive more comprehensive reports presenting the Norad-funded activities' finalized accounts during the previous year, as exemplified by the NPD's Annual Report for 1991. Gradually, Norad would accumulate complete time series of accounts, specifying the spending of Norad-funded time.

To that end, the numbers produced by the NPD for Norad made visible for Norad how the NPD spent their time. Hence, they made the NPD accountable to Norad in a new way. Based on my analysis of how the new evaluation optic was first employed, I have suggested to consider it a materialization of major changes in the Norwegian aid administration. This transformation had the effect of making the Norwegian context more important than it had previously been. This was done by means of the new optic, which demanded that the NPD translated their work into the categories and formats of Norad's new accounting system. In asking the NPD and all other cooperating agencies to quantify, calculate, and describe their

⁴⁹⁷ The NPD reports their total spending in 1991 to be NOK 7.425.878. *Norad projects 1991*, p. 4.

work in the *same way*, Norad standardized its reporting routines. These monitoring reports would then combined accumulate supposedly comparable data, which in turn would make possible accounting and audit of individual projects. The new accounting system thus also enabled a completely new kind of aid archive.

This new archive of aid accounting would make it possible to account for Norwegian aid in a different way than before: Receipts of funds spent and time spent would be available for potential future auditors, who would be able to retrace the spending through the annual and quarterly reports, back to the cooperating agencies and their specific travels, projects, and plans. The way in which the Annual Report juxtaposed planned activities and actual work done, and reported changes as “divergence”, contributed to establish the plan as a stable object and the work done a matter of realizing the plan in time. These genre prescriptions were possible to resist to a certain extent; as seen above, the NPD’s Annual Report for 1991 reported that the Mozambique project had had “no clear plan”; as a result, the work done then became merely “ad-hoc activities”. Nevertheless, by having to employ this term to describe their work, the NPD might have lost some authority: The project seemed to proceed with no clear direction and purpose. I will therefore suggest that the new accounting routines enabled not only stricter *book-keeping*, but also stricter *time-keeping*.

Enabling traceability, enabling accountability

Let me return to the question posed in an earlier section: What did it mean that 2,48% of NPD’s time had been spent “on MOZ 032”? Following my analysis above, I will argue that it conveys two important things: One, that the work of producing this number was itself time-consuming. Second, that this effort made the NPD part of an expanding infrastructure for producing and storing information about the use of Norwegian aid funds. The number 2,48% was relevant precisely as a *part of a whole*. Furthermore, the degree of precision produced both the promise of *overview* (the ability to see aid at-a-glance and from a distance) and *higher resolution* (the ability to see in more detail what funds had been spent where, when, by whom, and for what purpose). With Theodore Porter, numbers created *trust*.⁴⁹⁸

Indeed, with reference to Porter’s point that “quantification is a technology of distance”, the intensified monitoring routines arguably enabled Norad to see the NPD’s work more clearly from afar.⁴⁹⁹ With reference to Akrich and Law, Power highlights that accounting practices may also “create new proximities”.⁵⁰⁰ My argument above has been that this is precisely what the new accounting system in Norad enabled: To make the NPD align their work more closely with the Norwegian aid administration in Oslo and adhere to their stricter demands for transparency and accountability. It is in this sense I suggested above to

⁴⁹⁸ Porter 1996.

⁴⁹⁹ Porter 1996, p. ix.

⁵⁰⁰ Power 1996, p. 26. Power here refers to Law and Akrich’s contribution in the same edited volume (Law and Akrich 1996) to which his own chapter is the introduction. Full quote: “Accounting also carries with it the sources of its own delinquency by constituting local spaces of discretion; its capacity to ‘act at a distance’ must therefore be weighed against the new proximities that accounts generate. For Law and Akrich, ‘accounting is merely another addition to the more or less ramshackle technologies of modern governmentality’.”

consider the changing accounting requirements as the main context to which the NPD's Annual Report was made to respond. The new routines, forms, and genres made the NPD pay closer attention to the Norwegian aid context. In a word, the aid was becoming more Norwegian.

Does this make the emerging accounting infrastructure, into which the NPD's new *Annual Report on Norad Projects* was entering, a materialization of Michael Power's concept of "the audit society"?⁵⁰¹ Indeed, my analysis above has confirmed a shift in how a public sector agency implemented more comprehensive accounting routines, with stricter genre prescriptions and a tighter reporting system. A key shift was that continued funding was made dependent upon compliance with these new routines and genre prescriptions. As described by Power, this shift started with enabling auditable accounting, but the ramifications were eventually broader than this starting point. In the case of the NPD's aid work, a major part of the aid funds was translated into the spending of time through salary compensation, which made enhanced accounting routines foster not only stricter book-keeping, but also stricter time-keeping. Hence, the NPD's own conceptions of timing and temporality in the management of oil was translated into the aid system's conceptions of timing and temporality in the management of aid.

Other historians of Norwegian aid has shown how the intensifying monitoring system was critiqued by Norad's own staff members. Airing their frustration, they claimed that preparing quarterly reports took time away from their actual work. Both Norad staff working in the field offices and in the Oslo offices were dissatisfied with the situation.⁵⁰² The staff's frustration, I will argue, must be interpreted as a resistance towards doing laborious work for no apparent purpose. In contrast to this position, I will suggest to interpret the accumulation of reports as the building of an archive that would enable the traceability of aid funds. In the case of the NPD's Annual Report, the purpose was to enable retracing how funds were spent. To that end, what Norad needed was precise calculations with corresponding documentation, that is, readily available receipts. As I showed in my analysis of the *Handbook of Evaluation Questions* from 1981 (see Chapter 2), the evaluation staff had argued in a similar way: Traceability was what enabled evaluability. Without project documentation for every step along the way, it would be impossible to retrace the project from the present moment and back in time to its inception.

Ten years after the publication of this first handbook, Norad's new accounting system was enabling the building of a comprehensive aid archive. Following this line of reasoning, the point was not that every report should be read, but rather to accumulate reports in an archive for the purpose of enabling potential future audits. Hence, the reports were requested in order to enable *potential* reading. As argued in Chapter 2, aid *evaluability* depended on a rich archive of project documents. Following my analysis above, *aid accountability* too

⁵⁰¹ Power 1997.

⁵⁰² Ruud and Kjerland 2003, p. 135.

depended on a rich aid archive, not of project documents, but of receipts and reports. Hence, they both required traceability, just not of the same kind.

How to interpret this shift towards increasing demands for aid accountability? Power, in his discussion of different positions within the research literature on accounting, has emphasized that accounting practices may both produce *control* in the authoritarian sense, making citizens subject to governmental encroachment, and *transparency* in the liberal-democratic sense, making governments accountable to their citizens.⁵⁰³ This potential for both democracy and repression attests to how numbers are tools no different from any other technologies; their effects are not predetermined, but depend on how they are used.

To that end, the conclusion remains an empirical question. Richard Rottenburg, in his analysis of the implementation and monitoring of an aid project in a Sub-Saharan site during the early 1990s, concludes that the donors' demands for monitoring the use of aid funds and adherence to a pre-set plan produces a situation where the documents become more important than the concrete situation at the project site. Suggesting the term "accountability chain", Rottenburg describes how a Latourian translation chain renders the prescriptions of the project documents more important than responding to the project's changing circumstances. In this way, his analysis confirms the effects of control enabled by practices and infrastructures of audit. In contrast to this conclusion, Brit Ross Winthereik and Casper Bruun Jensen, in their analysis of aid infrastructures emerging 20 years after the object of Rottenburg's analysis, emphasize the transparency effect of audit and its potential for empowerment for actors outside of governments.⁵⁰⁴

Winthereik and Jensen's analysis highlights another key point: What to do with all the data accumulated by the infrastructures of aid? In contrast to my analysis above of NPD's response to Norad's new accounting routines in 1991, theirs deal with vast digital information infrastructures being established twenty years later, during 2010-11. They emphasize that the accumulation of information does not necessarily mean better overview or more control; it simply means more data. With reference to this argument, I will suggest to interpret the changes identified above in the administration of the Norwegian oil-related aid projects as a shift of weight, where adjusting to a changing Norwegian context was becoming more important. In practice, this shift entailed more quantification, calculation, and accounting for the NPD, and more archiving and audit work for Norad. But I will refrain from assuming that the numbers produced by default were powerful and influential.⁵⁰⁵

Interestingly, Porter argued that "reliance on numbers and quantitative manipulation minimizes the need for intimate knowledge and personal trust".⁵⁰⁶ Here, he juxtaposes the intimate and the external, the numerical and the personal. Following his analysis, there is a contradiction between intimate knowledge and accounting practices. This point is interesting because he uses the same concept – intimate knowledge – as did the NPD's resource director,

⁵⁰³ Power 1994.

⁵⁰⁴ Cf. Shrum 2015 for a review essay of both books.

⁵⁰⁵ Cf. Asdal 2011.

⁵⁰⁶ Porter 1996, p. ix.

Farouk Al-Kasim, in his explanation of the importance of seeing both the details and the whole of the continental shelf if one were to be able to find and exploit the petroleum resources. But intimate knowledge of the petroleum resources was not by any means in contradiction to quantification and calculation; such work was on the contrary what enabled intimate knowledge. Accumulating and analysing petroleum data brought you closer to the oil, not further away.

Conclusions: Optics for contexting and accounting

Let me return to the questions posed in the opening paragraph of this chapter: What did the oil aid project amount to ten years after its inception? How did different optics of evaluation enable it to be grasped from the outside? What happened with the project as it was being assessed amidst changing contexts? In order to tackle these questions, I have analyzed in detail two concrete efforts at grasping Norwegian aid around the year of 1990: The *Mozambique Country Study and Norwegian Aid Review*, undertaken by external researchers during 1989-90, and the Norwegian Petroleum Directorate's *Annual Report on Norad Projects*, prepared during 1991-92. I have analyzed both documents as what I have suggested to call *optics of evaluation*, that is, tools developed by the aid administration to better see and act upon Norwegian aid projects from afar.

In particular, I have looked for traces of the Norwegian oil aid project in Mozambique, whose inception I analyzed in Chapter 3 of this thesis. In doing so, I have shown how the project after a period of expansion during 1982-86 experienced a decline in activities. From being one of the Norwegian Petroleum Directorate's two main cooperation countries, it gradually declined in scope. When the external research team employed their optic upon this project during 1989, they argued that it "under the current circumstances" should be reduced in scope. By 1991, when the NPD prepared their new Annual Report to Norad, the NPD described their participation in the project as "ad-hoc" and "with no clear plan" and calculated that the project constituted 2,48% of their total workload. Clearly, the project was allowed to keep going, but it appeared to be uncertain what should be done with it. The Country Study's most specific recommendation was to prepare a new study specifically of this project in order to decide what to do.

By tracing this particular project, I have analyzed how the two optics themselves functioned, what their properties were, what they enabled, and how they established specific contexts. The two optics have in common that they both were initiated from the outside of the project's daily life: The Country Study was developed by the evaluation staff in the Ministry as a tool for seeing Norwegian aid projects in relation to their context. The Annual Report was produced by NPD staff as a response to a new accounting system in Norad. While the Country Study was explicitly concerned with context and made context part of its very optic, the Annual Report provided no context and translated the projects into quantifiable and calculable units. Furthermore, while the Country Study engaged in contexting as a way of building a narrative argument, the Annual Report produced precise numbers for the purpose of auditable

accounting. Yet, as I have argued, context was by no means absent in the Annual Report; quite the contrary. While it did not explicitly discuss context as a concept, one specific context nevertheless permeated the document: that of the changing system of Norwegian aid accounting. It explicitly described changes in this context and explained how this new context had demanded changes also in the oil staff's ways of reporting and accounting, which ultimately enabled the document of the Annual Report.

Such changes in the "current context" of the Norwegian oil aid project as of 1990-91 has been a main concern in this chapter. I have shown how major transformations was taking place both in Mozambique and Norway during the decade, which in turn had consequences for the oil aid project and how it was being assessed. The transformations took place in different sites: The country of Mozambique were increasingly paralyzed by a devastating civil war, economic collapse, and humanitarian crisis during the decade of the 1980s. In Norway, the Norwegian oil experience was emerging as a new object of aid, with increasing political interest and administrative capacity. Aid evaluation was institutionalized as a distinct field of expertise within the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, yet they had left behind the radical visions of transforming the aid system that they had voiced a decade earlier. And finally, Norad implemented a new strategy and a new accounting system during 1991 which reconfigured the relations between Norad and the agencies and organizations receiving aid funds. As I have argued, Norad shifted from *seeking to accommodate requests* for aid to *requiring auditable accounts* of all aid projects.

The shifting contexts had direct consequences for aid projects in that they fostered a need for changing project plans and ways of working. But there were also indirect consequences, notably in how the optics of evaluation were being employed. As I argued in my analysis of the Country Study, the shifting contexts changed how a project was assessed. New concerns, articulated as that which was *relevant* within the current context, made the evaluation staff see the project differently than had the staff initiating the project almost a decade earlier. The criteria with which the project was assessed were different than the criteria used when it was established. In this way, the shifting optics and the shifting context also had consequences for how the project was being grasped, in other words, how it was constituted as an object. This is important, because the assessments built upon how the project and its the context were described, in writing, which in turn served as the basis for how readers outside the project might see it from afar. What the project became in the documents of the Country Study and the Annual Report is therefore as important as what was "really going on" outside and beyond these documents. For Norad and Ministry staff in the Oslo headquarters who had not visited the relevant project sites, not partaken in project meetings, and not participated in evaluation missions, the documents would be the real thing: they were the tangible materializations of a project going on elsewhere. What was not textualized could not be taken into account simply because it was not accessible.

Indeed, how the project was textualized was very different in the Country Study and the Annual Report. In the previous chapter, I suggested that there were several *versions of*

evaluation at play simultaneously within aid: *The evaluation staff's* version of evaluation would require comprehensive routines for turning the project into writing that would make it evaluable, that is, make it possible to assess whether the project had fulfilled its goal and spurred the desired change in its surroundings. *The project staff* of the oil aid project had not been concerned with evaluability; rather, they had considered how the project could be made to fit into the current Norwegian aid priorities and how they could contribute to realize the project. *The oil staff* was explicitly engaging in evaluation of oil fields, retrieving and analyzing data from offshore explorations and considering the potential for oil production. In the present chapter, other versions of evaluation emerge: *The Country Study team* was ambiguous in their use of the term evaluation, yet their work entailed a major assessment of how the Norwegian aid portfolio within the current context of Mozambique, explicitly making the context more important than the individual projects. Finally, *the accounting staff* in Norad, present in this chapter only indirectly through their demand for precise numbers, enabled a version of evaluation in which the main concern was availability of numbers, with corresponding receipts, and coherence between budgets and accounts. In this version of evaluation, project plans attained a prominent position since any changes from the stated plan was translated into “divergences” (“avvik”). In this way, there were multiple versions of evaluation at work simultaneously within the one and same aid project, depending on where the work was being done, by whom, and in what way.

Interestingly, for both evaluation work and accounting work, the relation between the planned and realized aid project was a key point, yet the way they operationalized this were very different. In evaluation work, articulating the relation between plans and realizations were a means to assessing the project in relation to its specific site. Hence, planning was a tool for embedding the project in its context. In accounting work, the project site was not relevant in the same way, since the relation between plans and realizations were made to resemble the relation between budgets and auditable accounts. The context of the project site was not a concern as such; rather, the concern was to ensure that the Norwegian staff spent their time and their funds in a way that could later be accounted for. Their work should be traceable in the way accounts and receipts should be traceable. Hence, the traceability of accounting was different than the traceability of evaluation: In the former, what should be traceable were the aid funds; in the latter, what should be traceable was realization of the project. This is critical, because it shows how accounting and evaluation were in effect very different and not necessarily overlapping practices. As I have shown in this chapter, within Norwegian foreign aid, the two were institutionalized by 1991-92, yet within different offices, employing different optics, establishing different routines, and building different kinds of archives.

In this way, while both accounting work and evaluation work had the effect of making aid an evaluable object – enabling more data, richer archives, better tools, higher resolution – they did so in potentially contradicting ways. As the Country Study team had argued, the aid donors' concern for ensuring control with how funds were spent might in itself impede the

realization of the aid project's goals. Requiring accountability from the aid recipients might reduce their independence. Yet the new accounting system was accompanied by a new strategy articulating the principle of *recipient responsibility* in Norwegian aid. Hence, in combination with the intensifying accounting routines, the responsibility for the implementation of aid projects were transferred from Norad to the agencies and organizations receiving the funds. While the goal of the strategy was to increase the recipients' agency, the accounting practices simultaneously produced more work for the recipients.

This new paradoxical situation of increased accountability *and* increased responsibility, between, in Michael Power's words, *trusting and checking*, will be a concern of mine also in the next and final analytical chapter of this thesis. Here, I return empirically to the aid archives to investigate the daily life of the project before and after the Country Study. I will pay special attention to how the project was being articulated in writing, and what this writing may tell us about how the oil aid project was being constantly evaluated from *within*, as part of the aid staff's own routines: their internal reports, annual meetings, project documents, and the organization of a project review. In analyzing the process of the project review, I will investigate how this particular optic was built and employed: What was it made to grasp, and what did the project become through its lens?

Chapter 5: Transforming aid by writing documents

Introduction

In the spring of 1990, the Norwegian aid staff working at the Norad office in Maputo, the capital of Mozambique, was still awaiting the conclusions of the *Mozambique Country Study and Norwegian Aid Review*. They had been waiting for three years; while the plans for such a study had first been announced in 1987, the team started its work in May, 1989, and submitted their reports to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in July the year after.⁵⁰⁷ During this period of waiting, the Maputo staff hesitated to make any new moves: It “would not be natural”, they argued, to initiate new projects or close down existing ones before the Country Study was finalized and had been discussed with the Mozambican government.⁵⁰⁸ Things slowed down.

When the Country Study was ready, in July 1990, its recommendations for the oil aid project were ambiguous indeed: As I showed in the Chapter 4, the study recognized the project as “probably very valuable”, yet recommended it to be reduced in scope out of concern for *the current context*. This context was Mozambique’s ongoing civil war, economic crisis, and humanitarian emergency, coupled with both a fall in oil prices, limited oil discoveries, and changing Norwegian aid policies which made reduced funding and fewer programs a likely scenario. As part of its recommendation to reduce the petroleum sector program, the study also suggested having “an assessment” of the program “in order to relate the support to the probability of commercially exploitable discoveries in the near future”.⁵⁰⁹

In this chapter, I will analyze the making of this specific assessment; more specifically, I will investigate how Norad’s Energy Office in 1991 took on the task of commissioning a so-called project review. In doing so, I will again employ the concept of *evaluation optics* which I have developed during the past chapters. In contrast to the previous chapter, in which my empirical material said little about how the optics of the Country Study and the Annual Report were prepared and employed, the empirical situation in this chapter is the opposite. The actual *report* written by the project review team is not itself in Norad’s project archives, yet there were numerous documents from the review *process*: documents preparing the report, discussing the report, and building upon the report. This has enabled an analysis of how the aid staff built the optic and used its findings. Did the project review – understood as the whole *process*, not merely the physical *report* – somehow transform its object? Taking a cue from Kristin Asdal, I will look for the transformative capacities of documents:⁵¹⁰ How did they

⁵⁰⁷ Draft Country Program 1987-1990. MFA 37-4/187-13. This document refers to “the country analysis” (“landanalysen”) as expected to be done during 1987.

⁵⁰⁸ Draft Country Program 1989-1992, p. 29. MFA 37.4/187-15.

⁵⁰⁹ Mozambique Country Study 1990, p. 101.

⁵¹⁰ Asdal 2015.

articulate, define, redefine, move, and circulate the object of the petroleum sector program? How, if at all, did the program change in this process?

The question of the potential transformative capacity of documents will be a main concern throughout this chapter, in which the analysis of the project review is but one part. By returning to the project archives, I will look for traces of how the aid staff had also during the years before the project review articulated their views about the program. As I have shown in previous chapters of this thesis, a key point in the critique voiced by evaluation staff since the early 1980s had been the lack of enough written documents. The Country Study team had argued the same point, and the new accounting system introduced in Norad in 1991 required staff to both write more, write more often, and follow a specific format. In my own analysis, I will not take this argument about insufficient writing as a given. Rather than assuming that aid staff in Maputo and Oslo wrote too little and in the wrong way, I will investigate what they indeed *were* writing. In Chapters 3 and 4, I argued that there were several *versions of evaluation*: the aid staff's main concern had been to swiftly accommodate requests for aid from the recipient government, and their assessments reflected this concern. As time passed, did this remain their main concern, or were other concerns emerging as more important? And if so, how did their version of evaluation change?

In my analyses of the archival documents from the petroleum sector program, I have identified a set of moments where aid staff were writing documents. In doing so, they articulated their views about the petroleum sector program, for different purposes and in different ways. I will suggest to call these moments of intensified writing work for *moments of articulation*. In addition to showing how staff were indeed writing and assessing projects even if external evaluators considered their work lacking, I will use these moments to show how the administration of the project changed in notable ways during 1982-1992. The major transformation of Norwegian foreign aid from 1990 onwards materialized itself in the new documents that shaped the future of the petroleum sector program. Yet, this point may also be turned on its head: Was it the daily use of new forms of documents and the new routines of writing aid that in fact enabled the transformation to be realized at all? If so: What happened to the oil aid project in the process? And how were the changes it experienced related to ongoing transformations of Norwegian aid as a whole?

Moments of articulation

After the oil aid project, the so-called MOZ 032, was formally approved by Royal Decree (“Kongen i Statsråd”) in October, 1981, the project disappears from view. That is, rather than disappearing, it attains opacity, as it becomes less present in the archives of Norad and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Oslo. Few documents articulating the daily life of the project are included in Norad's project folders or the Ministry's country folders. This makes it hard to see retrospectively with much clarity what the project became during the 1980s and how it was assessed by the actors involved. In this section, I will look for traces of the project in the Norad project archive and the Ministry's country archive. Given that the project was sought

made an evaluable object by both evaluation staff and accounting staff in Oslo around 1990, I am curious to see what kind of assessments aid staff were doing before the new external evaluation optics were introduced.

Moment 1: Expansion (February 16, 1983)

After the MOZ 032 was formally established in October 1981, it was not made note of in any documents until February 1983, when it re-emerges with full force in the form of an eight-page memo prepared for the Norad Board, the highest formal level of the Norwegian aid administration. The paper had been drafted following a meeting in Maputo in December 1982, where Norad's resident representative, staff from the Norwegian Petroleum Directorate (NPD), and staff from the Mozambican secretariat for coal and hydrocarbons (SACH) had discussed the "future needs of the sector".⁵¹¹ Together they outlined a major expansion of the project – both in funds, scope, and temporal horizons. The result of these deliberations was a specific forward-looking document – a Board Document (referred to as a BD) – describing the project and arguing for the proposed expansion.

What kind of document was this BD, titled "MOZAMBIQUE (MOZ 032) – Oil cooperation"? A first observation regards the connection between the document's argument and its timing: The aid staff's document writing clearly clustered around moments where formal decisions were to be made: during the initiation, formal approval, and extension of projects. These moments, which I will suggest to call *moments of articulation*,⁵¹² were critical in turning the project into writing in order to make something specific happen. The daily life of the project between these intensified moments of articulation, when the planned activities were taking place, were hardly described or documented. Tracing the project in the archives thus leaves us with these moments of articulation.

The proposal written in Maputo was made to fit the genre of the Norad Board Document: It first described the current situation; then argued for the importance and value of the proposed novelty; then provided concrete budget calculations to show how the project was financially feasible; and finally stated a recommendation for what the Board should decide. The BD format included a standard element on the first page: In the top right corner,

⁵¹¹ SD 32/83. MFA 37-4/187-11. According to the Board Document (BD, in Norwegian "Styredokument", or SD), the representatives met in Maputo in December, 1982. The BD itself was dated 16. February 1983, and prepared for the Board's third meeting in March, 1983. I have not found any other documents from this process than a copy the BD from the Ministry's archives.

⁵¹² The concept has also been suggested by others, notably by Four Arrows (aka Donald Trent Jacobs) in his book *The Authentic Dissertation: Alternative Ways of Knowing, Research and Representation* from 2009. While he also develops the term to describe instances when something is put into textual and narrative form, he employs it to make a methodological point: "I refer to 'moments of articulation' to support a particular methodological frame of reference, a philosophical gaze on inquiry that is organic and multiply informing, and that permits and supports complexity. Here, moments of articulation within field work define utterances and somatic performances embedded within narrative contexts and their attending discourses, and instigate investigation, deliberation and engagement in analyzing the multiple ways in which disadvantage take root/route. These moments often occurred during fieldwork experiences that were invested in ambiguity and dilemma, so that my very body in that context often became a site of struggle between competing discourses. These narrative moments permitted me to stop and linger on the narratizability of the textual moment." Four Arrows 2009, p. 89.

the BD number, the date of writing (or, rather, the date of finalization), and the meeting date were listed. This gave all board documents an identical look, which in turn made them easy to spot, sort, and recall for both staff and board members (as well as historians visiting the archive 30 years and four months later).

In order to justify the proposed plan, the BD articulated how the work already done was worth not only continuing, but also expanding. For this purpose, it opened with a short statement about the value of the work already done:

The project is undertaken mostly according to plan. The project has been of considerable importance for the mapping of Mozambique's offshore resources and has resulted in Mozambique now being able to announce the first round of blocks for oil exploration drilling.⁵¹³

Furthermore, the BD stated that staff from the Norwegian Oil and Energy Ministry had given "valuable advice" during the preparation of the legal contracts for exploration drilling, and that the Norwegian geologist who had been commissioned to take part in the seismic investigations, Mr. Ragnar Kihle, had analyzed the seismic data as planned and also functioned as an advisor to the Mozambican State Secretariat for Coal and Hydrocarbons (SECH). Kihle had worked mainly in Stavanger, where he analyzed data, and in London, where he was "an active and important" advisor to SECH in their negotiations with foreign oil companies about potential onshore oil contracts. A key part of the BD's proposal was for Kihle to continue this work on a renewed and expanded expert contract with Norad, which would enable him to work for two years with SECH in Maputo.⁵¹⁴

The BD in this way asserted that the MOZ 032 project had gained beneficial results and that the Norwegian experts' work was conceived of as "valuable" and "important". It included a brief reference to project plan, stating that work had been done "mostly according to" this plan. The project emerged – in the words of the staff involved in its making and doing – as a valuable, important, and well-planned endeavor.

After asserting the importance and value of the MOZ 032 project as such, the BD placed the project within its Mozambican context, more specifically, within the country's development strategy. The BD asserted that oil exploration was a core component of the Mozambican government's own strategy for economic growth. Furthermore, the BD engaged also another context to support the project expansion: the current high oil prices made oil a particularly promising part of the Mozambique's development strategy. This made the "current context" of the project expansion different indeed from that of the Country Study seven years later. Given this current context, the Mozambican government maintained its concern for high speed, which had characterized its position since it had started three years before. Indeed, the BD asserted that the Mozambican government "wished to take the shortest responsible route to mapping and exploitation of their resources", and that they were

⁵¹³ SD 32/83, p. 3-4. Norway was not the only donor funding assistance to the Mozambican oil administration: The BD refers to Eastern European countries supporting geological mapping of petroleum resources on land; a US consultancy firm assisting in drafting the conditions for obtaining concessions and in negotiations with foreign oil companies; and the UN funding an expert and technical equipment.

⁵¹⁴ SD 32/83, p. 2.

“completely dependent on external aid to reach their goals”. The BD in this way emphasized the importance of expanding the project “now”, and argued that moving to “the next stage” in the project would be a “sound decision”.⁵¹⁵ Finally, it pointed to the context of the Norwegian aid policy and administration by suggesting that increasing the overall Norwegian presence in the oil sector would in general be a positive.

In this way, the actors undertaking the project themselves assured both that the original plan had been followed as intended and that it had also been valuable for Mozambique. To back up this claim, the BD referred to several issues: to studies and analyses that had demonstrably been undertaken; to advice from Norwegian oil bureaucrats having been “valuable”; to advice from the Norwegian consultant having been considered “important”; and that Mozambique had been able to announce their first round of licences for offshore exploration drilling. Finally, the BD asserted that the proposed activities followed the existing guidelines for aid to the oil sector.⁵¹⁶

In other words, by means of the Norwegian oil aid and the Norwegian oil experts, the country of Mozambique had moved one step closer to becoming an oil nation. The BD therefore closed by summarizing its argument, stating that:

The cooperation has up until now worked well and with the experiences one now has there is good reason to believe that the good cooperation will continue. Even the relatively modest Norwegian contribution of aid funds in this field may have a considerable effect on the development of the sector and later on the Mozambican economy. It is therefore recommended that the request is accommodated.⁵¹⁷

The BD finished with articulating the following decision for Norad’s board to make:

7. R E C O M M E N D A T I O N:

7.1. There will be provided financial aid with up to 20.000.000,- for the execution of a program for oil cooperation with Mozambique.

7.2. The aid is provided with the precondition of the authorities’ approval.⁵¹⁸

After the meeting in Maputo, it was most likely Norad’s resident representative who translated the discussion into a draft BD and then put the document in motion. First, it must have travelled from Maputo to the Country Office in Oslo, where it must have obtained the staff’s approval, possibly after some alterations and additions; then, the Country Office must

⁵¹⁵ SD 32/83, pp. 3, 7. Full Norwegian quote: «Mosambik er inne i en viktig fase i sin petroleumsutvikling. Det foregår forhandlinger om letekonsesjoner på land og 17 offshore blokker er nå lyst ut for letevirksomhet. Med Mosambiks svake økonomi synes landets satsing på oljesektoren fornuftig. Landets strategi er å fremme leting etter petroleum og en hurtig utvikling av sektoren. Mosambik mangler selv ressurser og fagfolk til disse oppgavene og er således helt avhengig av ekstern bistand for å nå sine mål.»

⁵¹⁶ SD 32/83, p. 7. Norwegian quote: «Norske retningslinjer for bistand på oljesektoren er blant annet å styrke mottakeren administrativt for selv å kunne planlegge de første faser i utviklingen av egne ressurser. Innholdet i det foreliggende program er således i samsvar med dette.»

⁵¹⁷ SD 32/83, p. 8. Norwegian quote: «Samarbeidet har hittil fungert bra og med de erfaringer man nå har er det god grunn til å tro at det gode samarbeidet vil fortsette. Selv den relativt beskjedne norske innsats av bistandsmidler på dette området kan få betydelig virkning på utviklingen av sektoren og senere på mosambikansk økonomi. Det tilrådes derfor at anmodningen imøtekommes.»

