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THE LOCALIZED CONTEXT OF THE ORGANIZATION
6.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, an organizational role description for the job of veterinary inspector was developed and the different organizational role identities of inspectors were discussed. Moreover, I found that higher levels of perceived knowledge about socialization content positively influence inspectors’ role identity on the enforcement dimension. This means that inspectors with higher levels of knowledge are more likely to have organizational role identities, on the enforcement dimension, similar to the organization’s role description. This automatically leads to questions regarding the learning moments that convey this content. How do inspectors know what the organization expects of them? This research starts from the idea that “a great deal of socialization is not so much ‘organizational’ as ‘tribal’. That is, newcomers are socialized largely through specific interpersonal and group-based interactions that are grounded in the localized contexts” (Ashforth et al., 2007: 36). This starting point implies that the socialization content is conveyed to employees through learning moments that take place in different (localized) work contexts.

The work environment of veterinary inspectors can be divided into two main localized contexts. On the one hand, there is the daily work environment in the facilities being inspected. It is in this localized context of ‘the field’ that the interaction with external actors is most frequent, whereas the interactions with colleagues are rather limited. On the other hand, there are different situations where interactions with internal actors take place (e.g. meetings, training programs, at the office). In this study I refer to this as the localized context of ‘the organization’. This distinction between the two localized contexts appears to ignore their interrelatedness, thereby rendering them somewhat artificial. Yet, the interviews show that this is a distinction made in the perception of inspectors as a result of the physical distance between their daily work environment and the organization. Based on the Thomas theorem¹ (Thomas & Thomas 1928:57), this distinction is expected to influence the behavior of inspectors. Therefore the distinction between the localized context of the organization and the field is used to structure the qualitative data analysis. Before elaborating on the

¹ If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences
empirical analysis, the main concepts presented in the theoretical chapter are briefly recapitulated.

While chapter 7 analyzes the learning moments in the localized context of the field, the aim of this chapter is to identify how learning moments in the localized context of the organization contribute to inspectors’ understanding of the socialization content. These learning moments can be divided into information sources and information settings. As discussed earlier (chapter 2, section 2.6), information sources are learning moments that take place through one-on-one interaction in specific contexts, whereas information settings are learning moments in which constant interactions between different information sources provide the employee with information. These learning moments can be either institutionalized or individualized. Whereas institutionalized learning moments are consciously implemented by the organization with the aim to structure the socialization experiences of employees, individualized learning moments are more coincidental in nature. The main assumption is that learning moments deliberately implemented by the organization provide the inspectors with information that is in line with the organizational message. This does not mean that (content from) individualized information sources and settings necessarily contradict the organizational standpoint. However, as these interactions are less regulated by the organization, the chances of such a contradiction are higher. This distinction between institutionalized and individualized learning moments is context dependent. For example, interactions with institutional sources in informal situations can take a more individualized character. This leads to three propositions that are addressed in this chapter:

2b) The localized context of the organization provides employees with the socialization content desired from an organizational perspective.

3b) Institutionalized learning moments contribute positively to employees’ knowledge of the organizational socialization content.

3c) Individualized learning moments impact on employees’ knowledge of the organizational socialization content.
Localized context “the organization”

Learning moments:

**Information sources**
- Institutionalized: Interpersonal, Non-interpersonal
- Individualized: Interpersonal, Non-interpersonal

**Information setting**
- Institutionalized
- Individualized

Socialization content:
- Organizational level
- Team level
- Job level

Proactivity

**Figure 6.1** Conceptual model: localized context of the organization

Besides the organizational factors influencing the socialization process, inspectors themselves can exert influence over their own socialization. By employing proactive behaviors, such as information seeking or network development, inspectors gain a better understanding of their context (i.e. socialization content). This proactivity is not the main focus of this research. Yet, as not to neglect the role of the individual in the organizational socialization process, this chapter addresses the proposition that:

4a) Proactive personality of employees increases their knowledge about the organizational socialization content.

In this chapter, data from both the cross-sectional and the longitudinal panel are used (see chapter 4 for a discussion of the data). The data from the cross-sectional panel is used to provide an overview of different perceptions held and information sources/settings used, whereas analysis of the longitudinal panel data is mainly used to capture the relation between different learning moments and socialization content. I start the analysis in section 6.2 by describing the interpersonal information sources, both institutionalized and individualized, encountered in the localized context of the organization. Section 6.3 discusses institutionalized and individualized non-interpersonal sources and section 6.4
addresses the institutionalized and individualized information settings. For each of these information sources and settings an empirical description is provided that discusses their role in the organizational socialization process of veterinary inspectors. Finally, section 6.5 summarizes the links found between the different learning moments and the socialization content learned (figure 6.1).

6.2 LEARNING MOMENTS: INTERPERSONAL INFORMATION SOURCES IN THE LOCALIZED CONTEXT OF THE ORGANIZATION

This section deals with both the individualized and institutionalized interpersonal internal information sources encountered by the inspectors. The institutionalized interpersonal sources identified in this research together constitute the formal –interpersonal– organizational network used to structure the interactions in the primary process. In the case of the veterinary inspectors, this network consists of three specific information sources: 1) the team leader, 2) the company inspector, and 3) the senior veterinary inspector. Yet, there are also interactions with interpersonal sources outside these formal structures. These individualized interpersonal information sources can be both veterinary inspectors as well as employees from other parts of the organization. The fact that veterinary inspectors are not considered institutionalized information sources needs some further explanation.

Even though veterinary inspectors are necessary actors in the primary process of the organization, their function is not intended to contribute to the organization’s structure regarding the socialization of its employees. Therefore, I consider these veterinary inspectors as not deliberately installed by the organization to provide structure in the organizational socialization process of other inspectors. In other words, these are the ‘hands’ in the primary process, but their function is not specifically related to structuring interactions and contributing to information exchange between internal actors. The latter is the job of company inspectors or team leaders who, for example, organize team and other meetings (see sections 6.2.1.1 and 6.2.1.2). The next section starts with a discussion of the institutionalized interpersonal information sources, their role in
the socialization process, factors influencing their effectiveness, and proactivity related to these information sources. After that, the same topics are discussed for the individualized interpersonal information sources.

6.2.1 INSTITUTIONALIZED INTERPERSONAL INFORMATION SOURCES: FORMAL NETWORKS AROUND THE PRIMARY PROCESS

As discussed above, there are three different information sources that serve as organizational contact points in the primary process. These information sources structure inspectors’ interactions with other organizational members regarding their daily work. The team leader, company inspector, and senior inspector are all assigned a prominent role in the daily routines and interactions of veterinary inspectors. Where team leaders serve as linking pin between the inspector and the organization, company inspectors are the linking pin between the facility being inspected and the inspector. Senior inspectors do not serve this same purpose, but can be considered a *primus inter pares* among inspectors. They are assigned a coaching role within the teams. This means that when inspectors are in need of practical or other content-related help, they should contact the senior inspector in their team (figure 6.2 summarizes these relations). The information sources are discussed separately below.

6.2.1.1 Team leaders

Team leaders serve as a conduit between the NVWA and team members on two fronts. On the one hand, team leaders help inspectors with personal and HR-related questions (i.e. providing organizational and team-level socialization content). On the other hand, they serve as information source for more (operational) work-related questions (i.e. job-level socialization content). Team leaders are therefore the main connection between inspectors and the NVWA as an organization, their role being focused on facilitating their team members. This makes team leaders of pivotal importance for the functioning of inspectors. Although the contact with team leaders is frequent, the contact is often indirect through phone or e-mail.
There are two attributes of team leaders that inspectors consider important for their functioning. On the one hand, there is the team leaders’ knowledge about the primary process and veterinary medicine. Although, according to organizational processes, content-related questions are actually meant to be directed to the senior inspector, inspectors consider it effective and pleasant if they can discuss these questions with their team leader. This is especially the case when inspectors discuss situations with their team leader and therefore the team leader’s decision influences the final outcome. Inspectors’ perceptions of their team leader as being less knowledgeable in content-related situations, as these team leaders are often not trained veterinarians, can result in some tension. This shows from an example mentioned of a team leader deviating from the inspector’s decision (interviewee 24-CSP):
"I decided to reject an animal, so there was some tension [with the company]. The team leader, who does not know about veterinary medicine at all and comes from a completely different field, took the decision to take a different route and to punish someone [the inspector himself] who took initiative to do an investigation."

On the other hand, there is the importance inspectors assign to a personal relationship with their team leaders. Due to the solitary nature of the job, team leaders are the source with which inspectors interact – or should interact – most frequently. This makes it important that this relationship is good; one thing particularly valued by inspectors is when team leaders take an interest in their personal situation. This shows that the role of the team leader is more than simply being an important source of information. Team leaders bridge the gap between the inspectors on the work floor and the NVWA, thereby bringing the two localized contexts in which inspectors work together. Therefore, team leaders who fulfil this function correctly are highly valued by inspectors. A salient detail is that both knowledge- and personally oriented management styles are associated by the inspectors with team leaders that have a veterinary background.

Proactivity from inspectors in relation to team leaders is aimed at gaining information from and on the team leader. Inspectors employ information and feedback-seeking behaviors to better understand what is expected of them (by the team leader). For example, inspectors seek answers to questions regarding procedures of decision making or look for feedback on their work. The data from the longitudinal panel show that, especially for new inspectors, support and confidence from the team leader goes a long way in bolstering the confidence inspectors have during their work.

Furthermore, proactivity is aimed at gaining a better understanding about the team leader and his functioning. Inspectors try to discover a standard for their team leader’s functioning in relation to the functioning of other team leaders. The proactive behaviors consisting of observations and interaction with other veterinary inspectors on this topic teach inspectors about differences between team leaders (i.e. team-level socialization content). This type of interaction, focused on learning about team leaders, is especially intense between inspectors.
that were members of the same cohort during the training program (see also section 6.2.2).

The socialization content derived from these learning moments shows inspectors that their team leaders are of pivotal importance for their career development opportunities. Differences between team leaders are related to important differences in employment conditions between inspectors. For example, the opportunities for personal development within the organization differ – or are perceived to differ – under different team leaders. Some team leaders support their team members when they want to follow extra courses or take up extra tasks, whereas others discourage this. Another important example is indicated by the quote below. Interviewee 2-LP says:

"Most people meanwhile have a permanent contract, but there are also those who still do not have a permanent contract. This is very much dependent upon the type of team leader. In that respect, I found out that the team leader is really very important."

These differences between team leaders increase uncertainty among veterinary inspectors about what to expect from their team leader and, more generally, from the organization. This uncertainty is intensified as inspectors are confronted with frequent changes in who their team leader is. This leads inspectors to constantly try to build new relationships and understanding with their team leader to reduce this uncertainty:

"In the time that I have been here now, one and a half years, I have had three different team leaders. Every time you start again with indicating your preferences and your team leader getting to know you and the other way around."

(interviewee 8– LP)

If the relationship with the team leader is less than positive, inspectors turn to other institutionalized or even individualized information sources, as will be discussed in the following sections.
6.2.1.2 Company inspector

Where the team leader is the conduit between team members and the NVWA, the company inspector is the conduit between the inspector and the facility being inspected. Because of the long slaughtering hours, multiple inspectors have to perform the inspections within one facility; these inspectors together are referred to as a cluster. The company inspector is the main contact point for both the company and the cluster members. The interactions primarily consist of questions and remarks on the inspection, from the side of the company, or on the inspected facility, from the side of the inspectors (i.e. job and team-level socialization content). Besides holding this task as a contact point and coordinator in the cluster, company inspectors also perform regular inspections at the facility under inspection.