⁵¹⁸ SD 32/83, p. 8. Norwegian quote: «7. T I L R Å D I N G: 7.1. Det ytes finansiell bistand med inntil 20.000.000,- for gjennomføring av et program for oljesamarbeid med Mosambik. 7.2. Bistanden ytes med forbehold om myndighetenes godkjenning.»

have moved it on to the office of Norad's Director General, where it also obtained his approval, which made it qualified for being transformed from a draft to a formal document; this transformation most likely took place in the hands of a clerk at the Director's office, who retyped the draft in the form of the BD and designated it with a unique number, "BD 32/83", which signified that it had been included on the Norad Board's agenda as issue no. 32 for 1983, to be discussed in the Norad Board's third meeting that year, scheduled for March 1, 1983.⁵¹⁹

The account above suggests a neat and smooth process: An optimistic and ambitious plan, prepared jointly by actors knowing oil and knowing Mozambique, was moved onwards and upwards through the organization, ultimately being approved by Norad's board. The second part of the suggested decision did however indicate a potential problem, that of the theoretical possibility that the proposed program was *not* approved by the authorities: "The aid is provided *with the precondition* of the authorities' approval" (my emphasis). This suggests that the Norad and NPD staff had not yet gained such assurances.

Indeed, in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs a staff member did raise objections. In the view of office manager Harald Høstmark, who led the Ministry's so-called 4. Development Office, Norad had gone beyond its mandate by approving a major project outside of the Country Program. In the left margin of the BD, Høstmark wrote in red ink:

This concerns 20 mill. NOK. It has not been discussed in Country program context. These deliberations are taking place shortly. MFA not seen the requests (following the Norad instruction requests outside the Country programs should first be considered by MFA) and it is outside at the current moment even though it will be inside when finally approved. No objections to the substance as such.⁵²⁰

Following up, another MFA staff member wrote in the upper-right corner:

1. Copy of req[uest] not rec[ieved] – From whom?
2. Should be discussed [during] country prog[ram] neg[otiations] before formalization. Therefore reservation Not approved before Country prog.neg.⁵²¹

Hence, the MFA resisted to give the expansion plans their formal approval before it had been made part of a larger discussion. According to the two remarks, the MFA considered Norad to have run along with the expansion idea without proper concern for following the correct process, which relied on two key documents: The Mozambique country program, which included 4-year plans for the complete Norwegian aid portfolio; and the Mozambican government's formal request for support, which apparently did not yet exist. In this way, what

⁵¹⁹ The meeting date is referred to in a letter from MFA to Norad, March 10, 1983. MFA, 37-4/187-11.

⁵²⁰ Handwritten comment by Harald Høstmark, MFA, on the Norad Board Document "Mozambique (MOZ032) – Oil cooperation" ("Mosambik (MOZ032) – Oljesamarbeid"). Full Norwegian quote: "Dette dreier seg om 20 mill. kr. Det har ikke vært drøftet i Landprogramsammenheng. Disse drøftelsene er umiddelbart forestående. Ikke har UD sett anmodningene (Etter instruksen for NORAD skal anmodninger utenfor Landprogrammene først behandles av UD) og det er utenfor på det nåværende tidspunkt selv om det vil være innenfor når endelig vedtatt. Ingen innvendinger til substansen som sådan. Det fremgår ikke hvilke myndigheter som har oversendt anmodningen. Er det sektor myndigheter?" MFA, 37-4/187-11.

⁵²¹ Handwritten unsigned comment on the Norad Board Document "Mozambique (MOZ032) – Oil cooperation" ("Mosambik (MOZ032) – Oljesamarbeid"). Full Norwegian quote: 1. Kopi av anmodn. ikke mott. – Fra hvem? 2. Bør drøftes landpr. forh. før formaliseres. Derfor reservasjon ikke godkjent før landpr.forh.» MFA 37-4/187-11.

in the Maputo meeting had been a matter of Mozambican oil (manifested in the draft BD), was from the Ministry's perspective also a matter of both Mozambique's development priorities and of the Norwegian aid administration systems. Norad had taken a shortcut by not building the project's chain of documents in the right sequence; in effect, in the view of the MFA, they had disregarded the concern for both Mozambique's development priorities at large and the proper routines for managing Norwegian aid funds.

These two contexts became, by means of the two documents, inseparable: Both the formal request and the country program were at the same time products of the Norwegian government and of the Mozambican government. This made the BD an unfortunate document, in part also because of its unfortunate timing, arriving so close to the country program negotiations, which seems to have irritated Høstmark. He promptly wrote Norad a short letter, stating that "the Ministry" granted "the Directorate" the authority to "initiate activities with a view to implementing the aid". Hence, he did accept the program; but, mobilizing the rhetorical force of "the Ministry" vis-à-vis "the Directorate", thus asserting their hierarchical relation, he stated that the Ministry presupposed that the project would be discussed during the upcoming country program negotiations and properly integrated in the program. Furthermore, the Ministry expected to have the draft agreement sent over for the Minister to approve before it was signed.⁵²² During the country program negotiations in Maputo in mid-March, in which Høstmark took part, the Norwegian delegation assured their support to the expansion of MOZ 032, but pointed to the pending formal approval.⁵²³ A month after, a letter from Norad's Energy Office arrived in the Ministry with the unsigned agreement; referring to Høstmark's letter, it asked for the Ministry's approval, which Høstmark granted two weeks later.⁵²⁴

In this way, the Ministry re-established its own authority to promise aid funds to other nations. Indeed, as Høstmark had written in his remark, he did not object to "the substance" of the proposal – only to the process through which it came into being. MOZ 032 was not just a matter of *oil* and a matter of *aid*, it was also a matter of the *state*, which made it part of a wide field of documents, offices, and concerns. The formal process of making the Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Kingdom of Norway enter into new agreements with other nations was not to be taken lightly: just like in October 1981, when the initial oil aid project was formally approved, there were, to use Callon's term, *obligatory points of passage* through

⁵²² Letter, Harald Høstmark to Norad, 10.3.1983, "Issue: MOZ 032 - Oil cooperation". Norwegian quote. "Departementet gir Direktoratet fullmakt til å iverksette tiltak med sikte på gjennomføring av bistanden omtalt i styredokumentet. Det forutsettes at det under de kommende landprogramdrøftelsene blir enighet om å innpasse bistanden i landprogrammet." MFA 37-4/187-11.

⁵²³ "Agreed minutes of the 1983 Norway/Mozambique consultations on development cooperation", MFA 37-4/187-11. The minutes referred to discussion in the following way: "It was agreed to tentatively allocate 20 mill. N.kr for the cooperation program in the petroleum sector. The scope and contents of the program is foreseen to be established in a new agreement that is to be negotiated in the near future."

⁵²⁴ Memo, Sverre Melsom to MFA's division of international economic and social development, 4.5.1983, "MOZ032 Oljesamarbeid". Melsom here referred to Høstmark's letter of March 10, where Høstmark had demanded to see the draft agreement before it was signed. In his response, Høstmark approved of the draft without comments, only minor editorial changes. Memo, Harald Høstmark to Norad, 20.5.1983, "MOZ032 – Oljesamarbeid". MFA 37-4/187-11.

which the new program would have to pass.⁵²⁵ both the MFA's 4. Legal Office, the Protocol Service, and the Archive of Treaties were sites necessary for a document to enter in order for the project's circulation circuit to be complete.

This handwritten comment indicates a tension between a concern for the specific oil project in itself and a concern for the country program at large. The proposed 20 million kroner was too big a sum to just be granted without further discussion. The Ministry clearly did not approve of the oil project being expanded without a view to the overall context of the total Norwegian support. The program nevertheless became what the meeting in Maputo had initially envisioned: The oil cooperation expanded from a project to a sector program, it became its own issue on the agenda and its own line in the budget, with funds secured for the next four years.⁵²⁶ Yet this heated moment of articulation attests to how there was already in 1983 a potential tension between the project as such and its country context, which was precisely what would become the key concern in the Country Study seven years later.

Moment 2: Critique (April 4, 1986)

After the oil aid project had been transformed into a petroleum sector program, it again lived its life outside of the documents and archives. In Norad's project archive, the program disappears completely for several years. In the Ministry's archive, it shows up, occasionally and briefly, at the routine moments of articulation: in the annual country program consultations and in the resident representative's quarterly reports. Three years into the program, in April 1986, the resident representative wrote the following home to Norad and the Ministry:

MOZ 032 – Petroleum cooperation

The cooperation centered around the person Kihle works well, and is of great use for Mozambique. Negative that Kihle seems to "manage" the aid fairly alone – ENH's structure/adm. is not pulled sufficiently in. Stavanger/Vestfold should not be the main seat for neither Mozambique's oil policy nor procurements for the sector.

A language class cancelled during the period.⁵²⁷

Here, the Norad representative in Maputo voiced a different view than the initial joint optimism from when the program was established three years before: The Norwegian consultant was clearly considered to be doing a good job – but was it in fact too good? Was he more concerned with getting things done than to enable Mozambique to build their own oil sector? Indeed, the Mozambican authorities' main priority was getting things done; they had argued for maintaining high speed ahead since the first meeting. Norad had sought to

⁵²⁵ Callon 1986.

⁵²⁶ Oil cooperation was discussed as issue no. 8 on the agenda and was made issue no. 2 in the budget. "2. Petroleum cooperation" with the allocated funds of NOK 1,5 million for the current year of 1983, NOK 3,5 million for 1984, and NOK 5,0 million for the years 1985-1987. These were the numbers suggested in the BD. NOK 3 million were carried from previous years; thus, there were funds readily available to fund the expansion.

⁵²⁷ Quarterly Report 1. quarter 1986, p. 6. Sent from Maputo Office to MDC, 4.4.1986. "MOZ 032 – Petroleumssamarbeid. Samarbeidet sentrert rundt personen Kihle går bra, og er til stor nytte for Mosambik. Negativt at Kihle later til å "forvalte" bistanden temmelig alene – ENH's struktur/adm. trekkes ikke nok med. Stavanger/Vestfold bør ikke være hovedsete for hverken Mosambiks oljepolitikk eller innkjøp til sektoren. Et språkkurs avlyst i perioden." MFA 37-4/187-13.

accommodate this – but here, in the “1. Quarterly Report for 1986”, faxed from Norad’s Maputo office to the Country Unit in the Ministry of Development Cooperation (MDC) in Oslo, the acting Resident Representative Bjarne Erdal articulated critical concerns about the effects of the work.

The quote above includes the quarterly report’s entire section about MOZ 032. The section was short, but contained a concise and strong statement: The work *should not* be done the way it was currently being done. While acknowledging its usefulness as such, it had the unfortunate effect of making key issues in Mozambique’s petroleum policy a matter of one Norwegian consultant’s work. Erdal was clearly of the opinion that the Norwegian consultant spent too little time in Maputo and too much time in Norway. Getting the work done fast was indeed what the Mozambican government wanted, as this would enable them to proceed to exploration drilling for oil and natural gas. It might have been more convenient and efficient to do the work outside Mozambique, but if the main purpose of the program was to enable Mozambique to do this work *themselves*, then this arrangement became far less favorable.

While I in Chapter 3 showed how the oil staff and aid staff had different views upon timing and speed of the oil aid project (the aid staff wanted to proceed ahead as fast as possible while the oil staff advised to spend time collecting and evaluating geological data), the quote above suggests that the aid staff’s view was shifting: the Norwegian consultant could indeed be too accommodating and work too efficiently, to the extent that it ran counter to the very purpose of aid.

Indeed, by articulating his concerns in the quarterly report, the resident representative broadcast his views for the entire Norwegian aid and foreign policy administration. He sent his report as a letter to the Ministry of Development Cooperation (MDC), who circulated it widely throughout Norad and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In an accompanying memo, the Ministry wrote, “It is presupposed that the questions the representation raises, are followed up by the responsible offices.”⁵²⁸ In this way, the Energy Office, who were the responsible office in matters of petroleum, were expected to pick up Erdal’s concerns. Whether they did is uncertain; I have not found any such discussions, but it is surely possible that the statement caused some kind of repercussions between Norad’s Energy Office and Maputo Office, the NPD, and the consultant himself.

Whatever the repercussions of this particular report, the routine articulation and circulation of quarterly reports from the field offices is also an example of how there were existing reporting routines within the aid administration also before Norad’s new accounting system and the new Norad strategy of the early 1990s. Although evaluation staff had asserted since 1980 that the systems of documentation were lacking and that this made Norwegian aid hard to evaluate, this does not mean that there were no routines at all. Indeed, as shown in the previous section, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had also been concerned about receiving the proper documents at the right time to ensure that all formal matters were in order. In the

⁵²⁸ Memo, MDC Country Unit to 20 different recipients in Norad and the Ministries, 18.4.1986. Received and filed in the MFA 24.6.1986. MFA 37-4/187-13.

quarterly reports sent from the field offices to Oslo every three months, the resident representatives expressed their observations and analyses of the current situation in the country in which they resided.

In doing so, the First Quarterly Report from Maputo during 1986 followed a clear structure organized into six sections:

1. Political and economic affairs	p. 2
2. Projects/activities	p. 5
3. Technical assistance	p. 15
4. Grantees and courses	p. 15
5. Administration	p. 16
6. Summary	p. 18

The structure of the report made the staff first attend to the current country context, then describe the Norwegian aid projects and activities, and finish with comments on the situation within the field office as such. The document also included lists of staff travels and visitors to the office.

The ongoing civil war dominated the narrative of this report completely: The first chapter opened with the sub-heading “The security situation” and the following statement: “The monsoon usually means an upscaling of the RNM’s [the anti-government rebel forces’] activities. So also this year.”⁵²⁹ The next pages described the developments of the civil war since the previous report and summarized recent destructions and atrocities. Then, the quarterly report turned to “Economic matters”, starting with the statement: “For reasons which we will not yet again reiterate, the economy of Mozambique is today precarious.”⁵³⁰ From here followed a discussion of the prospects for the country’s economy and the possible role of international institutions and foreign countries in this situation. Following this section came an account of the domestic political situation and the declining popularity of the sitting government.

Turning to the Norwegian aid projects, the quarterly report started describing them one by one. The final sentence of the paragraph on MOZ 032 – “a language class cancelled during the period” – indicates the strained capacity of the Mozambican government at this point in time. Given that the working language of Mozambique was Portuguese while the working language of the international petroleum sector was English, cancelling a language class for the staff of the petroleum administration attests to both how far away staff in general was from being able to partake in the running of the sector and how the efforts to remedy this situation was itself suffering in times of war.

The genre of this Quarterly Report also included a distinct style of writing. When compared to the Annual Report of the NPD’s Norad projects from 1991 (cf. Chapter 4), the Quarterly Report of 1986 had a clear individual author voice and a distinct narrative. It resembles a letter written in trust more than a statement of accounts. To that end, the genre of

⁵²⁹ Quarterly Report 1/ 1986, p. 2. Norwegian quote: «Regntiden pleier å bety en opptrapping av RNM’s virksomhet. Så også i år.»

⁵³⁰ Quarterly Report 1/1986, p. 2. Norwegian quote: “Av grunner vi ikke ennå en gang vil gjenta, er økonomien i Mosambik i dag prekær.”

the Quarterly Report made the reader see for their inner eye the daily life and concerns of the resident representative. At times, the prose of the report, such as the opening sentences quoted above, had a rhythm and inflection that brings associations of literature, not report writing:

“The monsoon usually means an upscaling of the RNM’s activities. So also this year.”

Connecting the atrocities of civil war to the cyclical, recurring, and inevitable coming of the monsoon in this way added a sense of sadness to the report.

Although the Norad staff were safely stationed in the capital of Maputo, the context of war had direct effects also for their daily work and everyday life. The report brings us into the Norad office itself, where the acting resident representative was in April 1986 sitting at his desk writing the report:

The office situation is good and the physical working environment is fine for the representation’s staff members (...) During the first quarter of the year we had new radio equipment installed, and we have elevated the antenna with several meters. The new equipment has at the time of writing only been in use for a few weeks, but the experience so far is very good. It seems that it may involve a considerable enhancement with regards to the possibilities of sending messages homewards, and from home to here. (...) What happened with the radio equipment is one of the most favorable (*things*) we have to report about on the administrative side this quarter. The other favorable thing that happened was the office computer we received. It came in the right time for the country program deliberations, and was of great use then. This quarterly report is the first to be written with the help of the text editing program in the computer.⁵³¹

The paragraph in which the Maputo Office voiced their views about the “MOZ 032 petroleum cooperation” thus entered into a textual context in which both the core issues of Mozambican politics and the practical matters of aid administration were indispensable parts. Indeed, the country context impacted directly upon the daily life and work of the office: Installing new radio equipment and elevating the radio antenna might seem trivial, but in a situation where the civil war made communication with the outside world increasingly difficult, such events were clearly of utmost importance.

The structure of the report presented the three issues in a specific order – the country, the projects, and the office – suggesting a priority of sequence, of what should be read first. But as opposed to the structure of both the NPD’s annual report and the Mozambique Country Study, there was no executive summary up front. The chapters, I will suggest, were written for the purpose of being read, with a summary and signature at the end. This made the document closer to a personal letter than an evaluation report or an accounting report. What was considered relevant to report was far more than how the funds were spent; this was but one part of the total situation.

⁵³¹ Quarterly Report 1/1986, p. 16. Norwegian quote: “Kontorforholdene er gode og det fysiske arbeidsmiljøet er bra for representasjonens medarbeidere. (...) I første kvartal fikk vi innstallert nytt radioutstyr, og vi har løfta antenna vår med flere meter. Det nye utstyret har i skrivende stund bare vært i bruk i noen uker, men erfaringen så langt er svært god. Det ser ut til å kunne innebære en betydelig forbedring når det gjelder mulighetene for å få sendt meldinger hjemover, og hjemmefra og hit. (...) Det som har skjedd med radioutstyret er et av det mest gledelige vi har å melde om på den administrative siden i dette kvartalet. Det andre gledelige som skjedde var kontorcomputeren vi fikk. Den kom i rett tid til landprogramdrøftingene, og var til stor nytte da. Denne kvartalsrapporten er den første som skrives med hjelp av tekstbehandlingsprogrammet i computeren.»

This expansive view of the task of reporting did not mean that the staff was not critical. As seen above, the Maputo Office voiced in clear words that they found the petroleum sector program to have problematic effects. Although acknowledging that it involved good oil work, they were of the opinion that it was *not* good aid work.

Such critique was not part of the official Norwegian stance at the time. When Norad and the MFA drafted a new 4-year country program in January 1986, the MOZ 032 program was described as providing “very useful expertise” which had helped Mozambique in negotiations with international oil companies, which in turn was paving the way for future resource exploitation. Hence, when the Maputo Office articulated their critique in April, 1986, the Petroleum Sector Program had already been extended and expanded during the country program deliberations in Maputo in March 1986 (during which the new office computer had been of such great use).⁵³² Hence, the delegations to the country program consultations did not seem to have worried whether the “very useful expertise” might in fact constitute a problem. And if they did, they did not worry enough to put it into writing; there is no trace of the critique in the agreed-upon minutes from this country meeting.

Moment 3: Hesitation (December 31, 1988)

After these two instances – the expansion into a sector program and the critical comment in the quarterly report – the petroleum program again disappears from the archives for two years. Again, it emerges during a moment of articulation of the Norwegian aid portfolio at large, in a draft country program which the resident representative sent to Oslo on New Year’s Eve, 1988. Here, the analysis is different from that of two years before: a sense of doubt has entered the document. In the subsection “5.4. The petroleum sector”, the Maputo Office wrote:

There are relatively clear indications of oil reservoirs offshore Mozambique and the first exploration drilling will be initiated during March 1988. There is also identified considerable reservoirs of natural gas onshore, but drilling has been postponed due to the security situation in the area.

Mozambican authorities still give a high priority to exploitation of these resources in part through promotion for the purpose of more exploration drilling and mapping of new areas and transport alternatives for the gas. It is however not realistic to count on this in the short term giving concrete results for the country. Questions may therefore be raised about which priority the petroleum cooperation should have in the coming years considering the current dire economic situation in the country.

⁵³² I have not found the renewed sector agreement, but it must have been negotiated between late 1985 and early 1986, as it was referred to as being “recently negotiated” in the draft country program for 1987-1990, dated 8.1.1986. In the draft country program for 1987-1990, the budget entry “Oil cooperation (MOZ032) was expected to increase from NOK 7 million to NOK 10 million annually for the years 1987-90. The document voiced no similar hesitation or concern, but merely stated that the aid had been of great use: “Oljesamarbeidet med Mosambik er stort sett begrenset til ulike former for faglig bistand, både ved bruk av konsulenter i Mosambik og ved bruk av Oljedirektoratets og Statoils ekspertise. Det er nylig forhandlet om et fortsatt samarbeid over en 4-årsperiode. Dette gir Mosambik en meget nyttig ekspertise i forhandlinger med internasjonale oljeselskaper og er et innsatsområde som er med på å berede grunnen for en framtidig utnyttelse av eventuelle olje- og gassressurser.”

This question should be discussed on a principal level during the country program negotiations with a view to gain clear priorities from the authorities in Mozambique. It is here necessary to be aware that even though the cooperation is reduced to a minimum level, it may be difficult to go below the budget for 1987 (NOK 8 mill).⁵³³

Here, the Maputo staff articulated a doubt about whether the work was worthwhile within the current context. Earlier, the document had described a new Mozambican policy of economic reconstruction (referred to as PRE) which the government had presented after having entered into negotiations with the World Bank and the IMF in 1987.⁵³⁴ Under this new policy, Mozambique would give priority to “activities which may give quick financial results”.⁵³⁵ As a consequence, the draft explained, the government asked aid donors to give priority to providing supplies for the industry and agriculture, and to reduce “costly technical assistance and rather channel the funds into a personnel fund as direct budget support”.⁵³⁶ In this context the MOZ 032 emerged as a less useful project than before. As the draft summarized:

The oil cooperation will hardly give economic results in the short run, and it should be considered to keep the activities going on a lower level. Cutting the sector completely will mean that one loses past investments.⁵³⁷

In its concluding section the draft repeated the first part of the point above: “9.3. Aid to the oil sector is reduced to a minimum level to keep the cooperation going.»⁵³⁸ Furthermore, the draft recommended to await both closing down and starting up any initiatives until the long expected Country Study was finalized. Several times, it returned to this point, most elaborately under the subheading “8. The cooperation in the future”:

In 1988, a country study is planned about the cooperation with Mozambique. Before this is finalized and the result discussed with Mozambique, it will not be natural to expand into new sectors or close down cooperation in the existing.⁵³⁹

⁵³³ Draft Country Program 1989-1992, sent from the Maputo Office to the Ministry of Development Cooperation, 31.12.88, pp. 19-20. MFA 37-4/187-15. Norwegian quote: “Det finnes relativt klare indikasjoner på oljeforekomster offshore Mosambik og den første prøveboring vil bli igangsatt i løpet av mars 1988. Det er også påvist betydelige forekomster av naturgass on-shore, men borestart er utsatt på grunn av sikkerhetssituasjonen i området. // Mosambikanske myndigheter gir fortsatt høy prioritet til utnyttelse av disse ressursene bl.a. gjennom promotering med sikte på flere prøveboringer og kartlegging av nye bruksområder og transportalternativer for gassen. Det er imidlertid ikke realistisk å regne med at dette på kort sikt vil gi konkrete resultater for landet. Det kan derfor reises spørsmål om hvilken prioritet petroleumssamarbeidet bør ha i de nærmeste årene tatt i betraktning den nåværende prekære økonomiske situasjonen i landet. // Dette spørsmålet bør drøftes prinsipielt under landprogramforhandlingene med sikte på å få frem klare prioriteringer fra myndighetene i Mosambik. Det er her nødvendig å være klar over at selv om samarbeidet trappes ned til et minimumsnivå, kan det være vanskelig å komme under budsjettet for 1987 (8 mill kroner).”

⁵³⁴ This move involved a drastic shift for the Marxist Frelimo government, which initially had refrained from asking these two institutions for help. Cf. Pitcher 2002.

⁵³⁵ Draft Country Program 1989-1992, p. 9.

⁵³⁶ Draft Country Program 1989-1992, p. 9.

⁵³⁷ Draft Country Program 1989-1992, p. 10-11. Norwegian quote: “Oljesamarbeidet kan vanskelig gi økonomiske resultater på kort sikt, og det bør vurderes å holde aktiviteten i gang på et lavere nivå. Å kutte fullstendig ut sektoren kan bety at man taper tidligere investeringer.”

⁵³⁸ Draft Country Program 1989-1992, p. 31. Norwegian quote: Bistanden til oljesektoren reduseres til et minimumsnivå for å holde samarbeidet i gang.”

⁵³⁹ Draft Country Program 1989-1992, p. 29. Norwegian quote: “I 1988 er det planlagt en landstudie om samarbeidet med Mosambik. Før denne er sluttført og resultatet drøftet med Mosambik, vil det ikke være naturlig å satse på nye sektorer eller avslutte samarbeidet på eksisterende.”

Hence, by the time the Country Study was finalized in July 1990, the Maputo Office had for more than four years raised concerns about the petroleum program, yet they had deliberately not made a conclusion about what to do with it. The Country Study was first expected to be done during 1987; during the next three years, program documents referred to the future Country Study and the conclusion one might then expect to receive.⁵⁴⁰ During these years, the relation between the project and the context was also shifting: At first, in 1986, staff were concerned that the oil aid, although undisputably useful in itself, was not necessarily good aid since it hardly involved the staff of the Mozambican governmental oil office or the state-owned petroleum company. From 1987, their concern was increasingly whether the oil aid was indeed a good priority given the new economic policy, where quicker financial results and less use of expensive experts were explicit priorities from the government.

When the Mozambique Country Study and Norwegian Aid Review in July 1990 recommended to reduce the oil aid despite its being considered important and valuable, it was therefore following a well-established line of argument within the Maputo Office. What might be interpreted as a tough recommendation voiced by external actors was already the conclusion which the actors closest to the project had voiced on several occasions. These occasions were, as I have shown above, not informal, off-the-record moments of confidence; rather, they were documents meant for wide circulation within Norad and the ministries. The draft country program was furthermore meant to provide the basis for the formal annual deliberations between the two countries, which would make it part of the official Norwegian stance in the matter.

Indeed, the uncertainty about the future of the Norwegian oil aid to Mozambique was voiced both internally and externally on multiple occasions during the second half of the 1980s, and the Country Study's conclusion must have come as no surprise to the Maputo office. Within shifting contexts, the aid staff was also shifting their conception of the object of the oil aid.

Moment 4: Results, not promises (February 8, 1990)

Critique and hesitation were not the only ways in which Norwegian aid staff articulated the MOZ 032 project in the late 1980s. While the war had become the dominant context in the internal reports and project documents prepared by the resident representative in Maputo during the 1980s, the sector-specific documents, which the Energy Office were involved in preparing from their office in Oslo, were less affected by this context. While the Maputo

⁵⁴⁰ The Draft Country Program 1987-1990 refers to the "country analysis" ("landanalysen") as expected to be done during 1987 (a reader had written «OBS» in the margins). MFA 37-4/187-13. Two years later, the draft Country Program 1989-1992 stated in its last concluding point that: "9.8.: In relation to the country study 1989, one is considering to include one of the following sectors as a new main sector: fisheries, health, education." p. 32. Norwegian quote: "9.8. I forbindelse med landstudien 1989, vurderer man å få inn en av følgende sektorer som ny hovedsektor: fiske, helse, undervisning."

Office had the country program as a whole on their desk, the Energy Office could concentrate solely on the Petroleum Sector Program.⁵⁴¹ Where the Maputo Office prepared Country Program Meetings, the Energy Office prepared Sector Program Meetings.

The Energy Study's writings about the MOZ 032 indeed also reflected the prolonged situation of waiting for the Country Study, mainly because less and less was being written. In the MOZ 032 archival box in Norad's project archive, the amount of documents drastically decreases during the last years of the 1980s. Paradoxically, this makes the velocity of the program seem to increase, since the documents constituting the annual Sector Program Meetings surface with increasingly higher proximity. Yet this situation, where the years seem to run by faster and faster, rather attests to how the project in effect was slowing down.

Yet, as the documents from the annual sector program meetings show, the project did indeed continue, but in contrast to how the Maputo Office voiced their concerns, the staff of Norad's Energy Office was in general pleased with how the project proceeded. In a memo written in preparation of the Annual Petroleum Sector Meeting for 1990, the seventh in the line of such meetings, the Energy Office summarized the past years' support to the Mozambican state oil company (ENH) in the following way:

The cooperation on the petroleum sector has been ongoing for many years and has attained well-functioning routines. The contact with the representation [i.e. the Maputo Office] and technical office [i.e. the Energy Office] is good. ENH is a small, yet given the circumstances efficient institution. Norwegian advisor on full-time is flexibly used and given the feeling of being an integrated part of the ENH's organization. (...) the 1989 program is undertaken by and large according to goals made during the previous sector meeting and within the frame of the sector agreement, where the main goal is to make international companies undertake the cost-demanding part of petroleum exploration and make the ENH capable of controlling the activities.⁵⁴²

While the Maputo Office three years before had been critical of the Norwegian petroleum advisor for working too independently, the Energy Office in this quote endorsed his work as well integrated in the ENH's office. Indeed, in their view, the MOZ 032 had achieved its own goals. In commenting the proposed program for the coming year, the Energy office stated:

Continuation of the ongoing activities is not commented upon, as they are undertaken following established procedures and according to the set goal: Making the companies interested in investing in explorations for petroleum in Mozambique, and to enable ENH in themselves controlling the development of the sector. (...) During the seventh sector meeting

⁵⁴¹ The Energy Office handled a similar, yet more comprehensive, sector program on hydropower, in which they facilitated contact between the Mozambican state energy agency (EDM) and its Norwegian counterpart (NVE).

⁵⁴² Memo, "MOZ 032 – 7. årlige møte petroleumssektoren, Oslo 22.-23.2.1990. Oppsummering av aktiviteter 1989 samt forslag til program for 1990. Utkast til instruks", p. 7-8. ES to 3AFR, copy to AFR and Norad Maputo, dated 8.2.1990. Norad archives, box A-6300 431-MOZ032, binder 1. Norwegian quote: "Samarbeidet på petroleumssektoren har pågått i mange år og er kommet inn i velfungerende rutiner. Kontakten med representasjon og fagkontor er god. ENH er en liten, men forholdene tatt i betraktning effektiv institusjon. Norsk rådgiver på full tid utnyttes fleksibelt og gis følelsen av å være en integrert del av ENH's organisasjon. (...) Programmet i 1989 er gjennomført i store trekk iht mål satt opp under forrige sektormøte og innenfor rammen av sektoravtalen, der hovedmålet er å få internasjonale selskaper til å utføre den kostkrevende del av petroleumseleting, samt gjøre ENH i stand til å kontrollere virksomheten."

discussions of policy-related nature are not anticipated except for the gas question. Discussion around Mozambique's possibility of continued support to the sector will not be relevant until after the treatment of the country analysis.⁵⁴³

The Energy Office did here note the possible *discontinuation* of the program, but this was not to be made an issue in the upcoming meeting. In this way, the Country Study kept acting upon the MOZ 032 *in absentia*, before it had even been published. The Energy Office nevertheless worked to keep the project going, accommodating requests from ENH. While continuing the project in the present, they abstained from discussing whether it should be continued in the longer term: This they defined to be a discussion of "policy-related nature". That discussion was not theirs to make; what they might do, was to ensure that the petroleum-related work was functioning as well as possible on a day-to-day, year-to-year basis.