An important part of the tasks of company inspectors is to check for uniformity and consistency in the enforcement between cluster members. Therefore, besides organizing two-weekly meetings with the management of the facilities in which its day-to-day operations are discussed, company inspectors also have to organize cluster meetings. During these cluster meetings, inspectors discuss the facility being inspected and their own work procedures at these facilities (these meetings and their importance are further discussed in section 6.4.1.2). The role of the company inspectors with regard to job and team-level socialization content cannot be underestimated, both as a result of their own extensive knowledge regarding the facilities being inspected and their role in structuring information exchanges between veterinary inspectors (i.e. cluster meetings). One of the company inspectors summarized his task as follows (interviewee 23-CSP):

"As company inspector you have to make sure that your team members are in line with each other and that when things happen which you think are not correct, you discuss this with your colleagues and take care that you agree on the way in which you want the inspection at the company to be arranged."

The data show that the individual occupying the role of company inspector is decisive for the effectiveness of this position in the formal network. In some
cases, company inspectors even develop into role models for younger inspectors (interviewee 16-CSP):

"Previously, we had a different company inspector...[name]... I learned a lot from her. I still see her as some kind of mentor. I still consider her my senior veterinary inspector, and when I have questions I still call her, the connections are short."

In other instances, company inspectors are perceived as being closed off, not willing to involve other cluster members, and share information. This behavior reduces the NVWA’s intended effect of the company inspector’s role as linking pin between inspected facility and cluster members. Moreover, this could potentially be harmful for inspectors’ motivation and their perception of their team, cluster and organization.

Besides inspectors employing information and feedback seeking behaviors towards company inspectors, company inspectors themselves also employ different proactive behaviors. These proactive behaviors are aimed at 1) improving the company’s operations and 2) improving the inspections at the company, for example, by digitizing paperwork or establishing points on which inspection should focus (interviewee 6-LP; company inspector):

"These are the things I slowly start doing [digitizing the archive]. I know I cannot change the world on my own so to speak, but surely slowly, lifting these kinds of things into the next century."

6.1.2.3 Senior inspector

The final information source discussed as part of the formal network is the senior inspector. The senior inspector’s role is less aimed at linking inspectors to actors in their environment, but more at supporting and coaching team members in practical situations. The senior inspectors are expected to be the main contacts within the formal network with regard to content-related questions; especially since team leaders are no longer exclusively veterinarians. To perform this role optimally, seniors are not scheduled full-time for regular inspections.
This allows them to visit veterinary inspectors on site when these inspectors feel uncertain about their decision or are in need of back-up. By offering this support, senior inspectors play an important role in creating uniformity among veterinary inspectors but also in strengthening the confidence of inspectors. Senior inspectors mainly provide inspectors with job socialization content. One inspector said about this (interviewee 13-CSP):

"Seniors have enough room in their schedule so that besides their schedule they can come and go when they want. That is just nice, works perfectly. You just know that they can be there any time and that you do not need to take big decisions on your own."

Whether veterinary inspectors actually use senior inspectors as an information source is mainly dependent on two things: 1) the work experience of the inspectors, and 2) the relationship with the senior inspector. Inspectors with substantial work experience are less likely to contact their senior inspector, as these inspectors are familiar with most situations. Even when they have questions, their own informal networks are generally extensive enough to find answers. Besides having a personal connection, the relation between inspector and senior inspector is influenced by their organizational role identities. In particular, differences in perception about aspects such as enforcement can influence the use of senior inspectors as an information source. This can be seen from an example in which an inspector mentions his senior inspector being more rule focused. This appears to deter him from actually contacting his senior inspector when he has questions. This is problematic as the role of the senior inspector is also aimed at creating uniformity in enforcement within the teams. The inspector said about this difference (interviewee 37-CSP):

"My real senior veterinary inspector is too formal [...] He is 100% focused on regulations and what is written down in the law. When I call [him by phone and ask]: how do you approach that? [He answers] What is written down in the regulations? Then that is the way we do it. He does not leave any room [red. discretion]."
Proactivity (i.e. information and feedback seeking) aimed at senior inspectors can result in feelings of support when inspectors have to deal with difficult situations and the senior inspectors provide them with back-up. Content-wise, the role of senior inspector is important in teaching veterinary inspectors about the applicability of rules and regulations in practice. Moreover, the senior inspector (along with the team leader) facilitates networking behaviors on the part of veterinary inspectors, by allowing inspectors to use the contacts of their seniors and team leaders to build their own informal networks. This happens, for example, when seniors cannot answer questions themselves and use their own elaborate networks to provide the veterinary inspectors with the necessary information. Often senior inspectors share information on who the relevant contacts are, which helps veterinary inspectors to build their own informal networks. (This is further discussed in section 6.2.2, which deals with individualized interpersonal information sources and in which I address the importance veterinary inspectors assign to informal networks).

6.1.2.4 Summary

A number of observations can be made with regard to how the institutionalized interpersonal information sources contribute to inspectors’ understanding of the socialization content. First, we see that the institutionalized interpersonal information sources which comprise the formal network around the primary process serve as a linking pin between inspectors and their different localized contexts. These sources provide inspectors with knowledge and practical help when they encounter problems during their work. As a result, these sources have the potential to contribute to uniformity in enforcement among inspectors. This process of knowledge transmission can be hampered when inspectors perceive the institutionalized sources as inadequate or when they are unable to perform their job properly. Such perceptions can originate from, as well as negatively impact, the relationship, including the personal relationship, between inspector and institutionalized information source, consequently influencing its effectiveness. Moreover, the data show that negative perceptions of the actors in the formal networks also reflect negatively on the NVWA as an organization.
An interesting issue, with regard to the proactivity of inspectors is the impact of the physical distance between the localized context of the organization and the work floor. This distance makes it important for inspectors to use proactive behaviors to seek information and receive feedback since encounters with institutionalized, and more generally with internal, information sources on the work floor are rare, thereby increasing the importance of proactivity. At the same time, institutionalized interpersonal information sources also contribute to inspectors’ proactive behavior of network building as these sources provide them with useful contacts. The discussion of the company inspector’s role as an information source shows that the information sources themselves can also influence the socialization content of inspectors. Another example of this is the influence of individual team leaders on the personal development opportunities of their team members.

Besides knowledge, the interactions with this formal network of team leaders, company inspectors, and senior inspectors can provide inspectors with feelings of support. These feelings of support, in turn, reflect positively on the organization. Therefore, it is crucial that these formal networks and the actors within these networks function properly. More specifically, when these networks do not function properly inspectors develop negative perceptions of the organization. Yet, the data show that inspectors develop proactive behaviors to counter the problems experienced with the organization’s functioning. They do so, for example, by developing informal networks of individualized interpersonal information sources which I discuss in the next section.

6.2.2 INDIVIDUALIZED INTERPERSONAL INFORMATION SOURCES: INFORMAL NETWORKS AS BACK UP

Besides formal interpersonal networks around the primary process, there are also informal interpersonal networks that are an important source of information for inspectors. The networks are developed over time through the use of institutionalized sources, as discussed in the section above, and institutionalized settings (see section 6.4.1.2). This function of institutionalized sources and settings in creating informal networks is especially important as the profession is solitary in nature and sometimes inspectors do not encounter
colleagues for several days or even weeks. For example, the training program contributes positively to the strengthening of relations and interactions as this training increases feelings of comradeship (see also section 6.4.1.2). These feelings increase the willingness of inspectors to share information and discuss situations. As most of these interactions are indirect (e.g. via phone, e-mail), the effectiveness of informal networks is dependent on the reachability of the actors in the networks. In this regard, there are some mixed signals from the data. Where some inspectors complain about other employees within the NVWA being hard to reach, others feel that the lines within the organization are short and that colleagues are easily accessible (i.e. organizational-level socialization content). These experiences appear to differ between clusters and teams. Moreover, inspectors also employ proactive behaviors aimed at increasing face-to-face interaction, such as meeting with colleagues in roadside restaurants or organizing meetings to evaluate their own actions.

The informal networks consisting of team members, veterinary inspectors from other teams and other NVWA employees have three important contributions in the socialization process: 1) information provision, 2) countering perceived inefficiencies in the organizational structure, and 3) attracting new inspectors during the anticipatory socialization phase. Most interactions with team members center on small aspects of the job, for example getting confirmation that rule enforcement such as the rejection of an animal was correct, or the interactions are meant to prevent inspectors being played off against each other by inspectees (i.e. proactivity). Moreover, the informal networks are used to deal with perceived inefficiencies in the organization, such as limited opportunities for inspectors to receive direct feedback on their job performance. Inspectors perceive their informal networks as pivotal in order to work efficiently as it reduces the risk of inspectors ‘reinventing the wheel’, which is considered a common problem within the NVWA.

Informal contacts also have a completely different role in the anticipatory socialization phase of newcomers and potential newcomers, that is, before potential newcomers have entered the organization. In the anticipatory socialization phase these contacts are of a personal nature, including for example fellow students already working for the NVWA, former colleagues from private veterinary practice or even current colleagues when potential newcomer
have colleagues that are practitioners. The newcomers question these personal connections about the organization, or are made aware of the vacancy by them, such as in the following example of interviewee 9-LP:

“A friend of mine worked there [in the NVWA] and was actually very positive. And then I talked to someone else who worked there and I thought I should check out what the work entails. Because I had an idea, but that idea did not appear to be correct.”

This importance and existence of informal contact with organizational members in the anticipatory socialization stage can be explained by the cohesiveness of veterinarians as a professional group. Besides the professional norms and values, the cohesiveness of this group is intensified as only one university in the Netherlands (i.e. the University of Utrecht) offers this program. As a result, the personal ties and networks between veterinarians are strong. Within this group of professionals, the perception of the NVWA as an organization used to be very negative, even after the improvements made in the training program and selection procedure. The personal contacts between veterinarians and inspectors in the anticipatory socialization stage appear to be the key in convincing more skeptical veterinarians of the NVWA’s improved image. The section on information settings discusses the shift in reputation of the NVWA among veterinarians in greater depth. However, first the role of non-interpersonal information sources in the socialization process is discussed.

6.3 NON-INTERPERSONAL INFORMATION SOURCES IN THE LOCALIZED CONTEXT OF THE ORGANIZATION: CHECK AND BACK UP

The previous section focused on interpersonal sources, whereas this section pays attention to non-interpersonal information sources (e.g. written sources). The main difference between non-interpersonal and interpersonal sources is their flexibility. All types of socialization content can be generated from interpersonal sources by steering the conversations in the desired direction. In contrast, the information provided by non-interpersonal sources is static and determined
upfront. In this regard, the written information sources used to communicate, such as e-mail, are different from, for example, policy documents as these are less static. The use of e-mail and written communication is discussed in chapter 7. In the interviews, none of the inspectors referred to the use of individualized non-interpersonal information sources such as professional literature. Therefore, this analysis focuses on the use of institutionalized non-interpersonal information sources.