This moment of articulation, in which the Energy Office was working to keep the project going by preparing the documents necessary for enabling the mandatory round of sector meetings, which in turn would produce the necessary meeting minutes, approved budget, and approved plan for the coming year, is interesting not only for what was happening *within* the specific text. Equally interesting is what happened *to* it. More specifically, the document itself stated in its introductory section that one of its appendices, a draft instruction for the Norwegian delegation attending the meeting, was pending approval by the so-called "Advisory Forum". This was a new actor within the Norad organization.⁵⁴⁴ Clearly, the forum's function was not only advisory, given that it was also vested with the authority to approve and (presumably) disapprove of documents. Again with Michel Callon, it had been established as an *obligatory passage point* through which all important aid texts would have to pass, taking over the role which the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had previously held (see Articulation 1 above).⁵⁴⁵

The Energy office met with the Advisory Forum two weeks later. On the agenda was one issue: "MOZ 032 – Sector Meeting Petroleum. Document and Instruction". Hence, what was to be approved was the Energy Office's memo (quoted above) and the instruction for what the Norwegian delegation would communicate during the upcoming sector meeting. The one-page meeting minutes demonstrated that the Advisory Forum indeed had the authority to make changes that were not purely semantic: They indicated an emerging reconfiguration of Norad's relation to its recipients. As I argued in Chapter 4, the new accounting routines which Norad established during 1991 shows how Norad shifted from seeking to swiftly accommodate requests to requesting auditable accounts. The Advisory Forum clearly had a similar mandate for pulling the daily work of Norad staff in the same direction. Yet rather

⁵⁴³ Memo "MOZ 032 – 7. årlige møte petroleumssektoren», pp. 6, 8. "Fortsettelse av de pågående aktiviteter kommenteres ikke, da de gjennomføres etter etablerte prosedyrer og i henhold til målsettingen: Å få selskapene interessert i å investere i undersøkelser etter petroleum i Mosambik, og å sette ENH i stand til selv å kontrollere utviklingen på sektoren. (...) Under det syvende sektormøtet forutses ikke diskusjoner av policymessig art utenom gass-spørsmålet. Diskusjon omkring Mosambiks mulighet for fortsatt støtte på sektoren vil ikke bli aktuelt før etter behandling av landanalysen."

⁵⁴⁴ Memo, "MOZ 032 – 7. årlige møte petroleumssektoren ", p. 1.

⁵⁴⁵ Callon 1986.

than demanding more precise *numbers*, as did the new accounting system, the Advisory Forum demanded more precise *results*:

The Document is approved with certain comments:

- 1) Results orientation. 3AFR [i.e. the advisory forum] requested an expanded description with regards to result of the institutional support to ENH.
- 2) Our aid seen in a larger context. ENH is asked to make an orientation of potential support from other countries.
- 3) The change of priorities which recently have been done by ENH relative to the initial draft budget is accepted in principle, on the condition that documentation is provided.⁵⁴⁶

The Advisory Forum here demanded changes in the document that attested to more fundamental changes in how aid was to be done: the concept of “results orientation” had not previously been used in the project documents for MOZ 032; yet in February 1990, results were made a key concern: The Advisory Forum “requested an expanded description with regards to results” of the support given to ENH. Clearly, stating in general terms that the relations were good and the cooperation well-functioning (as had the Energy Office in the memo quoted above) was no longer enough. Furthermore, the Advisory Forum called for more information on the *context* of the Norwegian petroleum aid and demanded *documentation* of any budgetary changes. In this way, the Advisory Forum was demanding Norwegian aid staff and recipient governments to articulate results and enhance their documentation.

The exact effects of the Advisory Forum’s comments upon the memo are unclear, as I have not found the revised version (if it even was revised; this is also unclear from the archival material). What the Energy Office surely did revise was the Instruction, in which they accommodated the Advisory Forum’s remarks in several ways. These changes also attest to the same emerging transformation I noted above. After the revision, the following point was added to the Instruction:

The Delegation shall: (...)

- 2) Comment upon use of funds for institutional support and ask ENH to account for
 - a) Achieved results
 - b) What other sources of financing ENH may make use of.⁵⁴⁷

Hence, the delegation was required to explicitly ask the Mozambican delegation to articulate the “achieved results” of the Norwegian aid funds and what other possible sources of

⁵⁴⁶ “Referat fra Rådgivende Forum 22.2.1990.” Norad A-6300, 431 MOZ032-1. Norwegian quote: “Dokumentet er godkjent med enkelte kommentarer: (1) Resultatorientering. 3AFR ønsket utdypning når det gjelder resultat av den institusjonelle støtte til ENH. (2) Vår bistand sett i større sammenheng. ENH bes orientere om eventuell støtte fra andre land. (3) Omprioriteringene som nylig er foretatt av ENH i forhold til opprinnelig budsjettforslag godtas i prinsippet, forutsatt at dokumentasjon fremlegges.”

⁵⁴⁷ “Instruks”, attachment to “MOZ 032 – Sektormøte. Referat fra Rådgivende Forum 22.2.90. Endret instruks”, memo from ES to AFR, copy to 3AFR, 22.2.1990. Norad A-6300, 431 MOZ032-1. Norwegian quote: “Delegasjonen skal: (...) (2) Kommentere på bruk av midler til institusjonell støtte og be ENH redegjøre for (a) Oppnådde resultater (b) Hvilke andre finansieringskilder ENH kan benytte seg av.”

financing the ENH might find for the same purpose. In effect, then, the Norwegian delegation was signaling that the Norwegian aid funds were not automatically granted. This addition was accompanied by a notable omission that was made between the draft and the approved version. The approved version did *not* state, as did the draft, that “the delegation should”:

6) Promise ENH swift assessment of a potential request.⁵⁴⁸

Given that this entry was *omitted* from the Instruction, the delegation should *not* promise a swift assessment. While the Energy Office had suggested this point to be part of the Instruction, it was no longer there after the Advisory Forum had handled the document. In this way, the new Instruction materialized the same shift toward demanding articulation of results and documentation of spending as I identified in Chapter 4, where I suggested that Norad went from swiftly accommodating requests to requesting auditable accounts.

Give no promises and request results: This was the explicit Instruction from Norad’s Advisory Forum in Oslo to the Norwegian delegation leaving for Maputo to discuss the petroleum sector program in December 1990. This position was enhanced by the Instruction’s final point: “Discuss an independent evaluation of the project during 1991.”⁵⁴⁹ The Energy Office had themselves made the same point in their memo:

It is important that there during 1991 is undertaken an independent review of the sector, with special emphasis on looking at the justification of continued support. A positive conclusion must be supplemented with concrete recommendations on the level and appropriate input areas and form.⁵⁵⁰

The Energy Office here asserted that continuation of the program would have to be explicitly justified by an independent *review of the sector*. Hence, the Energy Office had not used the term evaluation. Furthermore, they were calling for a review of the *sector*, not of the *sector program*. This difference had potentially wide-reaching consequences: Would the optic be designed by the evaluation staff in the Ministry or by the Energy Office themselves? Would the object be the Norwegian petroleum sector program or the Mozambican petroleum sector as such? In the sector meeting, the optic and object were made to be the following:

Both NORAD and ENH have agreed on having an independent evaluation during 1991 of the activities carried out under the second Petroleum Sector Agreement.⁵⁵¹

With that, the meeting minutes formally established that a project-specific evaluation optic would be undertaken during the coming year. Designing such an optic was what the *Mozambican Country Study and Norwegian Aid Review* had recommended five months before

⁵⁴⁸ “Instruks”, 8.2.1990. Norwegian quote: “(6) Love ENH hurtig behandling av eventuell anmodning.”

⁵⁴⁹ “Mandat”, attachment to the memo «MOZ 032 – 8. årlige møte petroleumssektoren», from ES to 3AFR, copy to AFR and Norad Maputo, 27.11.1990. Full Norwegian quote: “8. Diskutere en avhengig [sic!] gjennomgang av prosjektet i løpet av 1991.” Norad A-6300, 431-MOZ032-1.

⁵⁵⁰ Memo, «MOZ 032 – 8. annual meeting petroleum sector», from ES to 3AFR, copy to AFR and Norad Maputo, 27.11.1990. Full Norwegian quote: ”Det er viktig at det i løpet av 1991 blir foretatt en uavhengig gjennomgang av sektoren, med spesiell vekt på å se på berettigelsen av fortsatt støtte. En positiv konklusjon må suppleres med konkrete anbefalinger om nivå og hensiktsmessig innsatsområder og form.” Norad A-6300, 431-MOZ032-1.

⁵⁵¹ “Protocol, the Eight Annual Meeting MOZ-032, Cooperation within the petroleum sector”, signed in Maputo, December 1990. Norad A-6300, 431-MOZ032-1.

– yet then explicitly connecting the program to the potential for commercial exploitation of Mozambican petroleum “in the near future”:

We would therefore recommend that an assessment is undertaken of the Norad support to ENH, in order to relate the support to the probability of commercially exploitable discoveries in the near future.⁵⁵²

During the first months of 1991, the Energy Office took on the task of realizing this project-specific optic. As I will show in the next section, the precise ways in which this optic was designed had direct effects upon how it was employed, the conclusions it would reach, and the recommendations it would give for the potential continuation of the petroleum sector program.

A project-specific optic of evaluation: The Project Review, 1991-92

After several years with slim files of documents articulating the Norwegian petroleum sector program in Mozambique, the archival folders of Norad’s project archive expand notably with material written during 1991. The process of designing a project-specific optic of evaluation was clearly a task that demanded considerable work for the Energy Office in Oslo. Given the numerous steps and documents involved, I have deliberately not considered this process a *moment of articulation*; rather, I will again pick up Latour’s concept of the *translation chain* in my analysis of how the optic was constituted by a string of documents building upon each other.

Would the optic become an *evaluation* or a *review*? In the section above, I showed how both terms were used when envisioning the making of a project-specific optic. Surely, the staff may have used these terms interchangeably and paid most attention to the term *independent*, which had accompanied both. Yet in the *Handbook of Evaluation Questions* from 1981, the two terms had referred to very different optics: The former, evaluation, would be commissioned by the evaluation staff and was described as more comprehensive and independent than a project review, which would be commissioned by the project staff as part of the routine project administration. Hence, the two terms implied both different settings, preparations, and expectations to the optic, and by extension also to the report that it was to produce.

In the archives I have consulted there are no indications of the evaluation staff in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs being involved in the making of this optic. They did not design the optic nor commission the team; the Energy Office took on all the practical preparations. This means that the staff responsible for handling the sector program were also developing the evaluation optic that would be used to investigate this same program. The optic already here attained traits less of an *evaluation* and more of a *review*. Indeed, this was also the term the Energy Office used when referring to what they were preparing: a project review. Both nominally and practically, then, the optic was from the outset a review. Yet even if it was not going to be an evaluation, the term “review” did also etymologically imply a meta-gaze upon aid: Being a metaphor of seeing, the term was simultaneously a noun and a verb: the act of *re-*

⁵⁵² Mozambique Country Study 1990, p. 101.

viewing indicated looking back at something and potentially seeing it in a different way than before.⁵⁵³

Even though the project review would be realized within the offices and routines of the daily project staff, the Energy Office made sure to establish a certain distance between the object and the optic: In sending the Maputo Office their proposed set-up for the review process, they asserted that Norad staff “both at home and in the field refrains from partaking in the team”; furthermore, there should be “local/regional participation in the team”, meaning that the review team would have to have at least one member from Mozambique or another East African country.⁵⁵⁴ In this way, the optic of the project review attained features both of an internal review and of an external evaluation: designed by internal staff, employed by external consultants. How, more precisely, did the Energy Office design this particular optic? This question will be my concern in the coming section.

Recalibrating an existing optic

In addition to choosing who should design and employ the optic of the MOZ 032 project review, staff had to decide how to develop the optic in practical terms. When the Energy Office took on the task of preparing the project review in early spring 1991, they were already preparing a project review of the Norwegian petroleum sector program in Tanzania, Mozambique’s neighboring country to the north. It “would be preferable”, the Energy Office wrote to the Maputo Office, if the two project reviews could be coordinated.⁵⁵⁵ Enabling such a combination might seem a straight-forward administrative issue where similar tasks were synchronized to make more efficient the work of both the aid administration and the review team. I will argue that this practical coordination would also have significant effects upon how the project review was designed and employed. The combination made for a completely different optic, which in turn made the petroleum sector program emerge in a rather different way than what was presupposed by the *Mozambique Country Study and Norwegian Aid Review*.

Coordinating the two reviews not only involved combining two assignments into one task, but also to model the Mozambican review directly on the design of the Tanzanian review. The latter review had already been prepared by the Tanzanian state oil administration (TPDC), and the Energy Office now forwarded their drafts to the Maputo Office «for their information» noting that «it would be good if we could have something similar from

⁵⁵³ The Norwegian term for project review involves a different metaphor; “prosjektgjennomgang” literally means “project walk-through”, i.e. to *go through* the project from beginning to end, in effect also making it possible to see the whole project at-a-glance and determine what to do about it.

⁵⁵⁴ Memo, Energy Office to Maputo Office, 22.4.1991. Norad A-6300, 431-MOZ032-1. Norwegian quote: «Forespørsel sendes 2-3 norske firmaer om tilbud. (...) Norad både hjemme og ute avholder seg fra å delta i teamet. (...) Firmaene blir pålagt lokal/regional deltakelse i teamet.»

⁵⁵⁵ Memo, Energy Office to Maputo Office, 22.4.1991. Full Norwegian quote: «Som avtalt legger vi opp til en prosjektgjennomgang i overensstemmelse med det som er avtalt i årlig prosjektmøte for petroleum. En tilsvarende gjennomgang er under planlegging i Tanzania, og det vil være fordelaktig om det kan skje en samordning.»

Mozambique». ⁵⁵⁶ In addition, the Energy Office suggested to connect the writing of two reviews directly by encouraging the consultancy firms (the Energy Office was inviting 2-3 Norwegian consultancy firms to partake in the tender) to include members from the other team: “It would e.g. be preferable if participants from Tanzania could partake in the review of Mozambique and vice versa.” ⁵⁵⁷ It was in this way that the MOZ 032 review was not only administratively coordinated with another review-in-the-making, its very design was modelled directly upon this other project review. From the outset, the articulation of the rationale, scope, questions, and methods made the project review a very different evaluation optic than what the Country Study had called for. Whereas the Country Study had established the general *Mozambican* situation as the predominant context through which to assess the MOZ 032, the Project Review was built upon the specific situation of the *Tanzanian* petroleum administration.

From the perspective of the Energy Office in Oslo, who were handling all energy projects within Norad’s portfolio, combining the reviews of the Mozambican and Tanzanian petroleum sector programs was clearly the most efficient and rational thing to do: they would take place at the same point in time, in neighboring geographical sites, and most likely by the same team of consultants, given the small field of eligible consultants available both in Norway, Mozambique, and Tanzania. The Norwegian Petroleum Directorate had combined visits to both countries also in 1980, when the NPD’s then resource director Farouk Al-Kasim had undertaken the first fact-finding mission to Maputo as an extension of an already planned visit to the petroleum administration in Tanzania, with whom the NPD had been involved since 1975 (see Chapter 3).

During the summer and fall of 1991, the Energy Office kept working on the preparations for the two reviews. They kept handling them in combination, to the extent that by January 1992, when the consultants were ready to commence their work, the NPD wrote letters to Norad titled “TAN051, MOZ 032 – review of the Norwegian aid to the oil sector in Tanzania and Mozambique”. ⁵⁵⁸ The two reviews had become the same issue. Before turning to analyze the work of the consultants, I will in the next section look closer at what the Energy Office asked the consultants to do. In doing so, one document is most significant: The so-called *Terms of Reference* for the MOZ 032 project review.

Articulating the review’s “Terms of Reference”

What kind of document was this so-called *Terms of Reference*? Preparing such a document had been a key step in the making of the initial oil aid project in 1981 (cf. Chapter 3), and the *Handbook of Evaluation Questions* had provided a specific template for how to write Terms

⁵⁵⁶ Memo, Energy Office to Maputo Office, 22.4.1991. Norwegian quote: «Kopi av et utkast til T.O.R. foreslått av TPDC i Tanzania vedlegges til orientering og det ville være bra om vi kunne få noe tilsvarende fra Mosambik.»

⁵⁵⁷ Memo, Energy Office to Maputo Office, 22.4.1991. Norwegian quote: “F.eks. vil det være ønskelig om deltakere fra Tanzania kunne inngå i gjennomgangen av Mosambik og omvendt.”

⁵⁵⁸ Letter, NPD to Norad, “TAN 051, MOZ 032 – gjennomgang av den norsk bistanden til oljesektoren i Tanzania og Mozambique”, 9.1.1992. Norad A-6300, 431-MOZ032-2.

of Reference for an evaluation (cf. Chapter 2). In this section, I will look more closely at this specific genre. Indeed, the name itself is puzzling; both “terms” and “reference” are terms in themselves referring to language. They are concepts that point to the relations between texts and contexts, between signs and things, between descriptions and what is being described. The Oxford English Dictionary defines “terms of reference” in the following way: “the points referred to an individual or body of persons for decision or report; that which defines the scope of an inquiry”.⁵⁵⁹ Building on this definition, I will suggest to conceive of the “Terms of Reference” document as articulating both the evaluation object (i.e. what was to be investigated), the evaluation optic (i.e. how the tool was constituted), the evaluation process (i.e. how the team was to employ the optic), and the structure of the evaluation report (i.e. what and how they were expected to write). As shown in Chapter 2 of this thesis, the *Handbook of Evaluation Questions* argued in 1981 that careful preparations of the Terms of Reference document was critical for enabling a good evaluation process and a useful evaluation report.

Given this, we must assume that the specific way in which the Terms of Reference document for the MOZ 032 project review was crafted would have consequences for both the optic, object, process, and report of the MOZ 032 project review. So how, then, was this document crafted? To answer this, I will begin with what the Energy Office wanted the project review to enable.

The purpose of the MOZ 032 project review, the Energy Office noted in June 1991, was to gain a «basis for a decision about the further Norwegian aid to the sector».⁵⁶⁰ This phrase was open in that it included the possibility of the aid not being continued. In other memos written during the following months, phrases used were far less open, even stating the possibility of the program being closed down:

The purpose of the review is first and foremost that Norad will have a basis for possible further cooperation in the sector. This regards both whether the support is to be discontinued and the possible content of the cooperation should the suggestion be a new agreement after the current expires.⁵⁶¹

Here, the Energy Office asserted the real possibility of the program being closed down. Yet the particular way in which the Terms of Reference document was prepared made it more realistic to continue the program than to stop it. As shown above, the MOZ 032 project review was modelled directly on the TAN051 project review. This was done in a most concrete way: The Energy Office sent the Terms of Reference document for the TAN051 review to the Maputo Office and encouraged them to do “something similar” when drafting the Terms of Reference for the MOZ 032 review. At this point, in April 1991, the Tanzanian Terms of

⁵⁵⁹ www.oed.com/view/Entry/199409?redirectedFrom=%22terms+of+reference%22#eid18952831.

⁵⁶⁰ Memo, Energy Office to Maputo Office, 18.6.1981: «MOZ032 – Bistand til petroleumssektoren – prosjektgjennomgang med forslag til TOR.» Norad A-6300, 431-MOZ032-1.

⁵⁶¹ Telefax, Energy Office to Maputo Office, 6.8.1991: “MOZ031 [sic.] – Prosjektgjennomgang”. Norwegian quote: “Hensikten med gjennomgangen er først og fremst at NORAD skal få et grunnlag for evt. videre samarbeide på sektoren. Det gjelder både hvorvidt støtten skal avvikles og evt. innhold i samarbeidet hvis det legges opp til en ny avtale etter at den nåværende løper ut.» Norad A-6300, 431-MOZ032-1.

Reference had already been approved by both the Tanzanian government, Norad, and the Norwegian Petroleum Directorate. It had never had anything to do with the Mozambican country context, yet now it would serve as a model for Norad's project review of the Mozambican petroleum sector program.

The Tanzanian Terms of Reference document was two pages long and had four parts:

1. Background
2. Objectives
3. Scope of Work
4. Coordination and Reporting

In the opening paragraphs of its Background section, the Tanzanian Terms of Reference document started by referring to another project review. This previous review had been carried out four years earlier (in 1987) and had also assessed the Tanzanian petroleum sector program. In referring to this 1987 review, the Terms of Reference for 1991 review stated that: "The funds spent on the programme have been money well used."⁵⁶² Hence, the new project review being prepared in 1991 rested upon the premise that the program had in the past been found worthwhile supporting. While the text did include phrases of hesitation as to the possible continuation of the petroleum program in Tanzania, these were modest and indicated that the program would most likely continue. Indeed, the team was explicitly asked to articulate in detail how a continuation could best be done:

This review shall recommend necessary changes in the organization of the programme and eventual utilization of funds during the remaining programme period. A possible prolongation of the programme within the existing budget frame may be possible, and the review shall prepare a detailed plan for the use of remaining funds. (...)

Particular attention should be paid to the following matters: (...) (f) discuss type and nature of future cooperation, if any, with particular emphasis on cooperation and participation of relevant Norwegian enterprise in the (Tanzanian) oil sector.⁵⁶³

In the quote above, the words "eventual", "possible", "may", and "if any" signaled that Norad was not *promising* automatic continuation of the Tanzanian program. Yet in asking the review team to "recommend necessary changes", the Terms of Reference presumed that there would still be an object to change. I will argue that by building the document upon an existing favorable review and asking for detailed calculations and plans for further work, the document enabled a report to be written that had as its premise that the petroleum program in Tanzania would continue.⁵⁶⁴

Turning to the Mozambican Terms of Reference document, this premise of continuation becomes all the more striking given that the MOZ 032 had a very different evaluation history. Rather than emerging from a favorable project-specific review, as did the

⁵⁶² "Terms of Reference review of the Norad programme 'The Development of the Petroleum Sector in Tanzania, TAN 051'", p. 1. Appendix to memo, Energy Office to Maputo Office, 22.4.1991.

⁵⁶³ Terms of Reference, review of TAN 051, p. 2.

⁵⁶⁴ The ToR did ask the team to consider whether the Tanzanian petroleum administration would be able to undertake the work at hand without the assistance from Norwegian experts. To that end, it did indeed ask them to consider the possibility of a future situation without Norwegian aid to the sector. However, since the review was also expected to define the needs of the Tanzanian sector, the distance between needs and means must be expected to produce a gap in which the Norwegian aid program would be defined as necessary to continue.

Tanzanian review, the Mozambican review emerged from the Country Study’s recommendation of reduced activities. The Country Study was not itself referred to in the Mozambican Terms of Reference. Yet the document did state upfront that the petroleum sector agreement between Norway and Mozambique would soon expire and that the project review should enable Norad to make a decision on whether or not to renew the agreement for another four-year period. This was a very different starting point; yet, I will argue, the starting point of the Mozambican review was made less important because it was modelled directly on the Tanzanian review.

Assessing needs or results?

During the summer and early fall of 1991, the Energy Office circulated multiple drafts of the Terms of Reference. The Maputo Office was invited to comment, as was most likely the Norwegian Petroleum Directorate. Although the structure and main body of the document remained the same, there were certain notable changes between the drafts in the title and objective of the planned review. Table 5.1. shows how the purpose of the review shifted during the process of preparing the review’s Terms of Reference.

While the changes are in one sense minor – a shift of words, a changing emphasis – I will argue that it is critical to pay attention to them. Through these small shifts, made for the purpose of improving the draft and making it fit for approval, the presentation of the review, what became described as its “objective”, shifted from an attention to *needs* to an attention to *results*. The shift is not clear-cut: Gaining “an opinion about the further need” of aid to the sector was still included in the final version, but attention to results had come to dominate the paragraph.

Version	Title	Objective of the review
June 1991 version of ToR (attachment to memo) ⁵⁶⁵	Mozambique – the petroleum sector. Terms of Reference for examination of past assistance to the petroleum sector and appraisal of further needs .	A basis for a decision about possible continued Norwegian assistance to the Petroleum Sector for another four years period, it is considered necessary to examine the past assistance to the sector and what has been achieved . In light of this and an assessment of the general petroleum potential on Mozambique’s territory, a recommendation for further need for development assistance to the sector shall be made.
August 1991 version of ToR (attachment to memo) ⁵⁶⁶	Mozambique – the petroleum sector. Terms of Reference for a programme review of the Norwegian assistance to the petroleum sector and appraisal of further foreign assistance .	Before the current Agreement expires [in 1992], NORAD must make a resolve about whether the Norwegian assistance to the sector shall continue or not , and in case in which form. The objective of this review is to get a basis for this decision by assessing the results achieved during the implementation of the Norwegian financed programme. This findings [sic.] together with an

⁵⁶⁵ “Mozambique – the petroleum sector. Terms of Reference for examination of past assistance to the petroleum sector and appraisal of further needs.” Attachment to memo, Energy Office to Maputo Office, 18.6.1991. Norad A-6300, 431-MOZ032-1.

⁵⁶⁶ Terms of Reference MOZ032, for a programme review of the Norwegian assistance to the petroleum sector and appraisal of further foreign assistance.” Attachment to memo, Energy Office to Maputo Office, 6.8.1991. Norad A-6300, 431-MOZ032-1.

		assessment of the prospects of finding exploitable oil resources on Mozambique [sic.] territory, shall constitute the background for an opinion about the further need for development assistance to the sector.
September 1991 version of ToR (attachment to letters to invited firms) ⁵⁶⁷	Mozambique – the petroleum sector. Terms of Reference for a programme review of the Norwegian assistance to the petroleum sector and appraisal of further foreign assistance .	Before the current Agreement expires [in 1992], NORAD must make a decision about whether the Norwegian assistance to the sector shall continue or not , and in case in which form. The objective of this review is to get a basis for this decision by assessing the results achieved during the implementation of the Norwegian financed programme. This findings [sic.] together with an assessment of the prospects of finding exploitable oil resources in Mozambique, shall constitute the background for an opinion about the further need for development assistance to the sector.
September 1991 presentation of ToR (letter to invited firms) ⁵⁶⁸	Programme review of the Norwegian assistance to the petroleum sectors in Tanzania and Mozambique, and appraisal of need for further foreign assistance.	NORAD must soon make a decision about further assistance or phasing out , and as a background of this decision it is found necessary to undertake an independent review of the past development and appraisal of current plans. NORAD wants to receive competitive offers for this review before engaging a consultant. We hereby invite your company to offer for this work.
December 1991 presentation of the review's purpose(memo) ⁵⁶⁹	Project review , the petroleum sector Mozambique and Tanzania	[T]he review [will] mainly be undertaken to give NORAD a basis for handling the petroleum sector's future role in the cooperation with the two countries.

Table 5.1: Shifting presentations of the MOZ 032 project review during 1991. My emphases.

During the process of writing and rewriting the Terms of Reference, the phrase “achieved results” replaced the more open “what has been achieved”. Related to this shift was a clearer articulation of the possible effect of the review: While first being expected to serve as “a basis for a decision” about “possibly continued Norwegian assistance”, the review was in the next draft expected to inform a decision of “whether the Norwegian assistance to the sector shall continue or not”. This phrase was far more definitive than the former, explicitly referring to a potential future in which the program was *not* continued, that is, it was envisioned as potentially *discontinued*. When sending the approved version of the ToR to potential consultants with an invitation to take part in a tender for the assignment, Norad rephrased this point, stating that Norad “must soon make a decision about further assistance or phasing out”. Again, the option of phasing out, of *discontinuing* the program, was made a real possibility.

⁵⁶⁷ “Mozambique – the petroleum sector. Terms of Reference for a programme review of the Norwegian assistance to the petroleum sector and appraisal of further foreign assistance.” Attachment to letter, Norad’s Legal Division to Nopec, 12.12.1991. Norad A-6300, 431-MOZ032-1.

⁵⁶⁸ “Programme review of the Norwegian assistance to the petroleum sectors in Tanzania and Mozambique, and appraisal of need for further foreign assistance.” Letter, Norad to invited consultancy firms Nopec, Fountain, IKU, and Norconsult, 26. 9.1991. Norad A-6300, 431-MOZ032-1.

⁵⁶⁹ “Project review, the petroleum sector Mozambique and Tanzania”. Memo, Energy Office to Assistant Director, 11.12.1991, with copy to resident representative in Maputo, resident representative Dar es Salaam, 2. Africa Office and 3. Africa Office. Norad A-6300, 431-MOZ032-1.

This dual concern, both for articulating “results” rather than describing “what had been achieved” and for stating the possibility of *discontinuity*, constituted a shift, I will argue, in how the Energy Office was handling the prospective future of the MOZ 032 petroleum program. Furthermore, I will suggest that the shift is a manifestation of an important institutional change in Norad, where the concern for articulating results and alternatives were gaining momentum. It was no longer a given that aid projects and aid programs would continue without questions being asked.

After the MOZ 032 project review had been formally approved and the consultants had started their work during the fall and winter of 1991, the Energy Office and the Maputo Office turned to finalize another document that would enable the ongoing petroleum program to be extended for an additional year. During this process, program documents again circulated through the Advisory Forum (“Rådgivende Forum”). As shown in the section “Moment 4” above, this unit had the authority to demand changes in how documents were being written. In December 1990, they had also demanded that the Norwegian delegation to the annual petroleum sector program in Maputo would ask their Mozambican counterparts to articulate in more detail the results of their Norad-funded work. To that end, the Advisory Forum, I argued, functioned as an obligatory passage point, to use Callon’s term. One year later, the Advisory Forum again received documents from the Energy Office regarding the MOZ 032. In assessing these documents, the Advisory Forum explicitly connected the submitted documents to the ongoing project review.