The non-interpersonal information sources developed by the organization (i.e. work instructions, and rules and regulations) are used by inspectors to check whether an infringement has been committed. Moreover, the information gained from rules and regulations helps inspectors to write minutes and to support their argument towards the facility being inspected when they want to enforce regarding an infringement (i.e. job-level socialization content)\(^2\). The importance of this function of institutionalized non-interpersonal sources for the enforcement process is elaborated upon in chapter 7. Furthermore, the use of institutionalized, non-interpersonal information sources is triggered by the institutionalized interpersonal information sources telling inspectors about these sources and the information they contain. The solitary nature of the inspectors’ work and the availability of information play an important role here too, especially in combination with proactive information-seeking behaviors. The following excerpt pays attention to the use of these information sources (interviewee 19-CSP):

"Sometimes you just have to solve the problems yourself because there is time pressure. But in principle there are contact points, whom you can ask different things and who refer us to the texts; and in the end you still have to look for it yourself, but at least then you know where you can find it. That is something you learn very quickly while working for the NVWA. And then you can check it and then you can use the papers."

\(^2\) One could argue that the categorization of rules and regulations in the category of institutionalized, non-interpersonal sources is arbitrary, as rules and regulations in the field of food safety and animal welfare are determined at an European level, and are not institutionalized by the organization. However, as these rules and regulations are predetermined and form the base of the Dutch food safety services, I consider the rules and regulations an institutionalized, non-interpersonal information source.
The data show that the use of non-interpersonal (i.e. written) information sources is hindered by the time it takes to get the necessary information as it can take a lot of time to look things up rather than simply asking. Moreover, the physical environment in which inspectors find themselves also hinders the use of written sources as one can imagine it being difficult to use written sources for example in a slaughter hall. This is demonstrated by the answer one inspector gave when asked what she would do if confronted with a situation that she does not know how to handle (Interviewee 15-CSP):

"Dependent on what it is, either I will look for it myself in the rules and regulations. I always try that when I have time for it. Then I try that first. Because you then encounter the written laws and know which laws are stated where. Or If I have little time, because sometimes it is time-consuming, then I will call my colleague or team leader."

As a result, inspectors use these written information sources mainly during tasks at home or at the office, for example when writing minutes, to ensure that all formal requirements are met. Besides enforcement situations, there also appears to be a component of coincidence in the use of non-interpersonal information sources. Inspectors mention situations in which they coincidently have printed versions of their work instructions with them and therefore use them.

6.4 LEARNING MOMENTS: INFORMATION SETTINGS IN THE LOCALIZED CONTEXT OF THE ORGANIZATION

The first part of this chapter focused on the information sources that inspectors use and can use in the localized context of the organization. There are, however, also settings in which multiple information sources interact and provide inspectors with important information. These settings can be planned by the organization, such as, for example, training programs, but they can also be the result of normal day-to-day situations such as experiences with ICT. With regard to institutionalized information settings, the NVWA focuses on structuring
both 1) newcomers’ socialization and 2) information exchanges in the primary process. The individualized information settings refer more to the experiences inspectors have had with the different organizational departments (e.g. ICT, Planning). The next section first addresses the institutionalized information settings, followed by a discussion of the individualized information settings.

6.4.1 INSTITUTIONALIZED INFORMATION SETTINGS: NEWCOMERS AND THE PRIMARY PROCESS

6.4.1.1 Information settings focused on newcomers

Following the influential report of Vanthemsche that identified a lack of enforcement attitude among inspectors, the NVWA made changes in its institutionalized information settings by improving both the selection procedure and training program. As a result the selection procedure became geared to selecting inspectors based on their capability with regard to enforcement. The selection procedure, which consists of two interviews, an assessment and an orienting internship, is experienced as very extensive. The importance of this extensive selection procedure shows from the interviews with the longitudinal panel as from these interviews it becomes clear that the orienting internship can be pivotal in the decision of some inspectors to continue with the selection procedure and accept a job within the NVWA. This appears to be mainly the result of increased knowledge about the job content; more specifically, of the inspectors’ perceptions of the job as challenging. Interviewee 2-LP mentions:

“During the selection procedure I had contact by phone, about what it [the job] entails, to have some idea. Also I accompanied [other inspectors for] two days, with red meat in [Company] X and somebody who did exports... on the phone your idea [about what the job entails] is not as good as in practice.”

The training program also underwent some changes. In its current form, the training program focuses on two aspects of the inspection work. First, a part of the program deals with the veterinary content of the object of inspection (i.e.
pigs, poultry, cattle, and livestock transport); the other part pays attention to the improvement of inspection-related skills (e.g. communication skills, writing minutes, knowledge of rules and regulations). Young inspectors with lower levels of tenure in both panels emphasize the positive influence these courses have had on their confidence while performing their job, thereby reducing inspectors’ uncertainty. In particular courses on improving skills aimed at enforcement such as communication strategies were considered helpful.

Inspectors already working for the NVWA were also obliged to take the improved courses on formal rules and regulations and communication strategies to improve their enforcement attitude and communication skills. As some incumbents took the course for a second time, these inspectors were able to judge the extent of the improvements made in the structure of the courses. The general opinion among these inspectors was that major improvements were made to the courses and to the training program in general. This led these inspectors to think that the organization had taken the remarks of the commission seriously and was working to improve the situation as established in the Vanthemsche Report. Moreover, inspectors from the cross-sectional panel consider the fact that new inspectors are “no longer dropped in the meat grinder” an improvement (i.e. organizational socialization content). Interviewee 13-CSP vocalizes this:

“Yes, a lot of attention is paid to the training program. It is clearly a point in one’s favor, that I have to admit. First it was like you were fed to the lions and now you receive proper training. The training program is a very positive development.”