What the Energy Office and the Maputo Office needed this time, was to gain approval for extending the program for another year and spending the remaining funds while they were awaiting the conclusions from the project review. More specifically, they needed the Advisory Forum’s approval of one specific draft document: a so-called “Funding Document” (in Norwegian: “Bevilgningsdokument” or “BD”). In February 1992, the Energy Office’s draft Funding Document was the object of discussion in an Advisory Forum meeting. Here, the Advisory Forum voiced a strong concern for articulating the option of *discontinuation* of the petroleum program in Mozambique, and concluded that:

Possible continuation beyond 1992 is closely connected to the ongoing evaluation. It is therefore of interest to be informed of the consequences if we find that we are not able to grant such support. Will such a decision demand a finalization period for ongoing activities? The document should briefly have described the possible consequences of a termination or change of continued support.⁵⁷⁰

In this quote, the Advisory Forum again referred to the review as an *evaluation*, as they had also done the year before. Furthermore, they explicitly stated that “possible continuation” of the program “is closely connected to the ongoing evaluation”. What was the significance of

⁵⁷⁰ Memo, SAFR to head of AFR division, 14.2.1992, with copies to Energy Office and Legal Office, signed by Agnete Eriksen. Norwegian quote: ”Eventuell videreføring ut over 1992 er nært knyttet til den pågående evalueringen. Det er derfor av interesse å få opplyst om konsekvensene av mulige utfall av evalueringen. Hva er de faglige og budsjettmessige konsekvenser dersom vi ikke finner å kunne yte slik støtte? Vil en slik beslutning kreve en avviklingsperiode av igangværende aktiviteter? Dokumentet burde kortfattet ha gjort rede for mulige konsekvenser for en innstilling eller endring av fortsatt støtte.” Norad A-6300, 431-MOZ032-2.

them using the term evaluation rather than review? This question echoes my discussion in the beginning of this section about the significant differences between the two terms. First, the term evaluation indicates that the Advisory Forum was expecting an external, independent assessment of the MOZ 032. However, as shown in the table above, although the Energy Office did target external consultants to undertake an independent review, the set-up of the review differed from an evaluation in notable ways: it was commissioned by project staff, not evaluation staff; it was modelled upon a previous project review, not the evaluation genre; it was to be undertaken by petroleum consultants, not aid evaluators. Nevertheless, the Advisory Forum asserted the importance of making *discontinuation* of the program a real option: If phasing out a program was merely stated as an un-committing phrase without being expanded upon, was it then even an option beyond the hypothetical possibility? Demanding the Energy Staff to articulate the practical implications of this option may have contributed to making it appear as a potential reality.

Returning to the Terms of Reference document, the shifting words and emphases in the title and opening paragraphs (cf. table 5.1) indicate that the Advisory Forum's concern for articulating both results and the potential of *discontinuation* was being worked actively into the text. Precisely how this happened remains unclear; there is no record in the archive of the draft Terms of Reference having circulated through the Advisory Forum. It therefore remains uncertain whether the Advisory Forum had anything to do with this particular document.

On any occasion, although there was a clear shift from an "examination of needs" to a "review of results" in the stated purpose of the review (cf. table 5.1), the structure and questions of the Terms of Reference document maintained the attention to needs. There were few substantial changes between the drafts in the main body of the document. This made the content of the assignment, the practical work that was to be done, largely the same throughout the drafts. In all versions, the structure of the Terms of Reference was the following:

1. Objective. (in the June draft, this point was titled "General.")
2. Scope of work.
 - 2.1. Past development.
 - 2.2. Present situation.
 - 2.3. Assessment of the prospects of finding exploitable oil resources in Mozambique.
 - 2.4. Future work plan in respect of exploration activities.
 - 2.5. Future work in respect of downstream activities. (not in June or August drafts)
 - 2.6. Achieved professional level in the departments/divisions which have received Norwegian assistance.
 - 2.7. Need for foreign assistance.
 - 2.8. Possible future Norwegian assistance.⁵⁷¹

Several of these sections had their own subsections or a list of 3-6 bullet points detailing aspects to be addressed by the review team. Both in structure and content the document was close to identical to the Tanzanian Terms of Reference.⁵⁷²

⁵⁷¹ Terms of Reference, programme review MOZ032, December 1991, pp. 1-3.

⁵⁷² The differences reflected that the Tanzanian project had been ongoing for a longer time and were engaging also in downstream activities. Hence, while there were notable differences between the objects of the two reviews, the Terms of Reference documents made but minor adjustments to accommodate these divergences.

In the Terms of Reference for the MOZ 032, the review team was asked first to articulate the *past* contributions of the Petroleum Sector Program, including “financial input and achievement” for a number of specific activities. Then the team should describe the *present* situation, both in the Mozambican petroleum administration and in the petroleum reservoirs. For the latter, the team was asked to base their assessments “on the geological history of East Africa and the results from the exploration work undertaken in Mozambique”. Here, the *results* clearly referred to findings from the explorations, that is, what the Norwegian Petroleum Directorate had referred to as *evaluations of the geology*. From this analysis, the team should proceed to assess the Mozambican government’s “future work plan” for exploration and distribution of these real and potential resources and from there consider the government’s capacity and ability to undertake this planned work. This would then serve as the basis for a conclusion on the needs for more aid:

Based on the findings and conclusions from the work to be undertaken under section 2.1-2.5. above, an appraisal shall be made on the need for further assistance to the Petroleum Sector.⁵⁷³

More precisely, the Terms of Reference asked the team to give “special emphasis” to present “a well-founded opinion why foreign assistance is required for these undertakings”. In this way, the team was asked to build the case that more aid was indeed necessary. This led to the final section of the Terms of Reference, in which the team was asked to consider “possible future Norwegian assistance”:

In case the appraisal comes out with a clear conclusion in favor of continued Norwegian assistance to the petroleum sector, a proposal shall be made for activities to be included, the form of assistance, and time and budgetary limitations.⁵⁷⁴

Through its structure, the Terms of Reference established the Mozambican *need for foreign aid* to the petroleum sector by seeing the availability of petroleum resources in direct relation to the existing capacity to exploit it. The need was constituted by the gap between available resources and existing exploitation capacity. When identified, the need would then serve as the foundation against which to consider possible continuation of the Norwegian aid program.

In this way, the only relevant context for the assessment was the potential petroleum and its administration. Other contexts, which the Country Study had given more weight (notably the ongoing war and humanitarian crisis; the country program as a whole; and shifting Norwegian aid policies), were not articulated in the document and would thus not be taken into account. Rather, given that the Energy Office required the review team’s report to follow the same structure as the Terms of Reference, the review was expected to be built on a geological foundation, so to speak: The evaluation of the petroleum potential was what would be most significant when determining “the future needs of the sector” and then “possible future Norwegian assistance”.

Neither did the Terms of Reference extend the Country Study’s specific temporality, that is, its concern for the *current* circumstances. The Terms of Reference indeed resembled

⁵⁷³ Terms of Reference, programme review MOZ032, December 1991, pp. 1-3.

⁵⁷⁴ Terms of Reference, programme review MOZ032, December 1991, p. 4.

the Country Study in that it was organized as a progressive, forward-oriented move through history, both of the program and of the geology: from the past through the present and into the future. Yet the project review was not required to give “the near future” priority over the distant future, as had the Country Study recommended.

I would like to make one final point about how the MOZ 032 project review already during the making of its Terms of Reference was established such that it was already becoming less likely that the program would be stopped. The final section of the Terms of Reference, titled “Possible future Norwegian assistance” (quoted in full above), asked the team to make a proposal for “activities to be included, the form of assistance, and time and budgetary limitations” in a possible continued program. In this way, the review was also asked to function as a planning document. This meant that the team should first articulate the needs for continued Norwegian aid and then outline how this aid might be organized in most concrete terms: what to do with the means, funds, and time available. This was a different kind of recommendation than that of the Country Study, which had explicitly asserted that it was *not* a planning document. In contrast, the project review was from the very outset expected to explicate a continuation of the program, not only assess *whether* it should be continued. Hence, the needs and potentials of the Mozambican petroleum sector, not Norwegian aid priorities, was made the premise for the review.

Designing an oil-specific optic of aid evaluation

Through the writing and rewriting of the Terms of Reference for the project review, I argued above, the Energy Office calibrated their optic so that the MOZ 032 petroleum program became an object of oil work, and less so an object of aid work. Surely, aid was a key component, but the main concern of the review was made to be the *needs* of the Mozambican petroleum sector, not the *results* of the Norwegian aid program. As I will turn to show in this section, the choice of consultants reflected this point: From the start, the Energy Office planned to commission consultants whose expertise was first and foremost within petroleum geology and administration. As shown above, the questions asked in the Terms of Reference would require the ability to make sense of both geological data, petroleum legislation, administrative systems, and legal negotiations between governments and international oil companies. Knowing the aid sector was less necessary, while knowing the oil sector was vital.

When the Terms of Reference for the project review had been finalized and approved in late September 1991, the Energy Office called a tender among Norwegian consultancy firms, that is, they invited presumably qualified firms to submit bids for the combined assignment of the two project reviews (of the Norwegian petroleum sector programs in Tanzania and Mozambique respectively). Four firms were asked to attend, of which two responded with project proposals: Norconsult and Petroteam. Ten years earlier, the same constellation of actors had taken part in the making of the MOZ 032 project. As I showed in Chapter 3, the well-established Norconsult had in 1981 done the Norad-financed feasibility study that had recommended Norad to initiate an oil aid project in Mozambique. The newcomer Petroteam had been founded by the same Farouk Al-Kasim who in his capacity as

the NPD's resource director had done the first fact-finding mission to Maputo in 1980. In 1990, Al-Kasim had left his position in the NPD's top leadership and started his own independent consultancy firm, through which he took part in missions and tenders for, among others, Norad and Petrad (the Norad-funded NPD-based training program in petroleum administration for participants from developing countries, cf. Chapter 4).⁵⁷⁵

In Petroteam's project proposal Al-Kasim described how Petroteam would operationalize the tasks described in the Terms of Reference from Norad's Energy Office. The proposal included a two-and-a-half page long section titled "Method of Work" which followed right after a short introduction. In this section, Petroteam unpacked their interpretation of the phrases "review of past performance" and "review of current and future plans". While the latter phrase concentrated on the Mozambican plans for further oil exploration and how Norwegian aid might fit into these plans, the former phrase was concerned with the Norwegian aid activities as such:

The review of past performance, as itemized under 2.1. of the T.O.R. is understood to serve several purposes among which are the following:

- a) Assessment of the results measured against the original objectives as stated in the Sector Agreement documentation.
- b) Assessment of the adjustments made in the annual objectives and plans in pace with the results achieved, and with the development in operational requirements.
- c) Assessment of the internal priorities in the plans in terms of efficient implementation and relevance to the stated objective.
- d) Assessment of the value of the assistance in terms of developing national expertise in the sector.
- e) Assessment of the value in terms of institutional development and experience in resource and project management.⁵⁷⁶

Here, Petroteam outlined an assessment method far more elaborate than what the Energy Office had required. Al-Kasim intended to articulate results and measure these against the project's initial objectives; he made the project documents and annual plans into a central reference; he would consider the pace, efficiency, and relevance of the work done; and he would consider the Norwegian contribution in relation to the build-up of expertise and institutions in Mozambique. The Energy Office had in their Terms of Reference indeed covered the same issues, but Al-Kasim articulated these in the language of aid evaluability that had been promoted by the evaluation staff since the early 1980s, and, since 1990, by Norad's Advisory Forum.

⁵⁷⁵ Tonstad 2010.

⁵⁷⁶ "Project Proposal: Review of Norwegian Assistance to Mozambique in the Petroleum Sector for Norad by Petroteam A.S.", p. 3. Appendix to letter from Petroteam to Norad's Energy and Marine Transport Division, signed by Petroteam president Farouk Al-Kasim, Stavanger 12.10.1991. Norad A-6300, 431-MOZ032-2.

In doing this, Al-Kasim stated his commitment to reviewing not only the future of Mozambican oil but also the past of Norwegian aid. While the project review had been designed as an oil-specific optic that would have to be handled by petroleum sector experts, Petroteam's project proposal introduced the concepts and concerns of aid evaluability, again making it more of an aid review than what the Energy Office had themselves articulated.⁵⁷⁷

When Norad's Energy Office compared the proposals of Petroteam and Norconsult, they asserted that their main concern was to have a team with expertise in petroleum and the East African region combined. They considered Petroteam to have the strongest proposal in this respect, but in addition gave weight to their description of assessment methods being far more elaborate than Norconsult's:

[...] Petroteam's offer in our opinion stands out as the most preferable. The suggested methodology is thoroughly prepared, the suggested team has the best technical/professional combination, and the setup with a broadly composed reference group within Petroteam provides security for the validity of the conclusions that emerge.

In the offer from Norconsult A/S, the petroleum-technical strength is more lacking in the team composition, and no methodology for the operationalization has been described.⁵⁷⁸

In this way, the Energy Office considered Petroteam's proposal to be the strongest because of its *combination* of petroleum expertise and assessment methods. In contrast, they noted that Norconsult was both weaker on petroleum and did not describe their methods. In combination, these features made the Energy Office choose Al-Kasim's Petroteam to do the two project reviews. During the contract negotiations, Petroteam's partner in the proposal, Nopec, was made team leader.⁵⁷⁹

What would the optic of the project review make Norad see? What would the object of the MOZ 032 petroleum sector project become through this optic? The very future of the program was made to depend on the report that the review team was going to submit. The Energy Office made sure to emphasize that not only the content, also the form, was important:

Separate reports shall be prepared for the two countries. The reports shall be written in the English language, and sectioned and edited to the TOR (...). The reports shall be written such that they are easy to read and understand.⁵⁸⁰

⁵⁷⁷ The proposal ended the section with acknowledging that "Although many of these and other issues and considerations can be too complicated to evaluate within the scope of the project, the team intends to bear them in mind during its deliberations and use them as far as possible and justifiable." Project Proposal, Petroteam, p.5.

⁵⁷⁸ Memo, Energy Office to Assistant Director with copy to Africa Office, 30.10.1991. Norad A-6300, 431-MOZ032-1. Norwegian quote: "Av de to tilbudene som foreligger skiller etter vår mening Petroteams tilbud seg klart ut som det mest fordelaktige. Metodikken som er foreslått er grundig gjennomarbeidet, teamet som er foreslått har den beste faglige sammensetning, og opplegget med en bredt sammensatt referansegruppe innen Petroteam gir en sikkerhet for holdbarheten i de konklusjonene som fremkommer. Tilbudet fra Norconsult A/S har mangler i petroleumsfaglig tyngde i teamsammensetningen, og det er ikke beskrevet noen metodikk for gjennomføringen."

⁵⁷⁹ Farouk Al-Kasim's position as head of Petroteam had led to questions about whether Petroteam had a problem of habilitation. After a round of deliberation between Norad and the NPD, they found a solution in which Petroteam and Nopec, who had been part of the proposed team, shifted their positions, so that Nopec was made the team leader signing the contract.

⁵⁸⁰ Contract letter, Norad's Legal and Economic Affairs Dept to Nopec, 12.12.1991: "Contract for programme review of the assistance to the petroleum sectors in Tanzania and Mozambique". Norad A-6300, 431-MOZ032-1.

The review team's two reports were expected to mirror the structure of their respective Terms of Reference. Furthermore, the Energy Office might have worried that the reports would be too technical in their discussions of geology, petroleum administration, legal regulations, and contract negotiations; either way, they made sure to emphasize that the reports "should be written such that they are easy to read and understand".

Yet how the actual report from the MOZ 032 project review was structured and written has not been possible for me to find out. Within Norad's project archive or the MFA's country archive, the memos and letters preparing the review are followed by new memos and letters handling the report, but the report itself is not there. This makes the empirical situation quite the opposite from that of the Country Study: In that case, the report with all its volumes was publicly available through the Norwegian university library system, while I have had no access to how it was made and received. For the project review, I may follow the process in detail, both before and after, but without being able to analyze the very document which all this work was done to produce.

Navigating archives of oil and aid

Making the review unavailable was a deliberate move for reasons directly related to its particular object: the oil. In Chapter 3 I suggested that the omission of two reports from the aid archives (Al-Kasim's fact-finding mission and Norconsult's feasibility study) suggested that Norad staff in 1980-81 were less concerned with the specificity of oil; they were focused on realizing the two reports while delegating the responsibility for their content to the Petroleum Directorate. In 1991-92, on the other hand, the non-availability of the report is explicitly discussed in the memos and letters. The NPD was actively protecting its data and documents from being circulated beyond their control. When engaging Nopec to do the twin project reviews, Norad's Legal Office included the following clause in their contract:

Strict confidentiality shall be observed and maintained regarding all information related to the Work. The reports shall be similarly restricted and disclosed.⁵⁸¹

The restricted circulation of the reports was but one aspect of the broader NPD policy of restriction on access to information, including data and archives. The confidentiality agreement described the restrictions on data circulation as follows:

All confidential data and copies thereof supplied to NOPEC in the form of paper prints and sepia copies of seismic location maps, other data, report, map, plan and any other material pertaining to the provision of services, shall be returned to NORAD on completion or termination of the Main Agreement without NOPEC retaining any of the aforesaid data and/or material and the copies of any reports prepared by them in the performance of the services under the Main Agreement, or any report prepared by them using the data and/or the material, in any form whatsoever except with the prior written consent of NORAD.⁵⁸²

I will suggest that this concern for controlling how petroleum data were handled –who gained access to their archives and who got to read the report – materialized NPD's conception of its

⁵⁸¹ Contract letter, 12.12.1991.

⁵⁸² Confidentiality agreement, signed 17.01.1991 by Farouk Al-Kasim on behalf of Nopec. In its final clause, the agreement asserted that it would be valid for 45 years starting on the signing date.

own archive as the very foundation upon which the entire petroleum system, sector, and policies were built. As Al-Kasim had himself argued a decade earlier, “intimate knowledge of the petroleum resources” was what enabled the “proper management” of these resources. In order to gain and maintain such intimate knowledge the NPD’s infrastructure for collecting, storing, and analyzing petroleum data was indispensable. As shown in Chapter 4, when the NPD took on assignments for other nations, they often hosted their data within its own archives. In this way, the NPD’s archives in Stavanger also became the temporary sites of Tanzanian and Mozambican oil archives. Using Timothy Mitchell’s term, the archive constituted a core feature of a carbon democracy.

In this perspective, guarding the archive and its contents was a way to protect the petroleum data on behalf of aspiring oil nations.⁵⁸³ Yet this concern for the national interest also intersected with the interests of the international oil companies. More specifically, what the NPD sought to protect was the content of agreements made between the Mozambican government and companies involved in explorations (here referred to as licensees, i.e. the companies being granted exploration licenses):

It is necessary for the purpose of providing the services under the Contract of December 12th, 1991 between NORAD and NOPEC that NOPEC has access to available oil exploration, geological, geophysical and well data relevant to the provision of the services. Such information is in part of highly confidential character, protected and restricted as to confidentiality by specific agreements between the authorities and the petroleum licensees.⁵⁸⁴

In this way, the NPD in the face of an external review took two measures to avoid uncontrolled circulation of Mozambican petroleum data. Firstly, that the team had to sign a contract of confidentiality, from which the quote above is retrieved; secondly, that the team’s report would be withdrawn from public access.

In the project proposal, Farouk Al-Kasim had discussed access to data and archives under the section “Work plan”. Here, he was not concerned with the issue of the confidentiality of petroleum data; rather, he cautioned that his proposed work plan depended on the archives in Norway being “complete and well organized”. This included the archives of the NPD, Norad, and the Norwegian geology consultant who had worked on-site in Maputo. According to Al-Kasim, both the progress of Petroteam’s work plan and the scope of the review (or evaluation, as Al-Kasim referred to it) rested upon the archives being “complete and well organized”:

In order to form the initial basis for this evaluation, an outline for the essential ingredients in the project data-base will be designed at the start of the project. (...) Our estimate for the Mozambique part of the work is approx. 2 man weeks on the assumption that the archives in

⁵⁸³ Letter from NPD to Norad’s Energy Office, “TAN051, MOZ032 – Gjennomgang av den norske bistanden til oljesektoren i Tanzania og Mozambique”, 09.01.1992. Norwegian quote: “Da en slike evaluering er vedtatt på prosjektmøter i Tanzania og Mozambique, går vi ut fra at TPDC og ENH ønsker at OD stiller relevant informasjon, som måtte finnes seg på OD, til rådighet for Nopec a.s. For ordens skyld vil OD innhente tillatelse fra disse før konsulenten gis innsyn i dette arkivmateriale. OD forutsetter at NORAD inneholder taushetserklæring for det berørte personell i Nopec a.s. Eventuelt ansvar som måtte oppstå som følge av eventuelle brudd av taushetsløftet, blir rett mot NORAD.»

⁵⁸⁴ Confidentiality agreement, signed 17.01.1991.

all three places in Norway are both complete and well organized. Difficulties in retrieving or finding the relevant data may lead to delays and or revision in the scope of the work.⁵⁸⁵

Echoing the arguments of the evaluation staff, Al-Kasim here drew a direct relation between the state of the archives and the scope of the review: “Difficulties in retrieving or finding the relevant data may lead to delays and or revisions in the scope of the work.” In making this connection, he again asserted the importance of data, as he had done in his first fact-finding mission to Maputo in 1980 (cf. Chapter 3). He also, I will argue, highlighted the relation between the strength of Norad’s and NPD’s information infrastructures and the potential strength of the optic he was commissioned to employ. The optic of the project review would not function optimally without “complete and well organized” archives. Furthermore, he highlighted how the time spent by the review team in retrieving data was proportionate to the time spent by aid staff and oil staff in building and maintaining the archives. This was the point argued by the evaluation staff in their *Handbook of Evaluation Questions* from 1981: Although their intensified documentation practices would be labor-demanding, this work would have direct consequences for the evaluability of aid projects.

The archives of the aid administration and the oil administration posed opposite challenges to the team: While the latter was complete and well-organized to the extent that one might not even be allowed inside, let alone bring data back out, the former was readily accessible, but likely to be incomplete and un-organized to the extent that retrieving documents might itself be difficult. In each their ways, the two archives posed potential limitations to the work of reviewers or evaluators coming from the outside.

Paradoxically, then, while the NPD’s conception of data collection and storage was similar to what Norad’s aid evaluation staff promoted within Norad, the strength of the oil archives constituted a problem for aid evaluability. The processes of translation and traceability, upon which the making of a strong report depended, was in this instance cut short. The team did indeed gain access to the oil archive, yet their ability to report back was limited. Once they were inside, they were required to adhere to principles of secrecy. Hence, the document which they were set to produce would only be accessed by those already directly involved; no one outside the circulation circuit of the NPD, Norad, Petroteam/Nopec, and the Mozambican government would be allowed to read the report. Hence, the oil-specific properties of the petroleum sector program produced non-circulation of the review team’s report.

Reviewing the review

In the absence of the report itself, what has been available to me is the Energy Office’s own translation of the report: a memo summarizing their readings of the report. From this document it is possible to gain an impression of what the report might have been like. More importantly, what it makes us access is the Energy Office’s *reading* of the report: their

⁵⁸⁵ Project Proposal, Petroteam, p. 6.

endorsements, their objections, what they emphasized, and how they moved the review's recommendations on through the offices of the Norwegian aid administration.

The Energy Office received the reports from both project reviews in early June, 1992, six months after the contract had been signed with Nopec. Even Sund, head of the Energy Office, expressed the office's general satisfaction with the reports:

The reports are well received by those who have read them here in Norad, and we thank for good and comprehensive reports which may be considered approved by Norad.⁵⁸⁶

After having received the reports, the Energy Office asked for comments from the Norwegian Petroleum Directorate and the Mozambican and Tanzanian program partners. The Energy Office also themselves produced memos with their own comments to both reports; the memo concerning MOZ 032 amounted to ten pages. In this document, the Energy Office included quotes from the report, chronologically ordered, in one column, with their corresponding comments in a parallel column. Most of the Energy Office's comments to the report were objections and corrections to details in how the review team described the details of the program (table 5.2).

CHPT.	EXCERPT FROM THE REPORT	COMMENTS
3.4.	Refers to geo-studies undertaken. It is said that: In 1987 a geochemical survey was performed by IKU/Geolab. Near-surface samples were gathered from the M8 block area and sent to Trondheim for source rock analysis.	As far as we recall, this survey was a failure as one did not manage to retrieve samples due to the bedrock being too hard. This should have been mentioned when one refers to this survey. ⁵⁸⁷

Table 5.2. Example of Energy Office's corrections to the review team's report.

The Energy Office also noted that the review team occasionally did not follow the Terms of Reference; for example: "The review team here embarks on discussions which are beyond their mandate."⁵⁸⁸ In the introductory paragraphs of the memo, the Energy Office connected this last point (the report's adherence to the Terms of Reference) to the report being made in combination with another report:

1. GENERAL. The report is prepared simultaneously with an equivalent report from Tanzania and some of the conclusions and recommendations does fit as well with the current situation in Mozambique. The Mozambique report on some issues goes beyond the work specification that is given in the TOR. On the other hand clear answers are lacking to some of the questions that are asked.⁵⁸⁹

⁵⁸⁶ Letter, Energy Office to Nopec, 12.6.1992, signed Even Sund and Øistein Glømme, with copies to Norad's Dar es Salaam Office, Maputo Office, and Africa Division. Norwegian quote: "Rapportene er godt mottatt av de som har lest dem her i NORAD, og vi takker for gode og innholdsrike rapporter som kan betraktes som godkjente av NORAD." Norad A-6300, 431-MOZ032-2.

⁵⁸⁷ Memo, "MOZ032 – Mosambik, petroleumssektoren. Rapport fra programgjennomgang" [Report from programme review], p. 1. Signed 15.6.1992 by Even Sund and Øistein Glømme. Norad A-6300, 431-MOZ032, folder 2.

⁵⁸⁸ Report from programme review, p. 6. Norwegian quote: "Review Team gir seg her inn på diskusjoner som ligger utenfor deres mandat.»

⁵⁸⁹ Report from programme review, p. 1. Norwegian quote: «**1. Generelt.** Rapporten er utarbeidet samtidig med en tilsvarende rapport fra Tanzania og noen av konklusjonene og anbefalingene passer ikke like godt for den rådende situasjonen i Mosambik. Mosambikrapporten går på enkelte områder utover den arbeidsspesifikasjon som er gitt i TOR. På den annen side savnes klare svar på noen av de spørsmål som er stilt.»

The Energy Office here voiced a concern that this very combination had unfortunate effects for the Mozambique report. The Energy Office seems to suggest that it was the combined report-writing that had made the review team adhere insufficiently to the Terms of Reference, which in turn made the team's conclusions and recommendations "not fit as well with the current situation in Mozambique". As I showed earlier in this chapter, the combination of the two reports into one joint task had been done deliberately by the Energy Office themselves; indeed, they had modelled the Mozambique review directly upon the Tanzania review. In the finalized report of the Mozambique review, this very choice seems to have materialized as recommendations that did "not fit as well" in the Mozambican context. Yet in the quote above, the Energy Office implied that the reason was that the review team did not properly follow the Terms of Reference.

The Energy Office also had concerns with how the team had structured the report. In a section titled "review of the report", they effectively framed their memo as a *review of the review*:

2. REVIEW OF THE REPORT. The report lacks a condensed summary. We have therefore under section 3 provided quotes and excerpts from the report, and comments to these where we have seen the need to do so. Quotes and excerpts do however not give a complete picture of the conclusions and recommendations that are expressed in the report.⁵⁹⁰

In their review of the review, the Energy Office addressed issues on several levels. As shown above, they were concerned about the accuracy of technical details and precision in descriptions (table 5.2) and whether the team had adhered to the Terms of Reference (cf. quotes above). Writing a summary had not been required by the Terms of Reference; yet as shown in chapters 2 and 4, including such a summary upfront in the report had become a standard feature of evaluation reports. In lieu of a summary, the Energy Office made their own version of a summary by compiling a list of quotes. Although noting that the selection did not "give a complete picture" of the report's conclusions and recommendations, the Energy Office made a cut-and-paste version of the review team's report. By adding their own comments to the selection, the translation also integrated their own reading of the document.

In addition to commenting upon accuracy in descriptions and adherence to the Terms of Reference, the Energy Office had several comments to the review team's conclusions about the results of the Norwegian aid program. Who were responsible for the results that had been achieved – or not been achieved? And furthermore, what could one expect the results to have been? In discussing this, both the report and the memo pointed to how shifting contexts also changed the potential for continuing petroleum program (see examples in table 5.5, notably sections 5.4, 7.1, 8.1.2, 8.3.3).

Both the report and memo showed that multiple contexts of the petroleum sector program were changing rapidly in multiple ways. In combination, this made the potential

⁵⁹⁰ Report from programme review, p. 1. Norwegian quote: «**2. Gjennomgåelse av rapporten.** Rapporten mangler et konsentrert sammendrag. Vi har derfor under pkt 3. gitt sitater og utdrag fra rapporten, og kommentarer til disse der vi har funnet behov for det. Sitater og utdrag gir imidlertid ikke et fullstendig bilde av de konklusjoner og anbefalinger som fremkommer i rapporten.»

Mozambican petroleum future radically different than it had been both when it was initiated in 1980 and when the Country Study was finalized in 1990. First, a sequence of armistices spurred the hope that the decade-long civil war was coming to an end.⁵⁹¹ Second, the collapse in 1991 of the Soviet Union, who had contributed experts to Mozambique’s petroleum sector, produced both a new geopolitical situation and a vacuum in Mozambique’s petroleum administration. Third, the gradual dismantling of the apartheid regime in South Africa from 1991 opened new potential markets for Mozambican natural gas.⁵⁹² In combination, this constituted a completely new situation for building a petroleum sector in Mozambique: the security situation was being restored; Soviet and Eastern European assistance was no longer available; and South Africa was becoming a viable partner. Finally, the nature object itself was changing Mozambique from a prospective oil nation to a prospective gas nation, albeit of modest ambitions and long-term perspectives. These contextual shifts were all written into the Energy Office’s review of the review (table 5.3).

CHPT.	QUOTE/EXCERPT FROM THE REPORT	COMMENTS ⁵⁹³
3.1	Concerns “Past development of the Petroleum Sector”, and recounts the oil companies’ activities. It is stated that: Together with the general impression that Eastern Africa is gas-prone, the low prices led to less interest by the international oil companies. The civil war further decreased interest in operations, and in 1990 both Amoco and Shell decided not to continue with their exploration activities.	This means that no oil companies have concessions in Mozambique at the time being.
3.5	Concerns petroleum-related training. It is stated that: In 1987, a study of the needs for a training and manpower development programme was performed by The College of Petroleum Studies, Oxford. The study concluded that ENH has substantial needs for training and education. However from that point in time, the funds spent on training decreased significantly. The explanation for this is that ENH did not want to run an expensive training programme at a time when the NORAD support programme was in danger of expiring.	The study was financed with NORAD funds. The reason stated for why the training came to a halt cannot be actual. A new sector agreement was entered into in 1986, and there were no indications in 1987 that the Norwegian aid to the oil sector would be terminated.
5.4	With reference to the changed situation for oil exploration in the former Soviet Union and the Middle East it is stated that: It is being said these days that the golden era of oil companies is coming back, if not already now, then at least in the near future. Consequently, the challenges facing a marginally prospective country, such as	Given the investments that until now have been made on the exploration side, one will in this context have to ask the question of whether a poor country such as Mozambique,

⁵⁹¹ Frelimo and Renamo signed a series of armistice agreements from December 1, 1990 and through 1991 and 1992, ending with the “General Peace Agreement for Mozambique” signed August 7, 1992, in Rome. <http://www.cfr.org/mozambique/general-peace-agreement-mozambique/p24232> (retrieved 14.5.2015).

⁵⁹² Norway had no diplomatic relations to apartheid South Africa but unofficially gave financial support to the liberation movement led by the African National Congress (ANC). The apartheid regime and the African National Congress (ANC) reached an agreement on a new constitution in 1993 and called free elections, the first of which was won by the ANC, making Nelson Mandela president from 1994. Cf. Eriksen 2000 for a detailed historical analysis of relations between Norway and liberation movements in Southern Africa (including South Africa, Mozambique, and Namibia).

⁵⁹³ Report from programme review, pp. 1-9.

	Mozambique, in attracting oil companies have substantially increased.” Later in the Chap. it is indicated that exploration activities in Mozambique involve substantial risk.	in the present situation, should allow itself to use aid funds for further oil exploration. The probability for such investments not to bear fruit is high.
6.3	Pipeline to South Africa; with a spur line to Maputo. (...) Much work needs to be carried out on the size, structure, and possible determinants on the market possibilities for th alternative usages on South Africa. But also the demand for natural gas in Maputo needs to be studied in greater detail, as well as the cost for the alternative (fuel) replacements. It should be remembered that the alternative that so far appears most economically attractive (C2) requires a proven gas reserve of twice the current size.	This means that the main precondition for distribution of gas to South Africa, the gas itself, has not yet been found in sufficient amounts.
7.1	For the lack of commercial interest among the oil companies in gas development however, the chase after gas has never been taken up, despite the encouraging discovery. Instead, it was oil that has been the main target for exploration. Later in Chap. it is stated that: The new seismic data did not substantially alter earlier assumptions on better sourcing in the offshore direction. Nor have they added any substantial evidence on the presence of reservoir rocks. In other words, the status on exploration today is very much the same as it used to be in the eighties.	According to this, the direct effect for Mozambique of the Norwegian aid is not large. Investing in oil exploration will always involve risk. The mapping that has been done nevertheless holds great value in itself. It is possible that NORAD should have assessed further input based on existing data at an earlier point in time.
8.1.2	The thrust of the Norwegian support has been on the development of professional capacity. Less attention has been given to the effective utilization of the same.	As far as we know very little training has been given as part of the Norwegian aid. All training activities have been managed by ENH.
8.3.3	There are still sides of the ENH institution that are not adequately developed. Despite many years of support, ENH still lacks appropriate storage facilities in Mozambique. With reference to ENH’s future tasks it is stated that: This points to an area where Norwegian support has not had much impact; the strengthening and expansion of administrative capacity in ENH.	The use of Norwegian aid funds have been managed by ENH, and it is they who will have to carry the burden of any deficiencies.

Table 5.3. *The Energy Office’s comments to the MOZ 032 project review report.*

Amidst this combination of changing contexts and a changing nature object, it remained unclear what the aid program had accomplished and whether it should have been done differently. In several of the quotes included in table 5.5, the project review explicitly concluded that the results of the Norwegian petroleum program were unclear at best: the aid had concentrated on oil exploration, even when the potential for finding natural gas was much higher; the aid had not “had much impact” upon strengthening ENH’s administrative capacity; and the aid had not enabled organizational learning. Invoking a temporality of non-progress, the team noted what had *not* been achieved: “There are still sides of the ENH institution which are not adequately developed. Despite many years of support, ENH still lacks appropriate storage facilities in Mozambique. (...) [T]he status on exploration today is very much the same as it used to be in the eighties.” Yet the review team also envisioned possible

new times: “It is being said these days that the golden era of oil companies is coming back, if not already now, then at least in the near future.”

The Energy Office resisted several of the team’s conclusions by asserting that the responsibility for what had been done under the program rested with the Mozambican governments, that is, the ENH: “The use of Norwegian aid funds have been managed by ENH, and it is them who must take the burden of any deficiencies.” They did accept that Norad could have made some different choices, but nevertheless defended what had been done. For example, the geological mapping held “great value in itself”, even if its main result had been to find that oil did *not* exist.

Finally, the Energy Office resisted the ENH’s interpretation, as presented in the report, that the Norwegian aid program had been in “danger of expiring” in 1987. The Energy Office had no understanding of this interpretation: “The reason stated (...) cannot be actual (...) there were no indication in 1987 that the Norwegian aid to the oil sector would be terminated.” Given that the plans for a Country Study had been launched in 1987, the ENH’s interpretation might have been based on the impasse which this study-to-come surely created. As shown in the first section of this chapter, the impasse was becoming a key issue towards the end of the 1980s; for several years, while waiting for the Country Study, the Maputo Office refrained from both making new plans and closing down ongoing programs. In the Energy Office’s view as of 1992, however, there had been no such ambiguity.

In combination, the changing contexts, the changing nature object, and the unclear distribution of responsibility enabled a situation in which the results achieved remained ambiguous and opaque. As I will now turn to show, this situation made the Energy Office hesitate with drawing a clear conclusion as to what should be done with the program.

Hesitating to conclude

The combination of changing contexts, a changing nature object, and opaque results made the Energy Office hesitate with articulating a clear conclusion and recommendation for what to do with the program. The memo quoted a recent study by the World Bank (funded by Norwegian aid funds) which stated that: “There is a good chance of eventually arriving at a commercial solution, but this requires patient, long time work”.⁵⁹⁴ One of two main conclusions from this study was that far more comprehensive and detailed studies were needed of both potential gas markets, potential pipeline trajectories, and environmental impact. Echoing the report from Al-Kasim’s fact-finding mission in 1980, the World Bank study asserted the importance of maintaining long-term perspectives, of not giving in to impatience, and of employing sharper and stronger optics to increase the resolution of the petroleum resources. Before these had been designed and employed, the potential Mozambican petroleum future remained most uncertain.

⁵⁹⁴ Report from programme review, p. 8. The study referred was titled “Gas Development, Environment impact, and the Pande Project.” A copy of this report is included in Norad’s project archive.

The Energy Office extended its hesitation over what to do well into the memo's concluding section. This section, titled "The technical office's recommendation" (referring to itself), articulated the same combination of potential and uncertainty:

The technical office has full understanding for Mozambique's need to develop its gas resources and supports the World Bank's recommendations in this regard. We think that NORAD not necessarily should say yes to support the suggestions for gas-related activities which are expressed in the report from the review. (...) The World Bank's role and financial participation should be clarified as a basis for the preparations of programs NORAD will finance. NORAD's bilateral aid should then supplement the World Bank financing of the program that is being established.

With the great uncertainty that exists in the gas project, the strategy should be that Mozambique must find South African interests and the international oil industry to finance the further exploration activities for gas, such as seismic investigations and drilling and technical studies. Not until this turns out to be possible should Mozambique consider using aid funds for such an investment. (...)

We think that there should be maintained institutional support through the NPD or services from a consultant to ENH. The volume of this aid should be decided first after further discussion with ENH.

The clarification as to the need for aid for developing the gas project will by necessity take some time, and the volume of this aid will depend upon the result of the work that is being done. It will therefore be impossible at the current point in time to determine the volume of the Norwegian aid for a new 4-year-period. We therefore think that the aid to the petroleum sector during the next 2 years must be set on a yearly basis.⁵⁹⁵

Here, the Energy Office argued that building a Mozambican petroleum sector should not be a Norwegian aid project alone, yet neither should Norway stop its contributions completely. Noting that "it would surely take quite some time" to resolve the many uncertainties, the Energy Office concluded that it was "impossible at the current point in time to determine the size of the Norwegian aid for a 4-year-period." The degree of uncertainty made it impossible to fit Mozambican natural gas into the temporal cycles of the Norwegian aid administration. "We therefore think that the aid to the petroleum sector the next 2 years must be determined on a yearly basis."

⁵⁹⁵ Report from programme review, pp. 9-10. Norwegian quote: "Fagkontoret har full forståelse for Mosambiks behov for å utnytte sine gassressurser, og støtter Verdensbankens anbefalinger på dette punkt. Vi mener at NORAD ikke uten videre bør si ja til å støtte de forslag til gassrelaterte aktiviteter som framkommer i rapporten fra gjennomgangen. (...) Verdensbankens rolle og finansielle deltakelse bør avklares som grunnlag for utarbeidelsen av program NORAD skal finansiere. NORAD's bilaterale bistand bør så supplere Verdensbankens finansiering av det program som utarbeides. // Med den store usikkerhet som finnes i gassprosjektet, bør strategien være at Mosambik må få sør-afrikanske interesser og den internasjonale oljeindustrien til å finansiere de videre leteaktivitetene etter gass, som seismiske undersøkelser og borer og tekniske studier. Først dersom dette viser seg umulig, bør Mosambik vurdere å bruke bistandsmidler til en slik investering. (...) // Vi mener at det bør opprettholdes en institusjonell støtte gjennom OD eller tjenester fra konsulent til ENH. Størrelsen av denne bistanden kan først fastsettes etter nærmere diskusjon med ENH. // Avklaringen når det gjelder behovet for bistand til utvikling av gassprosjektet vil nødvendigvis ta en del tid, og størrelsen på denne bistanden vil avhenge av resultatet av det arbeid som gjøres. Det vil derfor være umulig på det nåværende tidspunkt å fastsette størrelsen på den norske bistanden for en ny 4-års-periode. Vi mener derfor at bistanden til petroleumsektoren de nærmeste 2 årene må fastsettes på årlig basis."

The Energy Office thus accepted that the issue of natural gas would require a long-term approach, but they at the same time did not allow Norad to be very patient. Instead of the established temporal horizons they suggested an ad-hoc solution which did not commit Norad to anything beyond a one-year timeframe. To that end, they in effect concurred with the Country Study team in accepting to support activities in the near future, but not in the distant future. Hence, The Energy Office suggested that the Norwegian approach to the Mozambican petroleum program should be to take part in activities in the *present* without making commitments for the *future*.

What would this amount to in practice? The review team had made several recommendations in their report, of which the two main strands were to enhance the so-called institutional cooperation between the petroleum administrations of Mozambique and Norway and furthermore to expand the program into what they termed an “integrated energy approach” (table 5.4).

CHPT.	QUOTE/EXCERPT FROM THE REPORT	COMMENTS ⁵⁹⁶
6.3.	It is therefore of paramount importance that the Mozambican government be boosted with relevant technical, financial, operational, legal taxation, marketing and industrial expertise and advice in order to handle the next phases of the gas utilization schemes. Mozambique will require substantial [assistance?], as well the training of their own staff, in these fields.	[No specific comment to this quote was included from the Energy Office.]
8.1.2	Staff should also be given real monetary incentives to participate on limited time basis in the type of regional development activities proposed (Chapter 9).	Review team is here entering into discussions that are beyond their mandate.
8.3.1	The continuation of the exploration efforts established under the Norwegian support programme. For this momentum to be sustained, Norwegian support will be needed; in the form of finance for certain seismic studies, data studies, and external promotion.	[No specific comment to this quote was included from the Energy Office.]
8.3.2	This chapter describes models for the cooperation. It is said that: In view of the limited practical training and experience being offered to the Mozambican staff in ENH, and the emergency of new professional fields and tasks as a result of the coming down-stream activities, a closer institutional cooperation will be required.	[No specific comment to this quote was included from the Energy Office.]
8.4	During discussion in Maputo, ENH have stressed the need for continued support, particularly in maintaining and further developing the functions that have been, or need to be, established.	The impression after having gone through Chapter 8.4, is that the Review Team is bringing forth the ENH’s suggestions.
10.5	Chapter 10 concerns the future Norwegian aid, and is a summary of what has previously been said in the report. In ch. 10.5 it is given a recommendation for the further Norwegian aid. It says: The traditional assistance towards the licensing effort can be gradually reduced to a viable minimum level.	In the budget in ch. 10.6, NOK 4,0 mill is included for this. I.e. 1,0 mill pr.year.

⁵⁹⁶ Report from programme review, pp. 5-8. (Norwegian quotes have been translated into English.)

	<p>Mozambique will be very much dependent on Norway in building institutional competence within the gas sector.</p> <p>Ultimately, the country will also require some support in the operational phase.</p> <p>Future requirements will call upon a much wider variety of expertise with increasing weight on downstream activities and the challenges of managing an integrated corporation.</p> <p>Whereas the thrust of Norwegian support has so far been in the exploration sector, further assistance must be based on an integrated energy approach.</p> <p>Concerns the needs for institutional cooperation. It is said that: A focal coordinating unit for gas/energy, with access to the various types of expertise would therefore seem desirable. Such a focal unit can be established either internally or externally. NORAD is well advised to look into this possibility.</p>	<p>The drawback is that we have to do with different secretaries.</p> <p>Institutional cooperation will most likely not be an option beyond what the Petroleum Directorate might contribute.</p>
10.6	Provides a budget for the Norwegian aid for the period of 1993-1996. [...]Sum: 36-45 mill.	The budget numbers seem somewhat high. Summarizing the individual activities give 36 mill. It is not provided an explanation for how the upper limit has been settled.

Table 5.4. The Energy Office's comments to the conclusions of the MOZ 032 project review report.

As shown in table 5.4, the review team asserted that “closer institutional cooperation will be needed” to enable ENH to do the wide new range of tasks that would come with the utilization of natural gas (referred to as the “downstream activities”). This included both continued expert advice and training of staff. Furthermore, with downstream activities came the “challenges of managing an integrated operation”, which also meant that the kinds of advice and training needed was about to be radically expanded. For this reason, the Review Team suggested to expand the range of expertise Norad made available. Furthermore, they advised to see the natural gas less in relation to petroleum explorations and more in relation to energy consumption. This was what they referred to as “an integrated energy approach”, and they argued that further Norwegian aid “must be based” on this approach.

The Energy Office rejected several of the Review Team's suggestions. They concurred that the aid program should be based on institutional cooperation between ENH and NPD, but anything beyond this “would hardly be an option”. They also hesitated with embracing the integrated energy approach, noting that “the drawback is that we have to do with different ministries” (see table 5.6). The points to which the Energy Office did *not* object were the general recommendation of continuing the program. Continuation, the team recommended, should include less funding for exploration studies and more and closer cooperation between the sister offices of petroleum administration. In this way, the memo opened for a shift in aid practices from the funding of specific studies, office equipment, and individual experts, to the funding of long-term institutional cooperation, although, paradoxically on a year-to-year basis.

Before finalizing their recommendation on what to do next with the MOZ 032 petroleum program, the Energy Office awaited the opinion of the Norwegian Petroleum

Directorate. In its nine-page memo, the NPD summarized the findings of the review team's two reports, endorsed their analyses, and recommended the continuation of the Norwegian aid programs. Per Blystad, who was also the staff member responsible for NPD's Mozambique portfolio, wrote in the margins on the first page: "NPD supports by and large the suggestions of the evaluation team!"⁵⁹⁷

The NPD was mainly concerned with whether the efforts to find and utilize natural gas were worthwhile. They noted that major gas fields had been found and that the ENH had been "developed into capable technical unit", but that the distance to potential gas markets was considerable. Given that NPD's involvement in Mozambique had been decreasing during the past years, it was harder for NPD to assess the Mozambique report than the Tanzania report. They nevertheless supported the review team in that the program should continue, albeit on a modest level:

The NPD has a weaker basis of assessment for the Mozambique project than Tanzania since the NPD's work has been less in Mozambique. This regards especially the past few years there since the NPD has only had a support function for Ragnar Kihle who is ENH's advisor. The NPD agrees with the group that the aid to Mozambique should continue within the frame of a livable minimum to ensure that Mozambique also in the future will continue to benefit from the investments and the work that has been done under the Norwegian aid.⁵⁹⁸

The NPD here suggested to continue the aid program "within the frame of a livable minimum" to ensure that the investments and work already done would not be lost. Continuing the program albeit on a reduced level would ensure that what had been already built would be maintained, which in turn would potentially benefit Mozambique "in the future".

A key point of concern for the NPD was the uncertainty of the petroleum resources. Entering into a discussion on what fields were most commercially promising, they also outlined the work that would have to be done to realize these promises. A set of studies were too uncertain, the NPD argued, mainly because there was still too little and too limited data. Even for the most promising and well-studied Pande gas field, for which "the seismic coverage was fairly good" after Norad had funded data collection in 1990, there was a "need for better data coverage to enable a more reliable evaluation of the field". This could in part be traced back to the 1960s when the first wells had been drilled without being "properly logged"; but also to newer studies, such as one done by a Soviet team in 1991, where the NPD (in a review funded by Norad) had identified "major weaknesses in the calculation of resources, e.g. there was bad documentation of core data and maps".⁵⁹⁹ Hence, despite numerous activities, in part funded by Norwegian aid funds, the Mozambican petroleum

⁵⁹⁷ Letter, NPD to Norad's Energy Office, 10.7.1992. Att Even Sund, signed head of division Finn Roar Aamodt and special advisor Per Blystad. Norwegian quote: "OD støtter stort sett forslagene til evalueringsgruppen!" Norad A-6300, 431-MOZ032-2.

⁵⁹⁸ Letter, NPD to Norad's Energy Office, 10.7.1992. Norwegian quote: "OD har et svakere vurderingsgrunnlag for Mozambique-prosjektet enn Tanzania ettersom OD's innsats har vært mindre i Mozambique. Dette gjelder særlig de siste år der OD kun har hatt en støttefunksjon for Ragnar Kihle som er ENH's rådgiver. // OD er enig med gruppen i at hjelpen til Mozambique bør fortsette innenfor rammen av et levelig minimum for å sikre at de investeringer og det arbeid som er gjort under den norske bistanden skal komme Mozambique til gode også i framtida.»

⁵⁹⁹ Letter, NPD to Norad's Energy Office, 10.7.1992, pp. 7-8.

resources were still hard to see properly. This made it hard for the NPD to conclude about what Norad should do next. They did support the review team's suggestion of increasing the ENH's capacity to handle natural gas, yet not without hesitation: "It is in our opinion difficult to specify the scope of this until evaluation work and market studies have proceeded further."⁶⁰⁰

Summarizing their recommendations, the NPD suggested to reduce the budgets and only continue with a limited amount of institutional support "for activities such as storage of data, maintenance and use of data equipment, office supplies and travels." In this way, the activities would keep going while awaiting further clarifications. Following the move from oil to natural gas, "the need for expert help will be shifting" from oil exploration to utilization of natural gas. Indirectly, then, they suggested to terminate the contract with the one Norwegian consultant who had been working in and out of Mozambique during the past decade. Furthermore, they suggested a more structural shift of the aid – not simply an exchange of individual experts, but a more active engagement by the NPD:

The Petroleum Directorate may probably play a more active role in Mozambique and Tanzania than they have done during the past years. This may especially be relevant if there are launched major NORAD missions. There is a need for a larger review of all relevant NORAD projects in order to assess the activities in these two countries in a total context.⁶⁰¹

This last point puzzled Even Sund, prompting him to write a question mark in the margins. What the NPD was envisioning here might have been a regional petroleum study, where the assessment of petroleum potentials was not confined to national borders. Or it may have referred to an assessment of the entire Norwegian petroleum assistance, across the globe, which in 1992 amounted to 10 countries, according the NPD's own annual reports. This world of Norwegian petroleum aid might have been "the total context" of the two country projects whose reviews the NPD was here commenting upon.

With that, all actors involved had stated their support to continuing the MOZ 032 petroleum sector program. The next day, Even Sund, head of the Energy Office, forwarded the NPD's memo to his colleague and commented:

Against the background of this and the review we should send our recommendation to the 2 res.rep.s who then should confer with AFR on a principal level whether support should be continued.⁶⁰²

In this way, the Energy Office outlined the trajectory for the continuation of the program: It had gained the support by both the review team, Norad's Energy Office, and the NPD, but it would also have to be endorsed by the country specialists at the Maputo Office and the area

⁶⁰⁰ Letter, NPD to Norad's Energy Office, 10.7.1992, p. 8. Norwegian quote: "Det er etter vår mening vanskelig å konkretisere omfang av dette før evalueringsarbeid og markedsstudier er kommet lenger."

⁶⁰¹ Letter, NPD to Norad's Energy Office, 10.7.1992, p. 8-9. Norwegian quote: "Oljedirektoratet kan trolig spille en mer aktiv rolle i Mozambique og Tanzania enn de har gjort de siste år. Dette vil særlig kunne bli aktuelt dersom det blir igangsatt totale NORAD-engasjement. Det er behov for en større gjennomgang av alle aktuelle NORAD-prosjekter for å kunne vurdere innsatsen i disse to land i en total sammenheng."

⁶⁰² Letter, NPD to Norad's Energy Office, 10.7.1992, p. 1. Norwegian quote: "På bakgrunn av dette og gjennomgangen bør vi sende vår anbefaling til de 2 Res.Rep'er som så bør ta opp med AFR på prinsipielt grunnlag om støtte bør videreføres."

specialists in Norad's Africa Division. Hence, although having been approved as worthy of continuation in a petroleum context, it would also have to be formally approved from staff working within the country context. As shown both in Chapter 3 and earlier in this chapter, contradictions between the concern for the country context and the petroleum context had several times caused tensions between staff in different offices and units of the Norwegian aid administration. In order to navigate safely around the potential contradictions and tensions, the Energy Office this time made sure to synchronize everyone involved around the writing and circulation of documents.

Synchronizing documents, meetings, and offices

To avoid problems and delays, the Energy Office tried to ensure that the proposal to continue the program followed the correct procedure when moving through the aid administration. After having obtained support from the NPD, the Energy Office in late August 1992 explicated the process ahead in a memo to the Maputo Office. A chain of documents would have to be written and circulated in a specific sequence. The memo here outlined a complicated synchronization of multiple documents, offices, and meetings, which should take place within an already strict timeline.⁶⁰³

The different elements all depended upon each other; most of all, the whole operation depended on obtaining one document from ENH: the so-called *project document*. Echoing the 1980 process of articulating the initial project, when the Energy Office had needed to receive a formal request from Mozambique to move ahead, they were also now dependent on ENH to submit a project document, and therefore explicitly asked the Maputo Office to remind ENH about this. Moreover, they specified that the project document should "mainly be in line with the recommendations from the program review". Indeed, if there were discrepancies between the ENH's document and the review team's report, "Norad should follow the technical recommendations". Hence, although the aid project in theory should be articulated by the recipient itself, the ENH's priorities might in practice be trumped by the Norwegian review team's recommendations.

⁶⁰³ Memo, Energy Office to Maputo Office, "MOZ 032 – Mosambik, videreføring av bistanden til petroleumssektoren", 24.8.1992. Norad A-6300, 431-MOZ032-2. Norwegian quote: "Fagkontoret støtter rapporten og Oljedirektoratets anbefalinger. Saksgangen videre må nå være at Mosambik utarbeider et prosjektdokument som danner grunnlaget for Norads bevilgningsdokument. Bevilgningsdokumentet må ferdigstilles og behandles i Rådgivende Forum i uke 38 for å ha NORADs beslutning klar før landprogramforhandlingene. Vi forutsetter da at Mosambiks prosjektdokument, som bør foreligge i uke 36, i hovedtrekk vil være i tråd med anbefalingene i utarbeidelsen av bevilgningsdokumentet, og stå på disse synspunkt i de forestående forhandlingene med Mosambik. Det litt uheldige i saken er at årets landprogramforhandlinger kommer før sektormøte. D.v.s. at det ikke blir anledning til å gjennomdrøfte innholdet i sektorbidanden med ENH før det framlegges som sak under landprogramforhandlingene. Bevilgningsdokumentet kan derfor ikke gjøres for spesifikt når det gjelder innholdet i bistanden, men henviser til sektormøte i uke 50 hvor videre detaljering vil foregå.// Vi bekrefter vårt tidligere utsagn om at vi gjerne påtar oss å utarbeide bevilgningsdokumentet, samt utkast til landavtale. Representasjonen må imidlertid purre på ENH for å få fram prosjektdokumentet til uke 36. Vi antar at dere sender det til oss på telefax så snart det foreligger.»

Transforming the evaluation optic into a planning tool

One week later, the Director General of the ENH, Mr. Mário Marques, wrote a letter to Norad's Maputo Office endorsing the program review with only a few minor remarks. The ENH concurred with the review's recommendations to the extent that they suggested simply using the review team's report as the project document:

Subject: Programme review of the Norwegian assistance to the petroleum sector in Mozambique and appraisal of future assistance
Reference is made to the report from the Project Review Team, who visited Mozambique earlier this year.

We describe in Appendix A some minor comments to the information in the report. As we agree in general with the findings, comments and proposals from the Project review Team, we would like to propose the report to be used as project document for the next Petroleum Sector Agreement. In Appendix B, we describe a proposed budgetary framework for the NORAD Assistance to Mozambique in the Petroleum Sector from the period 1993 to 1996.⁶⁰⁴

In this way, the ENH suggested to redefine the project review into a project document. In doing so, they would avoid writing a new document. Indeed, it was on any occasion supposed to have built directly on the review team's report, as the Energy Office had explicitly requested. As seen in the analysis of the report above, the Team had built many of their recommendations on the ENH's needs as these had been articulated by ENH themselves. The ENH in this way suggested to skip the making of yet another translation and instead redefine the existing documents.

The ENH was not the only actor reading the project review as a potential project document: So did the World Bank. In a letter to the Maputo Office, the team leader of the Bank's Gas and Oil Group (which was part of the Energy Sector Management Assistance Programme, which in turn was a joint program of the World Bank and the UNDP), the Norwegian Petter Nore, referred to the review as a draft program:

Program Review of the Petroleum Sector in Mozambique

We refer to your letter of June 23 (TOT/431 MOZ 032.2) and our preliminary answer on July 24, 1992 concerning the above question.

We have reviewed the draft program of the Norwegian assistance to the petroleum sector in Mozambique (Nopec, May 1992). Given the present activity of the petroleum sector in Mozambique, the overall economic and energy situation of the country it seems wholly appropriate that an important part of the future NORAD funding is earmarked for the natural gas sector. This is in line with Bank policy. As you know, the World Bank/ESMAP has lately been active in supporting efforts by ENH to develop the Pande gas field. We gratefully acknowledge the support which the Norwegian government has given to this work.

We find of particular interest and value in the suggestion that institutional and regulatory issues need to be dealt with in more detail than has been the case in connection with the development of the gas sector in Mozambique. [...]

⁶⁰⁴ Letter, ENH to Resident Representative, Norad, Maputo, 31.08.1992, signed Mário Marques. Norad A-6300, 431-MOZ032-2.

I will be in Mozambique from September 3-6, 1992 and look forward to having more in-depth discussions with you then.⁶⁰⁵

In this way, the World Bank entered the discussion between the Norwegian aid offices over the future of the Mozambican petroleum program. Reading the review not only as an assessment of what had been done, but also of what to do next, the Bank endorsed several of its specific suggestions. From the Bank's perspective, however, the Norwegian aid program was but one of many components which together made up the landscape of foreign assistance to Mozambique's gas sector, and Nore emphasized "the importance to ensure a close coordination between the work of the World Bank, the Mozambique government and NORAD". The Bank's own role was yet unclear, as was Norad's, but their possible roles would "be clarified during this autumn".

Writing the word "Urgent!" on the top of the first page, the Maputo Office sent off a memo to Oslo with their comments on what the new sector agreement for the Mozambican petroleum aid should become. Attached were the letters from ENH and the World Bank. By now, there was no longer a question *whether* the aid should be continued, only *how*. It was also well established that the object of the Norwegian aid was to assist in grasping *natural gas*, not *oil*. The Maputo Office noted that ENH had submitted budgets that were far higher than what they had signaled in earlier meetings, and suggested reducing the total budget to 20 million Norwegian kroner over a 3-year period. If these budget changes were made, the Maputo Office concluded, "the report is to be considered as ENH's project document".⁶⁰⁶

With that, the report from the project review was formally transformed into a project document. The planning of a continued petroleum sector program could begin.

Yet another version of evaluation?

In this section of the chapter, I have analyzed how a project review of the MOZ 032 petroleum sector program was designed and employed. In conceiving of the review as an optic of evaluation, I have noted how the making of the optic happened through the writing of a string of documents. Early on in the process, key premises were laid simply by modelling the optic upon another similar optic. This, I argued, had practical implications for how the optic could be used, what it would enable aid staff to see, and thereby also what the evaluated object would become.

From start to finish, the process of designing and employing the project review took more than two years. During this time, the name and genre of the optic kept shifting: The idea of a project-specific "assessment" was first articulated in the *Mozambique Country Study and Norwegian Aid Review*, which had been finalized in July 1990. During the fall of 1990, Norad's Energy Office picked up the idea and made an "independent review" part of the agenda the annual petroleum sector program meeting, which was to be held in Maputo in

⁶⁰⁵ Letter, World Bank/EMPA to Norad's Maputo Office, 24.8.1992, signed Petter Nore. Received by fax 25.08.1992. Norad A-6300, 431-MOZ032-2.

⁶⁰⁶ Memo, Maputo Office to Energy Office, "Petroleumsektoren i Mosambik – ny sektoravtale", 3.9.1992. Påtegnet kommentar: "Haster!" Norwegian quote: "Med disse endringer og Appendix B, er rapporten å anse som ENH's prosjektdokument." Norad A-6300, 431-MOZ032-2.

December, 1990. The meeting agreed to initiate an “independent evaluation” of the program. In April, 1991, the Energy Office started circulating drafts for a Terms of Reference document describing how the “independent project review” should be undertaken. The final version was approved in September and sent to prospective consultancy firms, who submitted project proposals in October. In December, 1991, one year after the review had been initiated, Norad and Nopec signed a contract. The review team started their work in January, 1992, and submitted their report from their “program review” in June. The Energy Office received comments to the “evaluation” from the NPD in July, and decided in early August, 1992, to continue the program, albeit in a changed form. The World Bank referred to the report both as a “program review” and as a “draft program”. The Mozambican government, endorsed the report, proposed to use it as a “project document” and attached an updated budget. The Norad’s Maputo Office made some alterations to the budget and forwarded it all to Oslo in early September, 1992. Upon receiving this “project document”, the Energy Office promptly started navigating it through the hoops of Norad’s country program planning routines.