Inspectors from the cross-sectional panel link these improvements to changes on the work floor. For example, they state that increased knowledge among inspectors in general has improved the interactions on the level of the work floor. However, newcomers who just graduated mention overlap with the curriculum of the program of veterinary medicine in Utrecht.
“Then there are some old people, or older people, you know what I mean, and they are sitting there and have a lot of difficulty with the teaching material so it has to be endlessly repeated. But I think after one time: yeah, yeah, I know this now. Or we learned it recently at university. That makes a big difference.” (Interviewee 11-LP)

The internships that are part of the training program were evaluated differently by inspectors. Some inspectors with substantial work experience felt that the internships took too much time, whereas other, less experienced inspectors felt the transition from being an intern to being a fully-fledged inspector could have been smoother. These internships not only taught inspectors about their job and new work environment, but also about the different approaches, ideas, and attitudes of their colleagues. In some cases this information conflicted with what inspectors learned during the training program. This conflict between content from institutionalized learning moments and individualized learning moments will be discussed in the next chapter as this is the result of interaction in the localized context of the field.

In general, inspectors note that the emphasis on selection and training results in a stricter enforcement attitude among inspectors. Inspectors with a longer tenure in the cross-sectional panel mention that the new generation of inspectors is more focused on enforcement. Moreover, these institutionalized information settings also have additional effects. For example, the internships that are part of the selection procedure contribute to convincing inspectors of the challenging nature of the inspection job, thereby contributing to the veterinarians’ anticipatory socialization. Another example of additional effects of institutionalized information settings is the contribution of the training program to the cohesion within one cohort. Furthermore, the fact that there is an intensive training program and selection procedure sends the message that the organization takes the work of its inspectors seriously and is willing to invest in the quality of its inspectors, thereby contributing to the feelings of organizational support among inspectors.
6.4.1.2 Information settings focused on the information exchange in the primary process

Besides structuring the socialization experience of newcomers, the Vanthemsche Report also emphasized the importance of structuring the information exchange around the primary process in order to improve performance. Next to the information sources implemented to structure this information exchange, there are also institutionalized information settings that contribute to this structuring. Team leaders and company inspectors organize respectively team meetings and cluster meetings. Inspectors perceive the cluster meetings as most important (i.e. meetings of all inspectors working at one company). During these cluster meetings, the day-to-day operations of the companies are discussed and final decisions are made about how to handle specific situations. Inspectors mention the importance of these meetings for establishing uniformity in enforcement among cluster members. These meetings should take place every six weeks. Whether this actually happens is dependent upon the company inspector involved.

The interactions during cluster meetings also provide inspectors with information about the more informal culture and personalities of their immediate colleagues. There is a large difference in how inspectors experience their informal environment (i.e. team/cluster). Some inspectors feel stimulated and motivated by the enthusiasm of their immediate colleagues, whereas others are uncomfortable asking questions or do not feel supported. This is partially dependent on the nature of the cluster meetings, which can also differ. In some instances these meetings are chaotic and inspectors verbally attack their colleagues, whereas in other cases the meetings are much more constructive. Therefore, the actual content team and job level is highly dependent on the teams and clusters in which inspectors work. In her story about her first cluster meeting interviewee 7-LP mentions:

"I was surprised, really surprised. People were talking at the same time and trying to be proved right and did not listen to each other."

The team meetings are where all clusters, and therefore all inspectors who belong to one team, meet. The frequency of these meetings is dependent on
the team leader. Yet, team meetings are even more infrequent than cluster meetings (i.e. once or twice a year). The team meetings usually have more of a team building function as this is the only time all team members come together. The content-related issues discussed during team meetings are also of a more general nature. Examples of topics discussed during team meetings are changes in the organization of the Dutch food safety services or veterinary illnesses in the sector (i.e. poultry, cattle, or pigs) in which the teams perform inspections. The ideas of inspectors about the usefulness of the team meetings range from appreciating the opportunity to meet other team members to feeling negative because of the perception that these meetings are not productive.

The infrequency of these team and cluster meetings is a direct consequence of the long slaughtering hours of companies. The main problem encountered when trying to organize these meetings is ensuring the attendance of all inspectors involved, as inspectors are required to perform inspections during the slaughtering hours of the companies. The length of these slaughtering hours makes it almost impossible to find a reasonable timeslot when all inspectors can attend. In practice this often means that civil servants are present during meetings while practitioners (i.e. self-employed veterinarians) perform the inspections. As a consequence, some practitioners do not feel taken seriously as part of the teams. One former practitioner mentions (Interviewee 13-LP):

“As a practitioner I only did livestock, so I only did that work and sometimes we had a team meeting. Now it’s much more intensive, not the physical cooperation but with the contacts.”

In short, cluster and team meetings not only help inspectors discuss casuistry and therefore gain a more in-depth understanding of their work; these meetings also provide inspectors with information about the organizational culture.
6.4.2 INDIVIDUALIZED INFORMATION SETTINGS: PRAGMATIC PROFESSIONALS IN A ‘BUREAUCRATIC’ ORGANIZATION

The individualized information settings revolve around different encounters between inspectors and different organizational departments and facilities. The main result from these encounters appears to be that the NVWA is considered bureaucratic by the vast majority of its inspectors (i.e. organizational-level socialization content). This interpretation stems from the interaction between the - more pragmatic - professional background of veterinarians and the problems encountered regarding four aspects of the organization: (1) planning, (2) ICT, (3) facilities provided by the organization, (4) consequences of the latest merger.

The planning is considered an important problem by inspectors. The work schedules are considered unfeasible and inefficient, and the fact that the work schedules are so tightly packed is perceived as jeopardizing the quality of inspections. The general perception of the planning (and planning department) is that its functioning is very problematic, and that the feasibility and efficiency of the planning is one of the major problems of the NVWA as an organization. These problems with work schedules lead inspectors to show proactivity in rearranging these schedules as the example of interviewee 23-CSP states:

"The team leader appreciates it if we send an e-mail when we switch [make changes in the order of the planning]. But in principle when the planning is final and we can arrange it among ourselves, then there is no problem [in switching]. So that makes it easier, so to speak. But most changes are done within the team if the planning [fails]."