I have accentuated these numerous ways in which the optic was conceived in order to show how the genres and optics of evaluation, regardless of the increasing formalization and standardization of the aid administration’s ways of writing and evaluating aid, maintained a considerable flexibility. This point has two aspects: Firstly, there were numerous moments during the preparation process in which aid staff had to decide upon specifics of how the optic was to be built. The choices made influenced the properties of the optic and thus what it would enable staff to see and ultimately conclude. Secondly, both during preparations and upon reading the finalized report, different actors kept interpreting the document in different ways – as an evaluation, as a review, and as a project document. To that end, the document enabled, to use Harry Collins’ term, considerable *interpretive flexibility*.⁶⁰⁷

This interpretive flexibility of the project review was not merely an effect of ambiguous statements or unclear arguments; rather, as I have shown, it was from the start *built into* the optic itself. The full title of the optic was “programme review of the Norwegian assistance to the petroleum sector and appraisal of further assistance”. The word *and* is key: The review was never meant to restrict itself to assessing past aid work, it should *also* be an appraisal of potentially continued assistance. (The phrases had varied between each draft and memo, cf. table 5.1.) This double objective – looking simultaneously backwards and forwards in time – was also materialized in the structure of the report. This made it possible to interpret the report both as an evaluation and as a planning document. Indeed, it was trying to be both.

The report’s combination of evaluation and planning also made it different from both evaluation documents and planning documents. In the evaluation team’s version of evaluation, the genres of planning, monitoring, and evaluation had distinct differences: They involved different kinds of documents, different offices, and different circuits of circulation. Furthermore, they were to be done at different stages of an aid project’s life. In the *Handbook of Evaluation Questions*, the evaluation staff had described a comprehensive chain of

⁶⁰⁷ Collins 1975.

documents which in combination would make Norwegian aid an evaluable object, starting with appraisals through continuous monitoring to external evaluations. This linearity presupposed a sharp definitions of when, how, and by whom the different devices and optics should be used. Yet in my analysis of the MOZ 032 project review, this linearity dissolves completely.

The review team's working definition of evaluation most likely contributed to dissolving this linearity. As I showed in Chapter 3, the staff of the Norwegian Petroleum Directorate, notably the then Director of Planning Farouk Al-Kasim, considered thorough evaluation of petroleum data to constitute a indispensable and integrated part of oil administration. In the NPD, evaluation work was a most central task, something that should precede planning and be continuously updated. Incidentally, the same Farouk Al-Kasim, now in the capacity of independent consultant, led the team that undertook the project review of the MOZ 032 Petroleum Sector Program. While he adopted the language of results assessment which was becoming a part of the Norwegian aid administration in 1990, the evaluation of the petroleum resources remained a fundamental part of the review, and based on which they articulated potential next steps for the Mozambican government and the Norwegian aid program.

The review's dual objective of both assessing past work and suggesting future work also had the implication, I have argued in this section, that the program was likely to continue, despite repeated suggestions of it being reduced and closed down. The optic from the outset combined the question of *whether* the program should continue with the question of *how* the program could best continue. Indeed, the latter was made dependent on the former; the review team was asked to articulate the how only *if* they concluded that the program should be continued. Yet by requesting the two be answered in the one and same report, I have argued, the Energy Office in practice made it far more likely for the program to continue than to be stopped.

The interpretive flexibility of the project review also extended to the nature object itself, which continued to be difficult to grasp: Was there any oil to speak of? Was there enough natural gas for exploitation to be commercially viable? How strong were the existing geological data and analyses? Even the current context was open to interpretation: What effects would the end of the Cold War, the South African apartheid regime, and the end of the Mozambican civil war have upon the potential of Mozambican natural gas? In addition came the shifting landscape of foreign aid to the sector: The World Bank was joining in, the post-Soviet actors were pulling out, while the Norwegian aid administration hesitated to commit to a new sector program.

In navigating this shifting landscape, the staff of the Mozambican petroleum administration, the state oil company ENH, was also expected by to attain full responsibility for the sector program. This was in line with the new Norwegian aid strategy for the 1990s, in which *recipient responsibility* was a key concept. As I showed above, the Energy Office had asserted this point when reading the review team's report: "The use of Norwegian aid funds

have been managed by ENH, and it is them who must take the burden of the deficiencies.” Yet this notion was still new at that point in time. The ENH, as all other recipients of Norwegian aid, were expected to attain both the formal responsibility and the practical work of planning and doing the activities of the aid program.

The ENH’s swift reinterpretation of the project review into a project document must be understood in this respect: Not only were the ENH staff learning how to make Mozambique a petroleum nation, they also had to learn how to become a responsible aid recipient. This added an extra complication to the already complicated process of handling the potential of oil and natural gas. In the next and last section of this chapter, I will turn to analyzing what the concept of recipient responsibility entailed in practice, which involves investigating how the concept was articulated in a new kind of program documents.

The transformative capacity of documents

In this last section of the last chapter of this thesis, I will return to Asdal’s notion of the transformative capacity of documents. In the following, I will show how the continuation of the petroleum sector program required articulating the program in new ways, more specifically, to write their documents differently. This begs the question: How did this change the program, if at all? And how did these document changes relate to broader transformations of Norwegian aid at large at the turn of the 1990s?

By September 1992, the Norwegian petroleum sector program in Mozambique, the so-called MOZ 032, was on the verge of reinvigoration. Much had changed since the initial project idea was articulated in 1980: First of all, it was no longer an oil aid project. Already in 1983, the MOZ 032 had been expanded into a Petroleum Sector Program. By 1992, the lack of oil and the promise of natural gas was gearing the activities in new directions. New actors were getting involved, notably the World Bank. Norway’s role in this new situation was still unclear.

Furthermore, the coming of peace entailed a major contextual shift for the Norwegian aid program. With the end of the civil war, a dominating context of the Norwegian aid work changed. As shown in Chapter 4, the “current context” of war and crisis had been the key premise for the *Country Study and Norwegian Aid Review* in July 1990; two years later, the potential peaceful future which the Country Study had not hoped to plan for was being realized. Clearly, the economic and humanitarian crises would not be eradicated at the stroke of a pen; the security situation was however likely to improve as the violence, displacements, and destruction of infrastructure came to an end. The coming of peace may have helped put a stop to the prolonged hesitation and uncertainty that characterized Norad’s handling of the petroleum program. Peace entailed a rupture from a decade of destruction, inaugurating new, yet still uncertain times.

The civil war had had direct consequences for the MOZ 032, as the Mozambican petroleum office had experienced that international oil companies were pulling out of the exploration work because of the security situation. Hence, the opposite happened of what had

during the past years been the main goal of the MOZ 032: attracting international companies to invest in the sector. When the war ended, this situation might change. Yet the coming of peace was not explicitly addressed in Norad's internal deliberations over what to do with the aid program. The decision to continue the program coincided almost to the date with the signing of the peace agreement, but the specific articulation of the decision built on a combination of the report from project review, the NPD's comments, and the ENH's project document (which, as I showed in the previous section, was in practice the same document as the review team's report).⁶⁰⁸

Upon receiving the project document from the Maputo Office, the Energy Office started preparing two documents: *A Funding Document*, in which Norad committed itself to continue the sector program for another four years and grant a set sum of funds for its implementation, and a *Sector Agreement*, in which the two nations of Norway and Mozambique signed a legally binding contract committing themselves to realize the continued sector program.

In the following, I will first analyze the making of the new Funding Document and then new Sector Agreement. In doing so, I will show how these two documents both reflected and enabled the current ongoing transformation of the Norwegian aid administration, with its introduction of the principle of recipient responsibility, new accounting routines and, as I will now show, new routines of project planning. In sum, I will argue, the minor transformations of all aid documents and staff writing routines was what made possible this major transformation of Norwegian foreign aid at large, in which Norad changed from swiftly accommodating requests to requesting auditable accounts.

The Funding Document

Preparing the so-called Funding Document ("Bevilgningsdokument," or BD) was necessary in order to continue the sector program. As shown in the previous section of this chapter, the Energy Office had also prepared a funding document the year before in order to obtain ad-hoc funding while awaiting the conclusion of the project review. The document that the Energy Office prepared during September, 1992, bore clear resemblance to the document I analyzed in the beginning of this chapter, the 1983 Board Document, which transformed the initial oil aid project to a full-scale petroleum sector program. Both the 1983 board document and the 1992 funding document articulated the program's background, purpose, plans, and budgets. Yet two main differences are prevalent.

The first difference was how the documents followed different itineraries. Whereas the 1983 document had moved through the Norad Board and several Ministry offices, the 1992 Document circulated only among Norad offices. The Board no longer existed, and the Ministry was no longer involved in the routine work of approving new projects and programs.

⁶⁰⁸ "Norad – Bevilgningsdokument. Fortsettelse av bistanden til petroleumssektoren Mosambik. Ny 4-årig sektoravtale" [Funding Document. Continuation of aid to the petroleum sector Mozambique. New 4-year sector agreement], p. 6. Attachment to memo "MOZ032 – Petroleumssektoren Bevilgningsdokument" from ES to Norad/Maputo, 17.9.1992. Norad, A-6300, 431-MOZ032-2.

This does not mean that there were no points of control and approval; with Callon, there was indeed an obligatory passage point also in the new itinerary through which the 1992 funding document would have to pass. This was Norad's Advisory Forum, which, I have shown in this chapter, ensured that Energy Office's documents adhered to a new set of requirements: Norad should require the aid recipients to articulate results, not give any promises of swift accommodation of requests for aid, and explicate the potential of *dis*-continuing aid programs. The draft Funding Document which the Energy Office was preparing in September, 1992 would also have to pass through the Advisory Forum. Yet even upon its arrival, this draft already had attained a markedly different form than its predecessors.

This new form amounts to the second main difference between the 1992 Funding Document and the 1983 Board Document. In the draft Funding Document, a whole new set of categories had been included that were not there ten years before: a development goal, project goal, target group, results, project responsibility, and risk factors. Several sections indeed resembled those from 1983, in that they described the program's background, the planned activities, the relation to Norwegian aid policies, the present situation within the Mozambican petroleum sector, and the energy staff's conclusion and recommendation. Yet the new categories were placed up front, at the beginning of the document, before these familiar paragraphs. In this way, they made it possible to see at-a-glance how the program articulated its goals, target groups, results, and risk factors.

These new categories bore clear resemblance to what the aid evaluation staff had envisioned 12 years before: that aid staff would articulate in explicit terms the relations between a project's overarching development goal, its specific results, planned activities, material input, existing preconditions at the project site, and staff assumptions about how these categories were related. As I argued in Chapter 2, the evaluation staff as of 1981 asserted that such articulations would enable both better planning and better evaluations. Employing Latour and Woolgar's concept of *inscription devices*, I suggested to understand the evaluation staff's new tools, as they were introduced in the *Handbook of Evaluation Questions* from 1981, as precisely this: tools that enabled turning "matter into writing", thus making it possible to better see the project in retrospect and from a distance.⁶⁰⁹

How were these categories and their internal relations articulated in this specific document, and what were the effects of this new way of preparing aid projects? The precise articulations are included in table 5.7 below. These articulations show how the new program explicitly transformed its object from oil to natural gas: While reducing the oil component to merely maintaining what past aid work had already enabled, it expanded exploration and exploitation of natural gas into the program's main concern. The project goal explicitly stated this shift.

While the specifics of the project goal differed from what past documents had articulated as aims and goals for the same program, it was still a similar kind of paragraph. Articulating a project goal was not in itself something new. What was new, were the

⁶⁰⁹ Latour and Woolgar 1986. (Cf. Chapters 1 and 2.)

Categories in 1992 Funding Document	Articulations in MOZ 032 Funding Document (draft by Norad's Energy Office, September 17, 1992; changes in approved version in bold) ⁶¹⁰	Categories in 1981 Assessment Matrix
Development goal	Contribute to exploitation of natural gas potential in Mozambique for thereby generating an alternative and hopefully cheaper energy source for their own industry and households, and through export of gas gain revenues for the country.	Development goal
Project goal	The overarching project goal is a thorough assessment of the gas project, and that it attracts serious investors. Through the project Mozambique is supplied with technical assistance both on the legal and technical side , which will enable them to manage the development of their gas resources. Furthermore, the institutional infrastructure and competence that are built through the Norwegian aid is maintained.	Purpose
Target group	The target group in the short term will be the state oil company ENH, and other national institutions that are given the responsibility for development of the gas resources. These institutions will through aid build up their own competence and procure specific assignments that are necessary in the build-up and execution of the gas project. In the long term the target group will be that part of the population that is given the opportunity to make use of natural gas, or electricity from natural gas, in their daily life, and in that way increase their standard of living. Sale of gas may be expected to generate financial income from which the greater part of the population will benefit indirectly.	n/a (but emphasized elsewhere in the Handbook)
Results	It is expected that Mozambique through this aid will gain contracts for export of natural gas, and attract private investors for the different parts of the gas project. There will also have been undertaken necessary assessments and investigations related to exploitation of gas. Mozambique will also have strengthened their competency in this technical field.	Results
Project responsibility	The donor side: NORAD, Maputo The recipient side: The state oil company Empresa Nacional e Hidrocarbonetos de Mozambique (ENH)	n/a
Donor contribution	NOK 27,0 mill over a 4-year period.	n/a
Risk factors	Both NORAD and ENH have long experience from the cooperation on the petroleum sector. Based on this experience it seems to be no organizational or progress-related risk for the execution. As for the overarching result of aid which is exploitation of the Pande gas, this is surrounded with high uncertainty. The available indications both for the gas potential and the opportunity for export are however so positive that NORAD should be willing to take the risk that the project poses.	Assumptions and preconditions

Table 5.5. Articulations of the Logical Framework in the MOZ 032 Funding Document

⁶¹⁰ Draft Funding Document, september 1992, pp. 2-3. (Translated from Norwegian.)

categories surrounding the project goal: the development goal, target groups, results, and risk factors.

The first main novelty was the category of the *development goal*, which was also given the most prominent spot, first in the list of categories. Here, the program was linked to an overarching vision of a future in which Mozambique's general population had access to alternative and cheaper energy sources and also benefitted (albeit indirectly) from export revenues. While these indirect relations between the project and the population had also previously been articulated (e.g. in the 1983 Board Document), they had not before been presented as a "development goal" as such. While in 1983, potentially improved energy access and increased export revenues had been an *argument* supporting the realization of the program, it had in 1992 become the overarching *goal* towards which the program itself would have to aim.

This shift was further reflected in the category of the *target groups*. The draft document articulated two target groups: the staff of the Mozambican state oil company (ENH) and the population that might benefit from direct access to natural gas, electricity produced from natural gas, and increased export revenues. Indeed, staff within the Mozambican petroleum administration had always been the main actors on the recipient side, yet they had not previously been labeled a "target group". Including the population as a target group was a notable change which mirrored the new development goal: Supporting the ENH in building a petroleum sector was no longer sufficient alone.

The shift from oil to natural gas also affected the proposed activities of the program, which in turn affected how the expected *results* were articulated. In this category, the draft funding document stated that at the end of the four-year period, the program would have attracted investors; produced assessments of the natural gas resources; and strengthened the competence of the ENH. Clearly, the distance from program activities to the development goal was long and not expected to be bridged within the four years the program would run.

The category of *risk factors* was included as the last of the new categories that opened the draft document. According to the included paragraph, there were no apparent risks for the program as such, given the involved partners' by then long experience of cooperation. There were however considerable risks involved with handling the nature object itself; it was still uncertain how much natural gas there was, and to what extent it could be exploited. Yet given the positive indications of natural gas indeed existing, the document argued that Norad should be willing to take on this risk. Hence, the document argued that since the aid program itself was virtually without risk, it was worthwhile to take on the risk of exploring the yet uncertain Mozambican natural gas. The program might achieve its expected results even if the nature object itself refrained from materializing in the desired way.

In the remaining eight pages of the document, the Energy Office described in more detail both the specific activities of the proposed program and its expected results. It also discussed the relation between the program and Norwegian aid policies at large in a section

titled “Norwegian aid criteria”. As I showed in the previous chapter, the Country Study had argued that the Norwegian support to the Mozambican petroleum sector should be reduced in part because it fell outside the main priorities of the Norwegian aid policy. Yet in the draft document, there were no traces of the Country Study; indeed, by asserting that oil was a *priority sector* of Norwegian aid it even argued the opposite of what the Country Study had done:

The oil sector is a priority sector with regards to Norwegian aid. According to current guidelines, aid funds for this sector may not be used for risk-filled investments, such as costly exploration missions, but for activities that lead to such investments being done by oil companies. The aid will, as it is described in this document, go to institution building, technical assistance, and field investigations that must be considered necessary for attracting investors to the project. The aid will thereby be in line with the criteria for Norwegian aid.⁶¹¹

Here, the draft funding document positioned the program in relation to a set of general principles for Norwegian aid and argued that the program adhered to these principles. It thus echoed the very first project documents from 1980-81 (cf. Chapter 3) where the same line of argument was presented in order to move Mozambique’s project request through the Norwegian aid system. Would the Advisory Forum accept this argument? Or had the Energy Office and the Maputo Office designed a program that was demonstrably valuable as such, yet not when seen within the Norwegian aid context at large?

Apparently not: The paragraph quoted above emerged unchanged from the Advisory Forum’s revisions. In all, the Advisory Forum seems to have required few substantial changes this time. One minor alteration involved specifying what kind of competencies the ENH was expected to acquire through the program; in the approved version, the project goal stated that these would be “both on the legal and technical side” (cf. table 5.7).⁶¹² The one substantial revision the Advisory Forum apparently demanded the Energy Office to make, was to explicate in more detail *how* the natural gas would benefit the population. Between the draft and the approved version of the funding document, several new paragraphs had been included that articulated in more detail how this might be done.⁶¹³

⁶¹¹ Draft Funding Document, september 1992, p. 9. Norwegian quote: “Oljesektoren er en prioritert sektor når det gjelder norsk bistand. I henhold til gjeldende retningslinjer skal bistandsmidler til denne sektoren ikke benyttes til risikofylte investeringer, som f.eks. kostbare leteoperasjoner, men til aktiviteter som fører til at slike investeringer foretas av oljeselskaper. Bistanden vil, slik den beskriver i dette dokumentet, gå til institusjonsbygging, faglig bistand, samt feltundersøkelser som må ansees nødvendig for å kunne tiltrekke investorer til prosjektet. Bistanden vil således være i tråd med kriteriene for norsk bistand.”

⁶¹² Draft Funding Document, september 1992, pp. 5-6. Compared to p. 5 in revised version of the same document, submitted to the Advisory Forum for final approval 6.10.1992, attachment to memo “MOZ032 – Sektorprogram Petroleum – BD 31/92”, from ES to SAFR, copy to ResRep Maputo. Norad, A-6300, 431-MOZ032-2.

⁶¹³ “Norad – Bevilgningsdokument. Fortsettelse av bistanden til petroleumssektoren Mosambik. Ny 4-årig sektoravtale,” p. 5. submitted to the Advisory Forum for final approval 06.10.92, attached to memo “MOZ032 – Sektorprogram Petroleum – BD 31/92”, from ES to SAFR, copy to ResRep Maputo. Norad, A-6300, 431-MOZ032-2. The approved version of the Funding Document explained that Mozambique was planning a pilot project in which natural gas from the Pande gas field would be transferred by pipeline to the area of Vilankulos, and described in some detail where the pipeline would go, that it would be built with the possibility of extensions to other regions. It furthermore stated that Norwegian funding would be necessary for enabling this part of project. The section concluded by linking the natural gas with reducing deforestation and improving working

After these changes were made, the Advisory Forum approved the new Funding Document. With that, the Norwegian petroleum sector program in Mozambique moved another step closer to being continued. By employing the new categories of project planning (development goal, project goal, target group, results, and risk factors), it articulated the program in a way that the evaluation staff as of 1981 could only have envisioned. Yet the Funding Document as of 1992 also diverged from their vision of how aid might be made an evaluable object: The articulation of responsibility, budget, and risk factors were all new elements, while the evaluation staff's categories of data, indicators, and means of verification were not there.

When compared to the two planning tools introduced in the 1981 *Handbook of Evaluation Questions*, the "goal pyramid" and the "assessment matrix" (which I analyzed as *inscription devices* in Chapter 2), the new categories employed in the 1992 Funding Document seem like a combination of the two: Both adding and omitting categories from both and turning them into one vertical column. How did this reworking of the evaluation staff's concepts end up being used by the Energy Office in their preparations for continuing the petroleum sector program in Mozambique? While I cannot answer this question in full, I will in the next section suggest how the translation most likely took place.

The Logical Framework Approach

In order to understand how the concepts from the *Handbook of Evaluation Questions* attained a prominent position in the Energy Office's Funding Document, it is necessary to return to the time of the Handbook's publication in the early 1980s. This was where the so-called *goal pyramid*, a planning tool by which aid staff would articulate an aid project through the interlinked concepts of development goal, purpose, results, input, activities, and preconditions, had first been introduced to the Norwegian aid administration (cf. Chapter 2). Norad's evaluation staff had prepared the Handbook during the years of 1978-80, published in January 1981 and promoted within Norad during the following years.

At first, the evaluation staff's new approach had been met with resistance in parts of the aid administration, notably from the Office of Plan and Program (P&P, from here on: the Planning Office). The Planning Office argued that the Evaluation Office was going beyond their mandate in suggesting comprehensive changes not only for evaluation work, but also for how aid in general was to be planned, implemented, and monitored. In a series of sharp memos written during the fall of 1981, the Evaluation Office and the Planning Office struggled over where the boundary between their respective mandates should go.⁶¹⁴

conditions for women. Norwegian quote: "På lengre sikt er det ønskelig at elektrisitet også kan erstatte ved som energi, i private husholdninger, bl.a. til koking. I dag fører bruk av ved til avskoging i tettbebygde strøk i Mosambik. Overgang fra ved til elektrisitet vil også bedre kvinnenes arbeidssituasjon, for som regel må de gå store avstander for å sanke ved."

⁶¹⁴ The Planning Office was negative to the Evaluation Office's suggestions because they considered them to overlap with their own work, notably project monitoring and project reviews; they therefore suggested additional evaluation guidelines to which the Evaluation Office in turn objected. The latter did however acknowledge a need for drawing clearer boundaries between evaluations and project reviews, yet they maintained that the Planning Office's suggestions was in direct opposition to the mandate of the Evaluation Office: "Our conclusion

While the Evaluation Office met resistance from the Planning Office, they experienced support elsewhere, notably from staff working in Norad's Training Office (*Opplæringskontoret*). Eli Sletten, who had both practical experience and theoretical training in education, was one of the staff members organizing training programs for Norad staff, Peace Corps volunteers, and technical experts going abroad for work in field offices or Norad-funded projects. Sletten was developing a new training program in project management as a means to expand Norad's leadership training. In cooperation with the Evaluation Office she invited aid staff from Western Germany (GTZ) and the UNDP to Norway to give workshops on a specific planning method, the so-called "Logical Project Analysis". Yet Sletten's initiative came to a halt in 1984 with the establishment of the new Ministry of Development Cooperation, as this entailed that the plans that had been made for leadership training in Norad would have to be redone.⁶¹⁵

Not until four years later, in 1988, Slettens initiative was reinvigorated. The timing coincided with the appointment of a new Norad Director, Per. Ø. Grimstad.⁶¹⁶ In January 1988, Sletten together with staff in the Planning Office (the same office that seven years before had been critical of the same idea) started discussing how the method of Logical Project Analysis could be implemented in Norad: they outlined a strategy for implementation, commissioned consultants to prepare a handbook on the method, re-established contact with the GTZ, and made new contacts within FAO, ILO, and Danida (the Danish aid agency).⁶¹⁷ In June, 1988, Sletten together with two Norad colleagues and the commissioned consultants participated in a five-day training session at GTZ. During the fall, they invited FAO's course organizer to Norway to give a one-day introduction to Norad's top management.⁶¹⁸

The initiative was soon expanded into the so-called "Working Group on Methods Development" (mainly referred to as "the Methods Group"), which took on the task of developing and implementing the method, that by then was mostly called *the Logical*

is that the Planning Office's draft to supplementing guidelines are completely at odds with the approved guidelines that the evaluation work follows. The draft involves a reduction of the evaluation work in NORAD, both quantitatively and with regards to the evaluations' independent and critical character. If these guidelines are approved, the need for a distinct evaluation office in NORAD will no longer exist." Norwegian quote: "Vår konklusjon er at P&P-avdelingens utkast til supplerende retningslinjer er helt i strid med de vedtatte retningslinjer evalueringsarbeidet foregår etter. Utkastet innebærer en svekkelse av evalueringsarbeidet i NORAD, både kvantitativt og hva gjelder evalueringenes uavhengige og kritiske karakter. Hvis disse retningslinjene blir tatt til følge, vil behovet for et eget evalueringskontor i NORAD ikke lenger være tilstede.» Memo, Evaluation Office to Deputy Director General, "Kommentarer til P&Ps forslag til supplerende retningslinjer for evaluering", 24.08.81. Norad A-4429, folders 840. Related memos in folders 840, 841, 842.

⁶¹⁵ Interview, Eli Sletten, May 23, 2014.

⁶¹⁶ Per Ø. Grimstad, an engineer, was appointed head of Norad in 1988. Having worked during the 1960s and 1970s for Norwegian firms and on UN missions to Tanzania, he was a staff member of Norconsult 1980-1986 and state secretary in the Ministries of Industry and of Trade until 1988. Cf. Liland and Kjerland 2003, p. 131ff. In 1991, Grimstad wrote an opinion piece about the effects of aid in a national newspaper, stating that "my worries are fundamental and existential (...) Does aid work? Are we approaching it in the right way? Are the results comparable to the input?" Quoted in Liland and Kjerland 2003, p. 131 (my translation).

⁶¹⁷ "Annual Report 1989 for Working Group on Methods Development", p. 1. Signed Eli Sletten, 9.1.1990. Attachment to memo from the Working Group for Methods Development to the Executive Director's Office via head of Africa section, 9. January 1990. Norad, A-5985, 273-22.

⁶¹⁸ Methods Group Annual Report 1989, p. 1.

Framework Approach, or LFA.⁶¹⁹ During 1989, the Methods Group prepared a three-step training program for all Norad staff: an introductory course to LFA, an advanced course in LFA, and a course for staff wanting to become LFA trainers. The Norad Director formally approved a mandate for the Methods Group on November 1, 1989 and devoted a half-time position to rolling out the training program. During 1989 and 1990, all Norad's staff members were called to take part in the training program and start adopting the new method in their daily work.⁶²⁰

The Logical Framework Approach closely resembled the goal pyramid and the assessment matrix, as these were described in the 1981 *Handbook of Evaluation Questions*, although it did not use these two terms. In place of these two devices, the LFA method used the so-called *program matrix*, which combined and also expanded its predecessors. The main principle of articulating *one goal* and have this one goal guide the further set-up of an aid project was the same in both versions. In the LFA version, the concern for goals was accentuated further by the phrase used to explain the method, notably "objectives-oriented planning", i.e. planning that took the objectives as both its point of departure and its point of reference. The title of the handbook that was prepared as part of the training program reflected this: *The Logical Framework Approach. Handbook for objectives-oriented planning*.⁶²¹ This handbook described a comprehensive process of developing the program matrix in workshops where participants articulated new aid projects step-by-step by writing and rewriting the different elements of the matrix (see table 5.8 for a summarized version of this process).

The LFA handbook was published in Norwegian and English in February 1990. It was written by the same consultant who two years later wrote the expanded version of the Ministry's evaluation handbook (cf. Chapter 4).⁶²² In this way, the development of methods for aid evaluation and aid planning were clearly directly related. At the same time, what had in 1981 been introduced as one coherent approach (called "Systematic Aid Assessment") was by 1992 split into two distinct fields, aid planning and aid evaluation, each with their own handbook and handled by different actors. The two were clearly still very much related, and both handbooks explicitly referred to the other field, yet they nevertheless followed separate organizational tracks: LFA work was done in Norad, evaluation work was done in the Ministry.

The Norwegian aid staff in Norad's Maputo Office and the Energy Office most likely took part in an LFA training session during 1990 or 1991, but there are no traces of this in the archives from the petroleum sector program.⁶²³ What is possible to see from the archives, is

⁶¹⁹ Methods Group Annual Report 1989, p. 1.

⁶²⁰ Methods Group Annual Report 1989, p. 1.

⁶²¹ Norad 1990. *The Logical Framework Approach (LFA). Handbook for objectives-oriented planning*.

⁶²² Both handbooks were written by Knut Samset from Samset & Stokkeland Consulting. Cf. chapter 4 for more details on the 1992 *Evaluation Handbook*.

⁶²³ The Training Office from 1991 organized the so-called Aid School (*bistandsskolen*). Cf. Liland and Kjerland 2003, p. 137. Several of the Aid School's courses and seminars were developed by researchers and consultants outside Norad. Cf. memo from Centre for Development Studies at the University of Bergen, 27.11.91, outlining

that the main categories of the logical framework were integrated in the program documents during the fall of 1992, as shown above. The new format of the Funding Document may be seen as a manifestation of the Methods Group's work. As Eli Sletten wrote in January, 1990: "Standardizing and developing templates for project documents will continue".⁶²⁴ In doing so, the Methods Group literally rewrote Norad's planning routines: By introducing the same templates across the organization, they made possible that all aid staff articulated their new projects in the same way, filling in the same categories and establishing the same logical links.

The method of the Logical Framework Approach, as it was presented in the LFA Handbook, was a comprehensive process for articulating the project's objectives, embed it in

The Logical Framework Approach (LFA) step by step	
Section 2: Planning with LFA	
Step 1: Participation analysis	Identify all parties involved: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Write down all persons, groups and institutions affected by the problem environment. 2. Categorize them, e.g. interest groups, individuals, organizations, authorities, etc. 3. Discuss whose interests and views are to be given priority when analyzing problems. Specify gender. 4. Select the most important groups. 5. Make a more detailed analysis of these groups, e.g. in terms of problems, interests, potential, and linkages.
Step 2: Problem analysis	Formulate problems: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify existing problems – not possible, imagined, or future ones. 2. A problem is not the absence of a solution – but an existing negative state. Example: No pesticides available (Wrong) Crops are infested with pests (Right) 3. Write down each problem on a card. Select a starting point and develop a problem tree: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify major existing problems 2. Select one focal problem for the analysis 3. Identify substantial and direct causes of the focal problem 4. Identify substantial and direct effects of the focal problem 5. Construct a problem tree showing the cause and effect relationships between the problems 6. Review the problem tree, verify its validity and completeness, and make necessary adjustments.
Step 3: Objectives analysis	Develop the objectives tree: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reformulate all elements in the problem tree into positive, desirable conditions. 2. Review the resulting means-ends relationships to assure validity and completeness of the objective tree. 3. If necessary: Revise statements, delete objectives which appear unrealistic

the setup of so-called "country knowledge courses". A two-day course on Mozambique was given May 25-26, 1992 (cf. program faxed to Norad May 21, 1992). In June, 1992, the Aid School wrote to all Norad's country offices (i.e. resident representatives) with a draft course program about the "administrative system and regulations in Norad's countries of cooperation", appendix to memo from ADM to all resident representatives, June 26, 1992. Norad, A-5985, 273.23.

⁶²⁴ Methods Group Annual Report 1989, p. 3.

	<p>or unnecessary, add new objectives where necessary</p> <p>4. Draw connecting lines to indicate the means-ends relationships.</p>
Step 4: Strategy analysis	<p>Identify alternative options</p> <p>Select the project strategy</p>
Step 5: Project elements (PM – project matrix)	<p>Define the main project elements:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Goal (anticipated long-term objective towards which the project will contribute) 2. Purpose (intended effects of the project for the direct beneficiaries as a precisely stated future condition) 3. Outputs (objectives which the project management must achieve and sustain within the life of the project) 4. Activities (expressed as processes) 5. Inputs (funds, personnel, goods) <p>Start at the top and work downwards. Decide upon one development objective and one immediate objective. (...) All outputs should be numbered. Each activity should then be numbered relating it to the corresponding output. Note: While the project management should be able to guarantee the project outputs, the immediate objective is beyond their direct control.</p>
Step 6: Assumptions (PM)	<p>Identify important assumptions.</p> <p>Assumptions describe conditions that must exist if the project is to succeed but which are outside the direct control of the project management.</p> <p>Assumptions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Can be derived from the objectives tree 2. Are worded as positive conditions (see objectives) 3. Are linked to the different levels in the PM 4. Are weighted according to importance and probability 5. Check the significance of the assumptions
Step 7: Indicators (PM)	<p>Define how to verify the attainment of objectives.</p> <p>In the context of LFA, indicators specify the performance standard to be reached in order to achieve the goal, the purpose and the outputs. Indicators should specify:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Target groups (for whom) - Quantity (how much) - Quality (how well) - Time (by when) - Location (where) <p>Indicators provide a basis for monitoring and evaluation.</p> <p>The details of the indicators determine how we can measure to what extent the objectives have been achieved at different times. Several indicators are better than one. Single indicators seldom convey a comprehensive picture of change.</p> <p>Formulating the indicator</p> <p>A good indicator is substantial, independent, factual, based upon obtainable data. The measures provided by indicators should ideally be accurate enough to make the indicator objectively verifiable. An indicator is “objectively verifiable” when different persons using the same measuring process independently of one another obtain the same measurements.</p> <p>Check the means of verification and the usefulness of the indicator</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Is the information available from existing sources (statistics, records, etc)? 2. Is the information reliable and up-to-date? 3. Is special data-gathering required? 4. If so, do the benefits justify the costs? <p>Avoid costly and/or unreliable indicators.</p>

Table 5.6: Summary of the Logical Framework Approach, as presented in the LFA Handbook.⁶²⁵

⁶²⁵ Based upon the *LFA Handbook*, fourth edition, pp. 25-57.

its surroundings, and identify key actors *before* deciding how to design a project (table 5.6).⁶²⁶ The document templates, in contrast, could not ensure that this process was followed when the templates were used. As I have shown in this chapter, the decision to continue the Petroleum Sector Program in Mozambique was made based on a combination of numerous factors. Undertaking an LFA workshop does not seem to have been one of them. Yet in order to continue the program, the Energy Office did have to use the new document template and articulate their plans through the concepts of the logical framework. Yet even though continuing the program required staff to fill in all the categories, the templates did not necessarily transform the ways in which aid staff did their work.

The effects of the LFA upon the MOZ 032 petroleum sector program seem to have been confined to articulating a new set of categories. The new categories made staff pay attention to the logical relation between goals, activities, results, and risks, yet the LFA categories did not automatically translate this into a matter of accounting. In Chapter 4, I showed how this had happened in the Norwegian Petroleum Directorate's new annual report to Norad, where the relation between goals and results had been translated into a matter of auditable accounting. The concern for auditable accounting was also highly noticeable in the second document prepared by the Energy Office during September 1992, the new Sector Agreement. I will in the following turn to analyze this document, before summarizing the chapter and moving on to the conclusion of the thesis.

The Sector Agreement

At first glance, the content of the new Sector Agreement for petroleum looks exactly the same as the previous sector agreements signed between Norway and Mozambique.⁶²⁷ It started by devoting much space on the first page to the full names of the two nations signing the agreement, which gives the document a prominent look. Adding to this, the document was written in a language echoing legal contracts and diplomatic agreements (cf. table 5.7 below). After this stylized front page followed a set of numbered articles, most with multiple numbered clauses, detailing the content of the agreement. What I will attend to in the following, are the sections that were added to the document after the Advisory Forum had reviewed the Energy Office's first draft.

⁶²⁶ The Methods Group was concerned that staff's expectations of what the Logical Framework Approach would enable were to high, and urged for "realism": LFA "was just a tool or a method for a process", and would "not solve 'all' problems". Memo, Methods Group to Training Office, May 8, 1990, p. 1-2. Norad, A-5985, 273.23. Norwegian quote: "I noen sammenhenger kan det se ut som om forventningene er for store og urealistiske. Dette fordi at en tror at metoden skal løse 'alle' problemer. Det vil være en viktig oppgave for gruppen og sentrale brukere å få en realisme i situasjonen, og det syn at LPA bare er et verktøy eller en metode for en prosess."

⁶²⁷ Cf. the 1983 agreement: "Agreement between the Government of the Kingdom of Norway and the People's Republic of Mozambique regarding Development of the Petroleum Sector in Mozambique". Draft version, 7.9.83. MFA 37-4/187-12.

A G R E E M E N T

between

THE GOVERNMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF NORWAY

and

THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOZAMBIQUE

regarding

Development in the Petroleum Sub-Sector

WHEREAS the Government of the Kingdom of Norway ("Norway") and the Government of the Republic of Mozambique ("Mozambique") entered into an Agreement regarding Development of the Petroleum Sector in Mozambique, dated 22 November 1983, prolonged by addendum dated 27 July 1986, and further prolonged by a second addendum dated 24 April 1992,

WHEREAS Norway upon request from Mozambique has decided to provide additional assistance for the further development within the sector,

NOW THEREFORE the following understanding in pursuance of the Agreement between Norway and Mozambique regarding the Cooperation for Promotion of the Economic and Social Development of the Republic of Mozambique, dated 1 August 1986, and prolonged by addendum 1 August 1991 ("Main Agreement"), and with reference to the provisions therein relating to Specific Agreements, have been reached by the parties:

*Table 5.7: First page of the approved new petroleum sector agreement, signed December 1, 1992.*⁶²⁸

The approved version of the new Sector Agreement included the following articles:

- Article I Scope and Objectives (no clauses, six bullet points);
- Article II Cooperation – Representation – Administration (4 clauses);
- Article III Contributions and Obligations of Norway (2 clauses)
- Article IV Contributions and Obligations of Mozambique (8 clauses)
- Article V Procurements (2 clauses, total of five bullet points)
- Article VI Disbursements and Reports (7 clauses, more than one page total)
- Article VII Evaluation, Planning and Monitoring (no clauses, two sentences only)
- Article VIII Disputes – Entry into Force – Termination (3 clauses)⁶²⁹

Of these, the whole Article VII and substantial parts of Article VI were not part of the draft version. Article VII, which concerned evaluation, planning and monitoring, was but two sentences long. While the first sentence was close to identical to previous agreements, the second sentence was included only after the draft had passed through the Advisory Forum.

⁶²⁸ "AGREEMENT between THE GOVERNMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF NORWAY and THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOZAMBIQUE regarding Development in the Petroleum Sub-Sector", p. 1. Signed December 1, 1992. Norad, A-6300, 431-MOZ032-2.

⁶²⁹ Agreement between Norway and Mozambique, December 1992, pp. 2-7.

In accordance with Article X of the Main Agreement, the Parties will agree upon the measures for evaluation and reviews of the Programme. NORAD has the right to undertake an independent Programme review within two years after the signing of this Agreement.⁶³⁰

This new second sentence is of key importance: It states that the Norwegian aid administration “has the right” to undertake an independent review of the program. In other words, doing an independent review was something that could be determined on the outside, in Norway, whether the Mozambican authorities approved or not. This language diverged considerably from how the evaluation staff had articulated the same issue in the 1981 Handbook: Here, the concern was that evaluations should be of help to the recipients in their own work, while the Norwegian needs for control with how the project was progressing should not be given too much weight. In the quote above, it was precisely this control function, the donor’s “right” to evaluate, that was expressed.

The concern for control with the Norwegian aid funds were all the more prevalent in the new additions to Article VI (“Disbursements and Reports”). Between the two versions of the Agreement, far more details were included on how Mozambique was expected to report, both on the use of funds and on the results of the program activities. More detailed were also the requirements for how ENH (the Mozambican state oil company) should account for all procurements they made with Norad funds (table 5.8). Furthermore, Norad was granted the authority to revise and approve program documents, such as Terms of Reference for commissioned experts, and to see receipts, copies of contracts, and original invoices (table 5.8). In sum, I will argue, the Agreement materialized Norad’s shift from accommodating requests for aid to requesting auditable accounts.

In addition to enhancing Norad’s control with how aid funds were spent, the Agreement detailed an elaborate routine for how often Mozambique would have to submit reports, budgets, and accounts. Once a year, Mozambique would be responsible for preparing the Annual Meeting.⁶³¹ Article VI, the longest of all the articles (covering more than one page), specified how often revised budgets, progress reports, and financial audits should be prepared and what they should contain (table 5.8).

The dual concern for book-keeping and time-keeping, which I identified in my analysis of the new Annual Report that the Norwegian Petroleum Directorate submitted to Norad earlier the same year (see Chapter 4), is evident also in the new Sector Agreement. As shown in Table 5.8, the Agreement described in specific terms how Mozambican

⁶³⁰ Agreement between Norway and Mozambique, December 1992, p. 6.

⁶³¹ Agreement between Norway and Mozambique, December 1992, p. 2-3. Article II, Clause 3: “(...) As preparation for the Annual Meeting, ENH shall within four weeks prior to the meeting submit to Norad: –A brief report on ENH’s general situation and main priorities for the coming year, with special emphasis on activities aimed to achieve long term sustainability in economic and physical terms. –A brief report on the existing and planned cooperation with other donors. –Brief reports on each main Programme activities last year, hereunder progress related to planned schedule, statement of cost incurred and financial situation, and identification of any existing or foreseeable problem that may threaten the completion of the Programme within budget and scheduled time, along with proposed methods of solution. –A proposal for a working plan and budget for all main activities for the coming year, including a project description for any new activity to be covered by the Programme.”

Article V

Procurements

1. Mozambique undertakes to effect all procurements of goods and services for the Programme and is responsible for the contracts to be signed. Tender Documents and Contracts including Terms of Reference shall be submitted to NORAD for approval before entering into force.

(...)

2.1. However, if considered beneficial for the progress of the Programme, Norway may upon requests from Mozambique effect disbursements directly to suppliers to cover procurement costs incurred under contracts entered into by Mozambique. Such disbursements will be made against receipt of requests accompanied by, i.a.:

- a copy of contract (if applicable) or quotation,
- invoice and vouchers in original,
- written statements certifying the receipt of the goods in question.

Article VI

Disbursements and Reports

1. All disbursements to suppliers of goods and services as mentioned in Article V, Clause 1, shall be made by Mozambique.
2. On the basis of what has been agreed upon in pursuance of Article II, Clause 3, above regarding the implementation of the programme, Mozambique shall present to Norway by 1 January each year a budget for the agreed activities of the Programme for the coming year.
3. Mozambique shall present to Norway semiannually by 31 December and 1 July each year, requests for disbursements from the Grant. The requests shall be based on the budgets referred to in Clause 2 above, and shall contain i.a.:
 - (i) A specification of funds to be used
 - (ii) Information on the intended utilization of funds for the agreed activities of the Programme
 - (iii) A progress report for the agree activities of the Programme.

This report shall set out i.e.:

- The progress in relation to the time schedules
- Achievements related to stated targets set for each activities
- Amendments if any, to targets and time schedule and the budget
- Programme of targets and activities for the next six months

Any amount which is already disbursed, but not fully utilized, shall be reflected in the requests.

4. The transfer of funds will be effected semi-annually in advance in accordance with the budget and upon Norway's approval of the disbursement request referred to in Clause 3 above. The transfer of funds will be made to Banco de Mozambique unless provisions stated in Article V are applied. The funds made available can only be used for the agreed activities of the Programme.
5. Mozambique shall submit to Norway semi-annually certified statements of expenditure incurred pertaining to the agreed activities of the Programme normally within six months after the period to which they refer.

- | |
|---|
| <p>6. Mozambique shall submit to Norway not later than 18 months after the end of each fiscal year, audited accounts in respect of the Programme.</p> <p>7. Norway shall submit to Mozambique semi-annual reports on costs incurred by Norway according to Article III, Clause 2, and Article VI.</p> |
|---|

5.8. *The Agreement's Article V Procurements and Article VI Disbursements and Reports*⁶³²

authorities should both write their reports and submit their accounts: when, how often, and how the documents should be prepared. In outlining the content of a progress report, it stated that such reports should bring information about “the progress in relation to the time schedules”. Hence, the notion of the program’s progress was relative to the time spent. This made time-keeping an important element in claiming that the expected progress had indeed been achieved. Furthermore, progress reports should describe “achievements related to stated targets set for each activities”. Hence, the targets articulated for the sector program at the beginning of the project, combined with the time schedule assigned to reach these targets, were established as the starting point for claiming progress.

The examples above attest to a fundamental shift having taken place in the relation between Norway as an aid donor and Mozambique as an aid recipient. The Agreement manifested a whole new form of cooperation: All writing should now take place in Mozambique, by Mozambican staff, and be submitted to Norad for reading and approval. According to the Agreement, fresh aid funds would be disbursed every six months, but not until the required documents had been received (cf. Article IV, Clause 4 above). Hence, the continued flow of aid funds were made dependent on the submission of documents – receipts, invoices, reports on cost, progress reports, revised budgets, and audited accounts. The combination of book-keeping and time-keeping made the stated *targets* of the program (also termed *goals* in the Funding Document and *objectives* in the Agreement’s Annex) of key importance: What was to be reported upon was progress *relative to* the time schedule and achievements *related to* the stated targets; in other words, Norad was not interested in reading about everything and anything that had happened since the last report was written.

In this way, the key points of reference for a progress report were *other* documents, notably the sector program, with its stated program goals, planned activities, anticipated achievements and results, and a time schedule. This means that the object of reporting was the aid program as such, as opposed to changes in the context or at the project site. The categories of the Logical Framework Approach, which had been implemented as Norad’s new routine planning tool (see above section), was made the organizing principle also of the reporting routines.

This situation suggests that project monitoring, what the evaluation staff had in the early 1980s had termed *continuous reporting*, was implemented across Norwegian aid on a whole new scale. Increasing amounts of far more detailed reports would begin to travel to Norad’s Oslo headquarters in unprecedented volumes, not only from Norwegian agencies

⁶³² Agreement between Norway and Mozambique, December 1992, pp. 4-6.

such as the Norwegian Petroleum Directorate, but also from aid-receiving governments across the globe. In order to gain access to Norwegian aid funds, these documents would have to be routinely written, and they would need to include specific information and adhere to a specific form.

Does the implementation of continuous reporting entail that the initial visions of the evaluation staff was by now being realized? Indeed, by the end of 1992, much of what they promoted in their *Handbook of Evaluation Questions* from 1981 had been implemented: planning documents were employing the logical framework and formal agreements were requiring recipients to submit written reports throughout the project period. This intensified textualization of aid projects would produce chains of project documents that in turn might enable external readers, whether Norad staff, evaluators, or auditors, to employ their optics of evaluation.

Yet at the same time, the object that emerged from the new reporting requirements might in practice not become what the evaluation staff had envisioned. What the Sector Agreement seemed to produce, was an aid object isolated from its surroundings, articulated only through references to the internal relations of its logical framework. This kind of isolated object, in which context had no designated place, was, paradoxically, precisely what the evaluation staff had wanted to avoid.

Transferring responsibility, requiring traceability

This form of self-referential reporting, where the categories and time schedule of the logical framework were made the significant aspects, is precisely what Richard Rottenburg is critiquing in his analysis of an aid project funded by the African Development Bank in an unspecified West African location during the 1990s. In this specific project, Rottenburg shows, adhering to a pre-set plan became more important than adjusting the project to changing conditions at the project site. In Rottenburg's argument, this situation was premised on a specific distribution of accountability and responsibility between donors and recipients: Donors, he argues, were accountable to their domestic constituents and would have to show that funds were spent according to plan. All documents produced by the project staff served to make visible this link between funds, plans, and results, in effect building what Rottenburg (with reference to Latour) describes as an *accountability chain*. This means, he argues, that aid staff were responsible for keeping the accountability chain intact and updated, but they were not responsible for the effects of the project beyond maintaining this chain of documents.

The new Sector Agreement that I have analyzed in this section confirms Rottenburg's argument. The donor had only a minimum of responsibility, while the recipient had almost all (cf. table 5.9). In the clauses included in table 5.9, the Agreement explicitly located the responsibility for the program with the recipient, and not the donor. It was Mozambique that should have "the overall responsibility for the planning, administration, and implementation of the Programme". In contrast, Norway was assigned the role of an auditor: "Mozambique shall permit Norwegian visitors to (...) examine any relevant records and documents."

Article III

Contributions and Obligations of Norway

Norway shall:

1. Norway shall, subject to Parliamentary appropriations, make available to Mozambique a financial grant not exceeding NOK 27.000.000 (twentyseven million) (“the grant”), to be used exclusively for the financing of activities under the programme
2. Norway will upon request from Mozambique make every effort to provide personnel as deemed necessary by the Parties for the successful implementation of the Programme. The costs connected therewith shall be met from the Grant.

Article IV

Contributions and Obligations of Mozambique

Mozambique shall:

1. Facilitate the implementation of the Programme (...);
2. Ensure that the Grant is reflected in the plans and budgets of the Ministry of Industry and Energy;
3. Have the overall responsibility for the planning, administration and implementation of the Programme, including all categories of works, repair and maintenance equipment, spareparts, goods and materials made available under this Agreement;

(...)

4. Promptly inform Norway of any condition which interferes or threatens to interfere with the successful implementation of the Programme;
5. Permit representatives of Norway to visit any part of Mozambique for purposes related to this Agreement and examine any relevant records and documents.

*Table 5.9: The Agreement's Article III: Contributions and Obligations of Norway and Article IV: Contributions and Obligations of Mozambique.*⁶³³

This last quote succinctly summarizes the transformation Norwegian aid had experienced during 1988-1992: Norad had attained the role of an auditor. In doing so, they added yet another dimension of difference between what had been the Norwegian oil experience and what was becoming the Mozambican gas experience: The ENH was made accountable to a foreign government not only for how they spent their funds, but also for how they executed their daily work: their articulation of priorities, changes in plans, choice of method, or any other consideration they might have. The Norwegian aid reform indeed did transfer responsibility from Norway to Mozambique; yet in practice, they also transferred a substantial amount of work. In being required to write documents for Norwegian readers, the Mozambican petroleum administration in effect started contributing to building the Norwegian aid archive and to making Norwegian aid an evaluable object.

⁶³³ Agreement between Norway and Mozambique, December 1992, p. 3-4.

Chapter conclusions: What kind of evaluable object?

In this chapter, I have been concerned with how the Norwegian oil aid project in Mozambique, the so-called MOZ 032, was established and transformed during the years 1982-1992. While I in Chapter 4 analyzed optics developed and employed from the outside in, I have in this chapter analyzed the documents written from the inside by the staff working closest to the project: Norad's field office in Maputo and the Energy Office in Oslo. In doing so, I have accentuated what I have suggested to call *moments of articulation* to describe instances where the aid staff used documents to make something specific happen, and in the process articulated their views about the MOZ 032: how it was progressing, whether it was going well, and what to do next.

In doing so, I showed how the Maputo Office and the Energy Office together enabled the project to expand into a full-scale four-year petroleum sector program, before beginning to voice doubts, critique, and hesitation with the program from 1986 onwards. While the civil war raged around them, the aid staff was awaiting the results of the *Country Study and Norwegian Aid Review*, which, when it arrived in 1990, brought the same concerns as the aid staff had themselves raised during the past years: Even if the Norwegian technical assistance to the Mozambican state oil company as such was going well, the lack of large oil discoveries within the current context of civil war, economic crisis, and humanitarian needs entailed that the program should not be made less of a priority. In other words; why provide oil aid if there was not much oil to speak of? Yet staff were hesitating to close down the project completely, partly because the resource situation might change (there were after all promising indications of natural gas) but also because this would mean that the results of the work already done and the funds already spent would not be sustained: the program would become a lost investment.

In order to resolve the question, the aid staff designed a project-specific evaluation optic, a so-called project review (often also referred to as a program review). In my analysis of this document, which was not in itself available in the archives, I analyzed its making and use as a translation process: Considering how each document built upon other documents, I investigated how the optic of the project review and the object of the aid program was established in combination: Through the process of preparing the optic, its object shifted from being conceived as irrelevant and untimely to gradually becoming something that should continue. In designing the optic, the aid staff established the question of continuation as a petroleum issue, rather than an aid issue. While the optic of the Country Study made the current context in Mozambique the key issue, the optic of the project review made the probability of future revenues from oil and natural gas the key issue. By modelling the project review upon another petroleum sector review and giving less weight to both the country context and the aid context, the evaluation optic of the MOZ project review made the question of continuation into a question of petroleum expertise, which in turn enabled the recommendation of continuing the program. In this way, the aid program was reinvigorated after four years of hesitation and uncertainty.

Continuing the program did however not mean that it would continue in the same way as before. Firstly, the nature of the object itself was changing: From having started as an *oil* aid project, the main concern of the new petroleum sector program was the potential of *natural gas*. Secondly, the project review recommended several changes to the program in order to accommodate this new nature of the object. These changes were also taken into the new sector agreement: the program was to include studies of potential gas fields, potential gas markets, and potential pipeline routes for transporting the gas, and also a pilot project for village electrification and gas utilization. Thirdly, the program entailed notable changes in how the program as such was to be done; more specifically, what should be written, by whom, when, how often, and in what form. In a word, what was required were more and different *documents*.

In my close reading of the documents preparing the continued petroleum sector program during the fall of 1992, notably the Funding Document (by which Norad formally approved to allocate Norwegian aid funds to continuing the petroleum sector program in Mozambique) and the Sector Agreement (in which the two countries agreed upon the terms of the continued aid program), I found numerous manifestations of the larger transformations taking place within Norwegian aid in the early 1990s. These larger transformations – new policies, strategies, and reforms – were materialized through new forms of cooperation in a literal sense: new document templates; new organizational units approving how documents were written; and new relations between aid donors and aid recipients. Yet the larger transformations, I will argue, would not be possible without the countless project documents that were written in a different way than before. It was through these small transformations in how project documents were written that the major transformation of aid at large might be realized. Let me recount how these changes emerge in the documents from MOZ 032.

The document templates shifted in notable ways. In the new Funding Document from 1992, the main concepts from the so-called Logical Framework had been placed upfront, making all aid staff having to articulate the program's development goal, project goal, target groups, results, and risk factors, in addition to its planned activities and budget. Following these categories out of the specific petroleum program, I showed how they were both related to and different from the evaluation staff's initial visions of aid evaluability, as these were articulated in the *Handbook of Evaluation Questions* from 1981. The idea of improving project management by making aid staff articulate one clear goal and then link all activities logically to this one goal, was further developed by staff at Norad's Training Office. After experiencing a lack of interest from political leadership in the early 1980s, the initiative was reinvigorated in 1988. The so-called Methods Group was given the mandate to implement the Logical Framework Approach (LFA) throughout the Norwegian aid administration by means of a training program, a handbook, and new document templates. The MOZ 032 Funding Document thus materialized a major shift in Norwegian aid towards so-called "objectives-oriented planning" by means of the specific method of LFA.

While LFA was mainly a planning tool without particular concern for financial accounting, this concern was made notable in the new Sector Agreement. In my analysis of this document, I found numerous instances where Norway's role as aid donor was reconfigured into that of an auditor who reserved the right to visit any archive and request any document. While Norway's main obligations under the agreement were limited to providing aid funds and relevant personnel upon the request of Mozambique, Mozambique's obligations were many, including having the whole responsibility for the implementation of the program. This was what the principle of recipient responsibility entailed in practical terms: routine submissions of numerous documents to Norad. This had two dimensions. Firstly, to enable financial accounting and audit at specified intervals and within given timeframes, mainly by submitting revised budgets, reports on costs, original invoices, copies of receipts, and annual auditable accounts. Secondly, to enable Norad to see how the program was progressing relative to its own plan. In order to make this possible, Mozambican staff was required by the Agreement to submit routine reports on a number of issues concerning the program's progress relative to the set goal, budget, and time schedule.

Hence, by 1992, aid staff was indeed writing in a different way than before: As my analysis of the shifting forms of the MOZ 032 shows, staff started employing standardized document templates. Yet the version of aid evaluability that was implemented around 1990, diverged from the evaluation staff's 1980 visions in two notable ways.

Firstly, the new sector agreement document *combined* the categories of the Logical Framework with the routines of Norad's new accounting system. As I showed in the section above, aid recipients would report more often and in more detail not only on how funds were spent, but also how the project or program was progressing according to its own plan. This means that while LFA had direct connections to the evaluation staff's visions of aid evaluability, it was in practice combined with tools and concerns from the field of accounting and audit.

This confirms the argument I made in the previous chapter: That while both evaluation and audit depended upon traceability through documents, the traceability was not the same for both. The *traceability of evaluation* was to be enabled through an accumulation of project documents, a chain of real-time snapshots which in combination documented the life of an aid project. This chain would in turn enable external evaluators to not only assess whether the project had attained the desired practical results according to plan, but also whether it had contributed towards the broader development goal by identifying effects of the project upon its context. In short, document chain was expected to make it possible to determine whether the project had caused change in the recipient community or country at large. The *traceability of audit*, in contrast, involved accumulation of documents that would enable a financial audit, in short, receipts documenting how funds were spent. These were also to be submitted at regular intervals. Any missing document would be a cause of concern, given that its absence indicated that aid funds could have been spent in the wrong way. The traceability of audit,

made possible through meticulous accounting work, was in this way a means for controlling that funds were spent as expected.

In the new Funding Document and Sector Agreement from 1992, these two versions of traceability were combined. The documents demonstrate how key elements of the evaluation staff's initial vision (the logical framework and continuous reporting) had indeed been institutionalized. Yet the envisioned version and the realized version were not the same. In practice, the two versions of traceability were combined. What were the implications of this new combination?

I have argued in this chapter that the effect of this combination was that staff was required to write reports in a way that documented the progress of the *project as such*, that is, how the project was progressing according to its own goal, plan, budget, and time schedule. With this, an aid project became a more distinct object, more precisely separated from its context, with a sharper boundary and a set temporality. When following a plan was aligned with adhering to a budget, and project reporting was aligned with auditable accounting practices, the project would also become a more autonomous unit.

This was indeed a paradoxical situation: The very foundation of the evaluation staff's visions of evaluability had been to integrate aid projects better in their surroundings, to actively pull the context into the projects, and force aid staff to question their own assumptions. The Logical Framework was developed as a device for doing this work in practice. Yet when these visions were translated into template documents and practical aid routines, these initial visions did not come along the whole way. In practice, the documents suggest, seeing projects in relation to their surroundings was not made part of the routine reporting, quite the contrary.

There was also a second way in which the realized version of the new project planning and reporting routines diverged from the initial visions of the evaluation staff, as these were articulated in the early 1980s: Documents could be far more flexible than one might expect. As I have shown in this chapter, documents, no matter how distinct their genre and purpose, could easily be reinterpreted, circumvented, and transformed. A project review could be interpreted as an evaluation by some (making it appear more independent and external) and used as a program document by others (making the review team in effect unwittingly ghost write the sector plans of a foreign government). Furthermore, seemingly major changes in aid practice, such as the implementation of new modes of planning, might not be that major in practice; staff might fill in the new categories without necessarily changing much to an already determined program. Finally, distinct separations between recipients and donors, between who should write and who should read, and between who should request and who should approve, could in practice be blurred by aid staff seeking to swiftly accommodate an aid request, also with numerous measures existing to make such swift accommodations more difficult.

Even with the new policies, strategies, and reforms implemented to increase both the evaluability, auditability, and accountability of Norwegian foreign aid, staff working close to

the projects would still strive to make new things happen. While the headquarters of the Norwegian aid administration attained the role of an *auditor*, requesting auditable accounts from aid recipients and cooperating agencies, the field offices also maintained their role as *facilitator*, working to accommodate requests. This contradiction, it seems, was not resolved by the new tools for doing aid.

The above paragraphs serve to argue that despite the demonstrable shifts between 1990-1992 in how Norwegian aid was to be done, this shift was not absolute; there was room for slippages, ambiguities, contradictions, interpretations, and flexibilities. Yet I will maintain that the shifting forms of cooperation which I have identified in this chapter had a set of most concrete effects that might in sum have large implications. This point concerns the new forms of writing aid that the new documents enabled.

What did aid become when writing shifted from narrative prose to logical frameworks? Returning to Latour's conceptual apparatus: What kinds of reductions and amplifications did these new inscription devices enable? What kind of objects did the aid projects become when articulated by means of the logical framework and auditable reporting? I will suggest that the translation enabled by these devices first *reduced* an aid project to a project-specific logical relation between articulated goals, results, activities, and risks. The one-page logical framework, the so-called project matrix, was the result of this reduction process. Then, through continuous reporting, what was *amplified* were the demonstrable materializations of this matrix. This, I will suggest, gave preset goals and timelines strong authority when project progress was to be articulated. Ironically, such a situation, where donors' interests were allowed to dominate the execution of projects, was the exact opposite of what the evaluation staff had wanted to achieve by introducing these very tools. Similarly, the principle of *recipient responsibility*, which was implemented in Norwegian foreign aid in 1990, was intended to increase the responsibility and independence of aid recipients, might in effect enable the opposite: The increased demands for accounting and reporting that accompanied this principle in practice made recipients more dependent upon the donors and spent more time accommodating their audit needs.

Then again, the specific aid program investigated in this thesis, the Norwegian Petroleum Sector Program in Mozambique (MOZ 032), shows a strong resilience to critique by its ability to shift both in form and content. Transforming from an oil aid project to a program for natural gas, it was literally enabling explorations into unknown territories: first offshore, then onshore. The very premise of the new program, as it was articulated in 1992, was that successfully exploiting natural gas in Mozambique was a high-risk endeavor. At the same time, and this confirms my point above, the aid program as such was presented as without risk. Hence, a low-risk aid program could exist in a high-risk environment, and it might well become a success even if Mozambican natural gas never became commercially viable. The aid program could in this way be logically separated not only from its context, but also from its own object: The possibly existing natural gas.