The problems with the planning appear to be the direct result of the way the NVWA organizes its inspection application process. In this application process inspectees have to file requests for inspections, which can be done up until 24 hours in advance. This short time span allows little room for the planning department to make the schedules, and consequently for inspectors to prepare the inspections. This situation is complicated further by the difference in work
schedules between inspectors and the employees working in the planning department. Whereas inspectors start working early (i.e. sometimes 3 a.m.), the planning department has regular office hours. Schedules for the next day are therefore often communicated when inspectors have already finished their working day. This has as a consequence that preparations for inspections have to be done in the evening, which in turn is problematic as inspectors start early and this seriously disrupts their work-life balance. Consequently, interactions with the planning department are generally not experienced as pleasant, as inspectors feel that the planning department does not take their personal situation into account.

Another problem contributing to the inspectors’ perceptions of the NVWA as bureaucratic are the negative experiences with ICT and the ICT helpdesk. Stories about failing computers, printers, and phones are widely shared and are some of the main story lines when talking about the functioning of the organization. There is a clear difference in the perception about the ICT helpdesk between the different age cohorts in the NVWA. Whereas young inspectors do not always feel taken seriously by the ICT helpdesk (e.g. “I know how ctrl+alt+del works”), older inspectors feel that the ICT helpdesk does not provide sufficient help for solving their problems. However, both groups of inspectors are skeptical about the ICT helpdesk’s capability to solve problems (i.e. organizational-level socialization content). One revealing example is that of an inspector describing her first experiences with the ICT Helpdesk (interviewee 25-CSP):

“I got a laptop and almost nothing was working and then you are just new and then you have to call DICTU (ICT Helpdesk), and then you get someone on the phone. And again this person is not able to help. Boy, it was a mockery. Meanwhile I have better connections [colleagues who can help].”

The consequences of these ICT problems experienced by inspectors are twofold, (1) it takes longer to perform their job, and (2) there is a loss of authority and respect from inspectees as inspectors come across as unprofessional. In particular this last point is considered problematic by inspectors. Based on their professional background as practicing veterinarians, inspectors enjoy a
certain professional standing (Koolmees, 2007). As this professional standing is considered important, veterinary inspectors experience this loss of authority and respect as something personal. Interviewee 32-CSP describes such a situation:

“Sometimes you are at a company and you have to export meat. And then you have a digital system and then it does not work. Using Vodafone you cannot enter [the system]. It is hopeless. And terribly slow. And then you get a remark again like: Oh God, that really is a civil servant thing. That I cannot handle. That is awful.”

Again, these inefficiencies evoke proactivity among inspectors focused on solving or circumventing these problems. Interestingly, some inspectors are developing into informal ‘ICT specialists’ (see section 6.2.2 on individualized information sources). These ‘specialists’ have gained theirs knowledge from their own proactive behaviors aimed at improving theirs understanding of the ICT. One inspector who has taken such a role as ICT expert (Interviewee 4-LP) says:

“I find it interesting and I try to deepen my understanding of it. And if people have questions, I often help. Generally these are older men, a bit older than me, who do not know much about computers and find it difficult to work with them.”

Furthermore, inspectors experience problems with acquiring other facilities needed to perform their job such as clothing, receipt books, or bond certificates. One minor example of these hindrances is the number of forms inspectors have to fill out in order to obtain the facilities they need. This process of acquiring facilities is further complicated as it is not always clear who to contact. However, even when interviewees indicate that they know who to contact, this does not guarantee that the facilities are delivered, as in some cases even direct notes and e-mails to these individuals are not answered. Interviewee 17-CSP mentions a situation in which he needed a new checkbook to write checks for the companies:
"So I drove here [main office NVWA], I arrived in the afternoon at four o’clock last week Wednesday, I believe. Nobody was here anymore. And yes they are in that cabinet but nobody had the key. So I wrote a letter and left it on the desk for the guy in charge; no response. I called, I did not see a note. Could you please sent me the checkbook by messenger because I cannot write any checks right now. I find it bothersome for those people and for me to a lot of work afterwards."

As a result, sometimes inspectors are forced into being creative in arranging facilities by contacting colleagues and borrowing their materials. For example, in some cases clothing in large or small sizes is not available. In these situations, where the organization cannot provide the right size of clothing, inspectors mention borrowing clothes from colleagues with similar sizes.

Finally, the latest organizational merger, completed in January 2012, has had serious consequences for the work of veterinary inspectors (see chapter 3). Inspectors say they have experienced an increase in work pressure and a decline in face-to-face contact with their colleagues as a result of this merger. This increase in work pressure is said to be caused by the fact that the assistants of the inspectors were collectively fired. Consequently, inspectors have to perform all the administrative tasks themselves and are therefore no longer able to perform all their inspections on time. One interviewee (interviewee 35-CSP) that lost the person who assisted her in the slaughterhouse says about this:

"I lost my best assistant, my right hand who had worked for more than 20 years for the NVWA and I found that quite difficult. I still notice it. He did certain things that I now have to do myself. I notice it on a daily basis. That I got more and more on my plate."

During this merger, a number of physical locations of the NVWA throughout the country were also closed. This resulted not only in less interaction between colleagues, but also in an increase of the time inspectors have to travel for certain facilities (e.g. configuration of the computer). Inspectors in the cross-sectional panel make the link between the merger and inefficiencies in the organization,
mentioning that the problems with planning, ICT, and other facilities increased after the reorganization.