If the new ways of writing were technologies of seeing, as has been my premise throughout this thesis, what did they enable staff to see? Following my argument above, I will suggest that what was made visible, was the degree to which an aid project resembled the specific form of logic that was built into the Logical Framework. The project as such emerged more clearly when seen from the Oslo headquarters. The standardized terminology furthermore made all aid projects look largely the same, obviously with individual features, but adhering to the same structure, which enabled comparison across projects, aggregation of numbers, and the possibility to see the entire Norwegian aid at a glance. Furthermore, the new technologies of seeing developed a more aid-specific technical language and a more formalized protocol for how to do aid work.

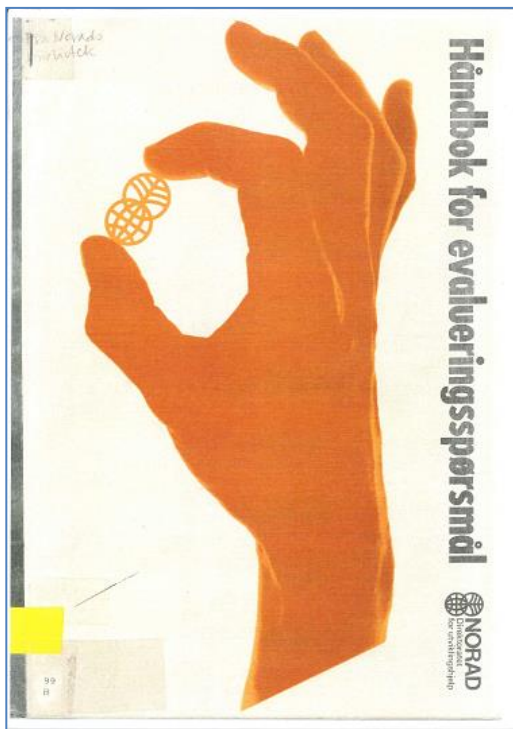
Yet if we pursue the metaphor of seeing and hold that the new devices enabled a higher resolution of Norwegian aid when observed from afar, what did then remain opaque or even attain opacity? If the expanding archives enabled a meta-gaze upon aid, what did the potential meta-gaze *disable*?

I will suggest that what was rendered opaque in the new way of writing was the relation between aid and its context, but also, paradoxically, the aid projects themselves. In the new, more formalized documents, the life of the project somehow slips through our fingers, it becomes more theoretical, less practical. It becomes an orderly object of aid, yet somehow less of an object in the world. The contrast is striking between the narrative prose of the quarterly report from the Maputo Office back home to Oslo in 1986 and the formalized structure of Mozambique's reporting requirements in the new Sector Agreement from 1992. Clearly, narrative prose would not allow for the same kind of standardization, aggregation, and accounting as did reports following the logical framework. The narrative prose was written in confidence and meant to be read in full, while accounting reports was written to enable external scrutiny in a potential future.

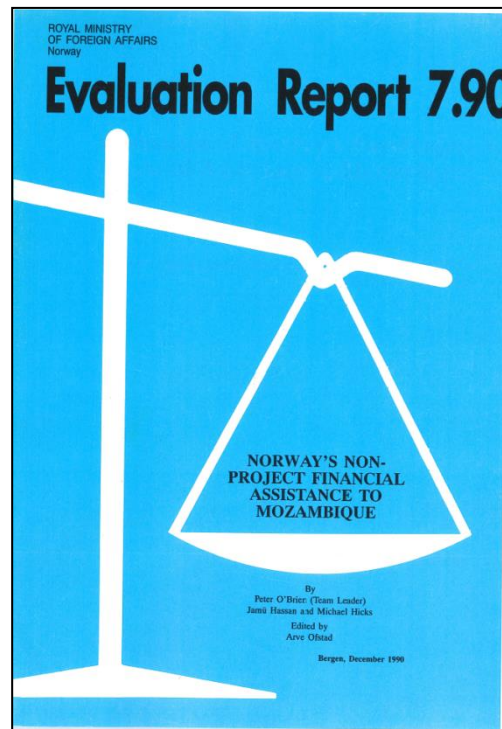
In this way, I will suggest the shifting forms of cooperation also institutionalized *trust* in a new way. Regardless of the possible slippages and flexibilities of the new routines, the new documents established a new relation in which trusting was replaced with checking, to paraphrase Michael Power. Paradoxically, then, while explicitly transferring the responsibility for aid projects to the recipients, Norway as a donor also stopped trusting and started checking that the recipients reached their goals. Simultaneously, Norad could no longer be automatically trusted to continue its support. Norwegian grants could no longer be taken for granted.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

How was Norwegian foreign aid sought made an evaluable object, and how did the evaluation efforts contribute to transform the field of foreign aid? This has been the research question of this dissertation. In this concluding chapter, I will draw together the main arguments that I have developed during the analytical chapters and discuss them in relation to the research literature on audit and accounting. More specifically, I will discuss whether my analysis of the transformation of the Norwegian aid administration during the years 1980-1992 shows the emergence of what Michael Power has termed an *audit society*. Indeed, such a turn may be aptly illustrated by juxtaposing the front matters of two Norwegian aid evaluation documents, published ten years apart:



Ill. 6.1: Handbook of evaluation questions, published in January, 1981. Template cover matter illustration during 1980-1989.



Ill. 6.2: Evaluation report no. 7/1990, published December 1990. Template cover matter illustration during 1990-1999.

The cover illustrations of these two documents (introduced in Chapters 2 and 4, respectively) suggest two very different ways of conceptualizing aid evaluation: To the left, the cover from 1981 shows a hand pinching the logo of the Norwegian aid administration (Norad), alluding to how scientists would fix an object and investigate its features. The illustration suggests that evaluation involves grasping aid at large for the purpose of handling it in a better way. To the right, the cover from 1990 shows a weight scale onto which a specific object of evaluation is placed, alluding to how merchants would measure an object's weight, calculate its economic value, and make it part of a financial transaction. The illustration also alludes to the classic

legal icon: that of the blindfolded lady Justitia who weighs the matters and principles of justice on her scale.

Both interpretations of the 1990 illustration – the economic and the legal – are indicative of the transformation of Norwegian aid which I in this thesis has shown took place during the early 1990s. More specifically, this interpretation suggests that evaluation work shifted from science-like inquiries of the properties of foreign aid into accounting for how funds were spent and ensuring that legal agreements were being kept.

As this interpretation indicates, my analysis confirms Power's *audit society* thesis in several respects. Firstly, I have documented how the aid administration during 1990-92 implemented a turn from direct to indirect management through the principle of recipient responsibility, a new accounting system, and new reporting routines. Secondly, as part of this, Norad started demanding recipients to submit auditable accounts, which arguably amounts to what Power describes as enabling "control of control", i.e. the establishment of internal self-auditing systems within (in my case) agencies receiving aid funds. Thirdly, I have argued how this transformation entailed a shift in the relation between Norad and its recipients, in which Norad changed from accommodating requests to requesting accounts; in a word, Norad took on the role of an auditor. This argument supports Power's point that the audit society is characterized by a shifting relation between the state and its constituents, epitomized by the new role of public servants who in the audit society no longer were providing welfare services but rather verifying that these services were being delivered as expected.⁶³⁴

These features of the audit society are key characteristics also of what is often termed New Public Management: indirect governing methods, intensified monitoring systems, increased importance of auditing institutions, and the creation of a market for auditing services. To that end, I have documented the specific ways in which elements of New Public Management were implemented in Norwegian foreign aid during 1990-1992. This supports past studies of Norwegian foreign aid that have identified a shift to more intensified reporting routines during these years, yet not analyzed this claim in much detail. Historians Liland and Kjerland, in their study of Norwegian aid during 1989-2002, briefly link Norad's new intensified reporting routines to the introduction of private sector approaches by Norad's top management, personified by the hiring of a new Norad director with a private sector background.⁶³⁵ Liland and Kjerland thus equates the new reporting demands with private sector methods in a general sense.

Indeed, following Power, New Public Management was based on administrative practices from the private sector and did contribute to reducing the public-private divide, yet it did not automatically mean neoliberal policies.⁶³⁶ Differentiating between the audit society, New Public Management, neoliberal policies, and private sector methods is critical if we are

⁶³⁴ Power 1997, p. 10-12. Cf. Chapter 1 for a more detailed account of Power's argument.

⁶³⁵ Liland and Kjerland 2003, p. 134. Liland and Kjerland builds their argument on interviews with Norad staff, including the former Norad director Per Ø. Grimstad.

⁶³⁶ Power 1997, p. 42-44. Cf. Chapter 1 for a discussion of Power's argument up against Rose and Miller, who more strongly argues that there was a shift to a neoliberal state.

to better understand the transformation of Norwegian foreign aid which I have analyzed in this thesis. While elements of the audit society and New Public Management were clearly being implemented, I have not found specific traces of private sector methods nor features that may be termed neoliberal.

On the contrary, what I have found, was a radical social science critique voiced from *within* the aid administration. This critique was combined with methods gained from other public sector agencies. Hence, my analysis has shown that the efforts at making aid an evaluable object should not be conflated with the adoption of private sector methods for enhancing control with how funds were spent. This is where my analysis diverges from past studies of aid: Attention to the *specific history of evaluation work* has produced a different argument than would a history of accounting and audit. In the following, I will discuss how my methodological approach has enabled this specific analysis and conclusion, before moving on to explicate the main arguments of the thesis.

Foregrounding the documents

As a key analytical move, I have throughout this thesis devoted space and attention to the many details of the documents of the Norwegian foreign aid administration. I have read, re-read, described, and analyzed documents of a number of different genres: agreements, annual reports, board documents, comments, evaluation reports, funding documents, guidelines, handbooks, letters, memos, notes, parliamentary proceedings, project reviews, press releases, program documents, project reviews, quarterly reports, templates, terms of reference, and white papers. Throughout the analysis, I have foregrounded these documents by trying to get at how they were written, circulated, archived, and read. I have investigated how they differed from each other; what significance these differences might have had; how they built upon each other in long chains; how these chains in combination changed the object at hand; and how the documents in this way enabled transformations of both the object they were handling and of the context into which they intervened.

My method has been to combine archival studies and textual analysis: Taking cues from a number of scholars, notably Asdal, Hull, Jensen, Kafka, Latour, Law, Richards, Rottenburg, Steedman, Winthereik, and Woolgar, I have made a strong effort to look *at* the documents, not just look *through* them.⁶³⁷ My method has been to pay detailed attention to the individual documents – both their textual properties, that is, their layout, structure, genre, and author, and their bureaucratic properties, that is, their role in the making of an aid project, their itinerary within and beyond the aid administration, and the effects they enabled or failed to enable. I have tried to read the documents against the grain by considering their visual features, starting from the last page and moving forward, investigating their footnotes and margins, comparing finalized versions with discarded drafts. By attending to the routine practices of writing and reading, I have paid attention to how these routines were at times followed, at times abandoned, at times sought transformed all together. In doing so, I have

⁶³⁷ Kafka 2009. Cf. also Asdal 2015; Latour 2010 [2002]; Latour and Woolgar 1986.

investigated the administration of aid not through its major policy proclamations, but through the daily work of its staff.

This research method, I will argue, has enabled an analysis that shows how series of seemingly minor translations may amount to major transformations. The close attention to the materiality of documents has made it possible to analyze how, in most specific terms, Norwegian foreign aid was sought made an evaluable object. This happened through the meticulous writing, circulation, and storage of chains of documents, and the subsequent reading and analysis of these documents by means of specially designed evaluation optics.

By making the document's materiality and not only their contents the object of analysis, the document's physical storage, *the aid archives*, have become an active part of my analysis. As I have shown, evaluation depended upon the availability of well-kept chains of project documents, that is, a rich archive. This has made all that which is absent from the Norwegian aid archives into valuable empirical material in and of itself. In this way, I have moved from conceiving the archive as a repository of historical sources to making it a key empirical site in its own right.

Optics of evaluation

In answering my main research question, I have explored how the Norwegian aid administration during the years of 1980-1992 developed and employed new evaluation tools and routines – what I have suggested to call *optics of evaluation* – that were expected to enable an external gaze upon aid. The new optics would make it possible to see aid from a distance, both temporally and spatially. While the optics in this way would enable higher resolution and decrease opacity, seeing aid better was not in itself the purpose of the optics. Rather, an evaluation "had little value unless it was being used," evaluation staff stated in 1981. This made the optics both *technologies of seeing* and *technologies of politics*: They were both *describing* aid projects to make them visible at a distance and *prescribing* how the project could best be handled.

The 1981 *Handbook of Evaluation Questions*, which I analyzed in Chapter 2, fleshed out the ramifications of making aid an evaluable object. For the new evaluation optics to work, it was not sufficient to develop and refine evaluation tools and routines as such. As any scientific instrument and any scientific method, the evaluation optics needed tangible data in order to investigate its object. Norwegian foreign aid was constituted of numerous aid projects dispersed across multiple countries, technical fields, and social sectors. To better see these projects, let alone Norwegian aid as a whole, the optics depended on chains of documents articulating the planning and daily life of the projects. Without such document chains readily available in the archives, the aid would be untraceable, and therefore also un-evaluable.

For aid to become possible to evaluate, the evaluation staff argued, Norad should employ a new set of planning tools that would make it possible to articulate, systematize, and circulate data about aid projects. Furthermore, the new tools were designed to make aid staff articulate a hierarchy of goals, results, and activities, and visualize how these related to each

other, in order to connect a project to the specific situation into which it was intended to intervene. I have analyzed these tools as *inscription devices*⁶³⁸ designed to produce what I have suggested to call *traceability*, which in turn would enable *evaluability*. In this way, making aid an evaluable object required all staff across the aid administration to change how they were doing their work. More precisely, they would need to write more and in different ways than before.

Integrating a social science critique of aid

These initial calls for enhancing Norad's evaluation efforts, I have shown, sprang out of a fundamental critique of aid. In Chapter 2 I argued how this critique was voiced by aid staff who were themselves graduates in the new social sciences of the 1960s and 1970s, notably critical sociology and development geography. When Norad established a specific Office for Evaluation and Research in 1977, this critique was taken into the aid administration and pushed forward from within. During the next few years, evaluation staff worked to expand Norad's evaluation efforts by articulating an evaluation mandate, establishing routines and systems of evaluation, and writing a handbook of evaluation questions.

My analysis of the *Handbook of Evaluation Questions* in Chapter 2 showed how the evaluation staff not only introduced specific social science methods, notably interviews, focus groups, and surveys, to the field of evaluation. They also insisted that aid staff should analyze both their own *assumptions* about the expected effects of the aid project and the *context* into which an aid project was about to intervene. With regards to the latter, what the evaluation staff was designing, I argued in Chapter 4 were tools for making the context an integrated part of the evaluation optic itself, in other words, making context a filter through which the aid would have to be seen. With Asdal and Moser, I suggested understanding it as a tool made to enable *contexting*.⁶³⁹ The evaluation staff's concern for contexting was inseparable from a fundamental critique of aid at large: In their view, aid projects were too often planned and done without proper concern for the specific needs and preconditions of the project site, and without any detailed analysis of how the specific project would lead to the desired development. In order to improve this situation, the Handbook introduced a set of practical tools that were designed to make aid staff articulate aid projects by means of a matrix of interconnected concepts, notably development goal, purpose, output, input, activities, assumptions, data and indicators, and means of verification.

The Norwegian evaluation staff as of 1981 brought with them a combination of idealism and disillusionment which they transformed into a practical vision for a whole new way of doing aid. Yet when crafting the specific devices for planning, monitoring, and evaluating aid projects, the evaluation staff reached for tools already in use elsewhere. As shown in Chapter 5, the Logical Framework Approach was a device designed to make aid staff expand the planning process by integrating the context, the project site, and the target

⁶³⁸ Latour and Woolgar 1986.

⁶³⁹ Asdal and Moser 2012.

groups in the very articulation of a new aid project. An important part of its implementation in Norad was through the standardization of how aid documents were to be written, in short, by means of new document templates. In 1992, in order to obtain funding for both new and ongoing projects, aid staff would have to articulate the project's development goal, project goal, target group, expected results, and risk factors. These categories clearly resembled those introduced by the evaluation staff and may as such be interpreted as the success of their labors in making Norwegian aid an evaluable object.

From accommodating requests to requesting accounts

Yet the new aid documents of the 1990s were, paradoxically, also devices that isolated the evaluation object from its context. In translating aid projects into evaluable objects, with its own internal logic of interrelated categories, the object closed in on itself. This was precisely what the evaluation staff had set out to critique one decade before. Instead of embedding the aid projects in the shifting contexts of the specific project site and the recipient country at large, which was what the Evaluation Office was calling for, the new project documents and reporting routines served to disentangle the projects from their immediate surroundings and pull them closer to the Norwegian context. To that end, they were enabling a different version of contexting that did the evaluation staff's optics.

This Norwegian context was becoming increasingly dominant from 1990, when the aid administration implemented both a new strategy and a new accounting system. The new aid strategy asserted that Norway would transfer the responsibility for the planning and running of aid projects to the recipients while the new accounting system required the recipients to regularly submit receipts and accounts to Norad. This new situation, I have argued, in practice made Norad shift from swiftly accommodating requests for aid to requiring auditable accounts for how aid funds were spent. While the former was the case in 1980-81, when Norad staff were seeking to start a new aid project for building an oil sector in Mozambique, the latter was the case in 1992, when the two countries signed a new agreement for continuing the support to the petroleum sector. Through this agreement, Mozambique were given the entire responsibility for the aid program while Norad took on the role of an auditor: Requesting regular reports on how funds were spent, reserving the right to access all relevant actors and archives, and approving of all new plans and budgets.

Furthermore, the requirements of the accounting system was combined with the categories of the Logical Framework Approach. This in practice entailed that recipients should not only account for how they spent their *funds*, but also for how they spent their *time* and whether the expected results were materializing according to the plan. My analysis here confirms Rottenburg's argument that this kind of delegation of responsibility and accountability in aid led to what he terms a *project explosion* (with reference to Michael Power's term *audit explosion*), in which donors were only responsible for whether a project adhered to its own plan, and not whether it causes the real-world changes it was designed to enable in the first place.

This situation was, paradoxically, the opposite of what the evaluation staff had envisioned: in the 1981 Handbook, they had explicitly warned that the aid donor's needs should not be allowed to overrun those of the recipient. In 1990, the research team commissioned by the evaluation staff to write the so-called *Country Study and Norwegian Aid Review* of Mozambique pursued this argument even further, critiquing what they considered "neocolonial attitudes" among donors who did not want to grant responsibility to their aid recipients. Paradoxically, while the research team endorsed the principle of recipient responsibility, this principle, when implemented, was in practice coupled with intensified demands of accounting and reporting that maintained and even strengthened the donor's control with how aid funds were spent.

It is in this sense that my analysis supports Michael Power's thesis of the *audit society*: There was indeed a proliferation of tools and routines for enabling auditable accounting of Norwegian aid, and these were not limited to financial results, but also to project results. Norad's new role as auditor entailed a shift, still following Power, *from trusting to checking*. Yet this institutionalized mistrust went both ways: In Chapter 5, I showed that while Norad stopped trusting and started checking that funds were spent according to plan, recipients could no longer trust Norad to automatically continue their funding. Continued funding was made dependent on the conclusions of external evaluations, reviews, and audits. Norwegian aid grants could no longer be taken for granted.

Yet there are also aspects that point in a different direction than towards an audit society. In the next two sections of this chapter, I will turn to highlight the contradictions and uncertainties of aid evaluation.

The aid archive: Enabling what kind of evaluable object?

Building a rich archive of aid documents, I have argued, was a crucial element in the evaluation staff's vision of making aid an evaluable object. In their proposal for how evaluability might be realized, the routine writing of project documents played a key role. Employing Latour's conceptual framework, I have analyzed this as an effort at building strong *chains of translation* in order to capture the numerous small steps of writing, rewriting, and circulating texts that in combination would make aid an evaluable object.⁶⁴⁰ In Latour's vocabulary, the concept of *circulating reference* captures the process of moving back and forth between a text and its reference; in Latour's case, from a scientific publication through the many steps of analysis and data collection back to the nature objects the scientists set out to study. In this thesis, I have investigated the evaluation staff's notion of aid evaluation in a parallel manner: Only by obtaining a complete chain of project documents, all written in the same way at successive moments in time from a project's initiation to its finalization, would it be possible for future evaluators to retrace every step of the project. In a word, evaluability depended upon what I have suggested to call the *traceability* of aid projects. In enabling such

⁶⁴⁰ Latour 1999.

traceability, a rich project archive would be a prerequisite, as this was where the evaluators would have to go to obtain the chain of documents.

As I argued above, intensified routines of writing and storing aid documents were implemented in Norwegian aid around 1990. Yet what kind of aid archive was accumulating? The ideal project archive as envisioned by the evaluation staff would make it possible to see an aid project from afar, both temporarily and geographically; yet the project archives that in practice were being assembled, I have shown, contained a quite different kind of documents. Surely, these were planning documents and monitoring documents, which was what the evaluation staff had called for; yet they were formatted so as to enable auditable accounting and controlling progress, more than seeing the project in relation to its context. The physical aid archive was being filled with receipts and reports that enabled Norad to retrace whether funds were being spent according to budget and whether projects were progressing according to plan.

The combination of a new accounting system and the Logical Framework Approach, I argued in Chapter 5, enabled a different kind of traceability than what the evaluation staff had envisioned. In effect, archives built for enabling evaluation and archives built for enabling audit were not the same; they materialized different concerns, required staff to write different kinds of documents, enabled different kinds of optics, and also, I will suggest, enabled different kinds of *objects*. The same project would be constituted and assessed in different ways by the field office, the evaluation office, the accounting system, and a logical framework analysis. When the Logical Framework Approach shifted from enabling project contexting to enabling project accounting, aid projects did indeed become more accountable. Yet the internal coherence of project input, outcome, and results had been but one part of the evaluation staff's initial vision of evaluability. The ability to connect the project to its specific contexts, both its immediate surroundings and its national setting, I will suggest, remained but a vision, despite the many efforts at enabling precisely this.

The evaluation staff's calls for building rich archives bore clear resemblance to the how the contemporary Norwegian oil administration described the success of the Norwegian oil experience. In Chapter 3, I analyzed how staff from the Norwegian Petroleum Directorate explained the importance of accumulating and analyzing oil data in order to gain "intimate knowledge" of the continental shelf, which in turn was critical in order to maintain national control over the petroleum resources vis-a-vis oil companies, pace the development of the oil sector, and enable long-term democratic planning of the role of oil in the economy and society at large. The Norwegian Petroleum Directorate's main concern, I suggested, was to build as strong an archive as possible, and to do so by continuously maintaining and strengthening this vital infrastructure. Following my combination of the concepts of *technologies of seeing* and *technologies of politics*, I will argue that making oil an evaluable object was what the Petroleum Directorate was built to do, working as it was to enable the highest possible resolution of the Norwegian petroleum resources in order to exploit as much oil as possible and formulate as precise policies and plans as possible.

In contrast, the aid evaluation staff, while making a parallel argument for the field of foreign aid, did not experience the same institutional support nor retain their position at the center of the organization. While they were initially granted an office of their own directly under the Norad director, they moved into the new Ministry of Development Cooperation in 1984 and then into the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1990. Hence, they remained on the outside, one step removed from the daily life of the aid organization. Meanwhile, inside Norad, new writing routines were increasing the amount of documents in the archives, yet this did not necessarily make aid an evaluable object in the evaluation staff's sense of the word. My analysis suggests that aid staff were indeed writing more than before, and while they were duly filling in the categories of the logical framework they were not necessarily enabling evaluability in the evaluation staff's sense of the term. The documents remained tools for enabling something else to happen; their accumulation and storage was not the aid staff's main concern. Here, Norad diverged drastically from their fellow public agency of the NPD.

Yet the strength of the oil archives, I showed in Chapter 5, also produced its own kind of opacity: The archives were actively guarded and the circulation of its contents were actively restricted. Few were allowed to enter; those who were allowed in, might not bring documents back out; and few would be allowed to read what was eventually written. While the opacity of aid was based in a *lack of available documents*, the opacity of oil was actively produced by *making documents unavailable*. In investigating foreign aid to the oil sector, as I have done, this contrast has been both empirically interesting and methodologically productive.

Versions of evaluation and moments of articulation

The combination of oil and aid in my empirical material also alerted me to how there were simultaneously different versions of evaluation at play. The evaluation staff's definition of an evaluation process, an evaluation report, and of what it would take to enable evaluation in the first place was but one way of conceptualizing evaluation work. The staff of the Norwegian Petroleum Directorate used the term in different ways. Rather than conceiving of evaluation as the final stage of linear process, the NPD's version entailed a constant process of evaluating and re-evaluating both new and existing data in order to gain "intimate knowledge of the petroleum resources". If there was linearity, evaluating oil data was what *preceded* other work; it was what enabled planning in the first place. Intimate knowledge, I will argue, could never be gained once and for all, but had to be actively maintained by constant evaluation and re-evaluation.

The notion of *versions of evaluation*, inspired by Singleton's analysis of *versions of accountability* and Asdal's *versions of care*,⁶⁴¹ opens for a different take on aid documents than does the deficiency argument of the evaluation staff. According to them, aid staff were writing too little and in the wrong way. Rather than taking this position for granted, I have investigated what staff in practice *were* writing. I have suggested to call these pieces of

⁶⁴¹ Asdal 2012b; Singleton 2012.

writing for *moments of articulation*. With this approach, numerous ways in which aid staff articulated their views and concerns about planned and ongoing aid projects emerged: As I showed, aid staff was constantly assessing, analyzing, seeing, grasping, and judging aid, while at the same time using documents sometimes to speed things up, othertimes to slow things down.

When the Norwegian aid staff at Norad's field office in Maputo, the capital of Mozambique, were writing quarterly reports home to the Oslo headquarters amidst a ravaging civil war, they were not producing traceability in the sense that would be demanded by evaluators and auditors. Still, I will argue, they were making aid visible from afar, perhaps even more vividly so than what the categories of the Logical Framework Approach would later allow for. Using narrative prose, they voiced both optimism, hesitation, doubts, and critique. Key conclusions and recommendations of the major *Mozambique Country Study and Norwegian Aid Review* written by a team of external social scientists had been articulated in internal reports several years before. Moreover, the internal reports also engaged actively in contexting by embedding the Norwegian aid portfolio both in the specific site of Mozambique, the specific temporal moment of writing, and the specific office of the Norad resident representative in Maputo.

When the so-called Methods Group standardized Norad's document templates in 1989-90, and the so-called Advisory Forum were granted the authority to demand changes in how staff were writing, the narrative prose described above was replaced by documents formatted in the style of accounting reports. With such standardized reporting, Norad might be able to combine and aggregate the total accounts for Norwegian aid and gain an overview of how projects were progressing. The ability to retrace how funds were spent was an important feature in making aid an accountable object. Yet accumulating progress reports from all projects and programs – the petroleum sector program in Mozambique was but one minor grant in the total Norwegian aid portfolio – did not in itself make aid an evaluable object. While progress reports indeed resembled accounting reports, they were composed mainly of text and could only to a limited extent be combined in the way numbers might be combined. In the oil administration, continuous evaluation of data was what enabled intimate knowledge of the oil resources. In Norad, progress reports and annual reports would accumulate, yet they would only rarely be further investigated. They were handled as financial receipts, not as oil data: Required to be available in the face of a potential evaluation or audit, but apart from this, they were left alone.

This point relates to Jensen and Winthereik's analyses of present-day aid information infrastructures, where they investigate the current proliferation of aid information and the aid field's effort at handling the expanding amounts of data and documents, both physical and digital. Drawing on the later work of Michael Power, they employ his term *audit implosion*, which Power in 2000 suggested might come to characterize an audit society if it continued to expand its auditing systems: it would, following Jensen and Winthereik, become an

information infrastructure that kneeled under its own weight.⁶⁴² Following this line of reasoning in my own analysis, the intensified writing routines and the expanding aid archives might have produced an accumulation of documents and enhanced Norad's ability to check how funds were spent, yet it did not eliminate opacity and uncertainty. Aid was becoming a more auditable object, yet it was not necessarily becoming a more evaluable object.

While aid writing was standardized by new requirements from the evaluation staff, the Methods Group, the Advisory Forum, and the accounting system, I have shown that there was still room for both flexibility, hesitation, and interpretation. In the end, staff would still be able to swiftly accommodate requests and navigate a project safely through the aid administration. Even when genres and templates were increasingly becoming standardized, a document's properties were never completely pre-given or fixed. They maintained their *transformative capacity*, to use Asdal's term.⁶⁴³ They could transform both an object, its context, and even itself. As shown in Chapter 5, even with strict separations between the genres of project review and project document, the first might still easily be transformed into the other.

Reducing opacity, producing uncertainty?

In conclusion, while this thesis has shown how the Norwegian aid administration around 1990 implemented key features of New Public Management and what Michael Power has termed the *audit society* (notably indirect management of public funds through systems of accounting and audit), I have not found indications of this also being a neoliberal turn. Rather, I will argue, the new routines emerged from *a combination of tools and concerns from multiple sites*: The evaluation initiatives sprung out of an idealistic social science intervention into aid which itself was critical to all things neoliberal.

For the evaluation staff, the main concern was to foster better aid by embedding aid projects firmly in their specific contexts and by making aid staff acknowledge their own situatedness. The practical planning tools emerging from this initiative were hardly concerned with audit and accounting; also they were initially envisioned to facilitate an expanded insight into the project's context. Yet when implemented, they were combined in specific ways with the routines and concerns of auditable accounting. This had the effect, paradoxically, of enabling a shift of emphasis from the recipient context to the donor context. Hence, if we are to understand how Norwegian foreign aid was sought made an evaluable object and how evaluation contributed to transform the field of foreign aid, we must accommodate these co-existing, overlapping, and occasionally contradicting practices of evaluation and audit.

By attending to the specific practices of both aid work and evaluation work, I have shown how a key feature of the effort of making aid an evaluable object is, quite frankly, its meticulous character: Even one single evaluation process involved a large number of steps, making a number of critical choices, and synchronizing a number of heterogeneous actors.

⁶⁴² Jensen and Winthereik 2013; Power 2000b.

⁶⁴³ Asdal 2015.

Similarly, determining the fate of but one minor aid project might continue to be difficult even after multiple optics of evaluation have been employed.

In this way, opacity, slipperiness, and interpretive flexibility of aid persisted also within the new practices and systems of documentation. Much work was needed if one were to attain clarity, overview, and certainty. This may help explain why the uncertainty over whether aid works is so persistent: Making aid an evaluable object would require much more resources than donors are willing to accept.

Yet this line of reasoning may in itself reinforce the expectation that more knowledge will by necessity produce clarity and certainty. Quite to the contrary, I will suggest, it is precisely *because* optics have been employed that the uncertainties become visible. Indeed, efforts at producing clarity, overview, and certainty might in themselves have the effect of accentuating uncertainty in more specific ways than before. To that end, making aid an evaluable object in itself contributes to the notion that “we still don’t know enough”.

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