The adage “actions speak louder than words” summarizes nicely the impact of these individualized information settings on the socialization content for inspectors. This impact shows most explicitly from the interviews with the longitudinal panel. In the first round of interviews, most inspectors are neutral or positive about the NVWA. In this stage, the perceptions on the organization are mainly based on the selection procedure and training program which are considered a sign that the organization is willing to invest and support its people. In the second round of interviews, the perceptions of the organization took a negative turn. In particular, the perception that mistakes are made repeatedly and the NVWA is not able to learn from these mistakes is experienced as shocking by new inspectors. This interpretation of the organization as ineffective and bureaucratic is intensified as inspectors take a private veterinary practice as a point of reference with which to compare the NVWA. These small organizations are much more flexible and lines between colleagues are much shorter, which makes it easier to get things, as for example buying a computer, done.

6.5 THE LINK BETWEEN LEARNING MOMENTS, PROACTIVITY, AND SOCIALIZATION CONTENT

The different learning moments, proactivity showed by inspectors and socialization content gained from interactions in the localized context of the field are outlined above. In this section, the focus is on what this means for the dynamics underlying the organizational socialization process of veterinary inspectors. The distinction between institutionalized and individualized learning moments is used to gain a better understanding of the differences in impact on the socialization process between intentionally implemented learning moments and learning moments that are the result of normal day-to-day interactions.
6.5.1 INSTITUTIONALIZED LEARNING MOMENTS

Focusing on the institutionalized learning moments, there are two main contributions of these learning moments to organizational processes. These learning moments are related to both 1) the socialization of newcomers and 2) the structuring of information exchange around the primary process. The selection procedure and training program play an important role in conveying job and organizational-level socialization content. These two institutionalized information settings help inspectors in determining what the organization expects of them with regard to knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors; this might, for example, be by emphasizing the importance of enforcement attitude (i.e. selection procedure) or showing inspectors different communication strategies (i.e. training program). This holds true for both newcomers and incumbents, as the latter group also had to take certain courses. These incumbents mention the importance of the training program for interaction on the work floor as it creates a general understanding of the responsibilities of the job; they also point out the increased emphasis among new inspectors on communication and enforcement. Furthermore, the awareness of the risk of capture by the inspectees’ interests has also become more strongly ingrained through this training program. The next chapter, focusing on the localized context of the field, will elaborate on this awareness and how it plays out in the daily routines of inspectors.

The formal networks around the primary process serve as formal points of contact that connect inspectors with their different localized contexts. In theory, these institutionalized information sources provide – or can provide - inspectors with all different types of socialization content. Team leaders within these networks are the bridge between the work environment and the organization. Therefore, team leaders provide inspectors with all kinds of different information about the organization, their team, and work-related situations. In the formal networks, company inspectors are the institutionalized information sources that are the linking pin between facility and inspector. These company inspectors are the main point of contact for both company and inspectors with regard to the inspection. The company inspectors therefore provide inspectors with important information at both job and team-level. The same holds true for the senior inspector when helping inspectors who are faced with difficult situations.
The institutionalized information sources and settings in the localized context of the organization have the potential to create strong feelings of organizational support among the inspectors. For example, the existence of the training program is interpreted as an indication of the organization’s investment in its people. However, the analysis in this chapter shows that there is an important condition for the effectiveness of institutionalized information sources and settings, especially the formal networks, which is the occupant’s implementation of these roles. If these three institutionalized information sources (i.e. team leader, company inspector, and senior inspector) function properly, have a good personal relation with their inspectors, and keep their promises, this goes a long way towards inspectors experiencing organizational support. Moreover, positive feedback, especially from the team leader, is important for bolstering the confidence new inspectors have in performing their job. Yet, when there is no personal relationship, and the individuals occupying these different roles are considered incompetent, inspectors direct their attention to other - individualized - sources.

The institutionalized information sources also have an important function in structuring the interactions between veterinary inspectors by organizing team and cluster meetings (i.e. institutionalized information settings). Again the effectiveness of these meetings is dependent on both the team leaders and company inspectors who function as chairs, but also on the type of relations among inspectors in the teams and clusters. In some clusters and teams there is an open attitude and willingness to share information, whereas in others this is not the case, and inspectors do not experience a safe environment. The training program, in this case, appears to strengthen the willingness to share information; although this willingness extends mainly to the other inspectors who followed the training program at the same time.

This brings us to the socialization content, gained from all these interactions with institutionalized sources, that can be considered ‘side effects’ of these interactions. For example, information about the informal culture among inspectors (i.e. team-level socialization content). This type of information is gained through the interactions with team members during team and cluster meetings and differs between the teams and clusters. However, the example of internships shows even more clearly that also institutionalized information
sources and settings can differ in socialization content they convey toward the inspector. This can result in situations where the socialization content from institutionalized learning moments contradicts the organizational message. This risk is especially apparent in the institutionalized information setting of internships where the socialization content is dependent on the specific role model (i.e. colleague) involved. However, the negative influences of this appear to be partially countered by the training program’s content, as the data show that this socialization content establishes an important point of reference for employees with regard to the responsibilities of their job.

However, before discussing the individualized information sources and settings, attention should be paid to the role of written sources in conveying socialization content. The use of written sources is related to the distance between the work floor and the NVWA, and thus to the reachability of other organizational members. Therefore, some inspectors state that it is easier to look things up than to try to find the right person. Yet, mention is also made of the use of written sources being time intensive. The institutionalized written sources (i.e. work instruction and rules and regulations) are generally used when it is important to know exactly how things are arranged, such as in enforcement situations. As the effectiveness of enforcement actions is dependent on the accuracy of the minutes and argumentation, inspectors use the written sources to check whether their argument is correct. In this case, the course in the training program on rules and regulations provides inspectors with a good starting point for looking up the rules and regulations. However, colleagues who are considered experts with regard to knowledge about the rules and regulations are also often used to check the strength and correctness of the argumentation used in enforcement situations.

6.5.2 INDIVIDUALIZED LEARNING MOMENTS

The individualized information sources can be summarized under the heading of informal networks. The informal networks consist of veterinary inspectors and other employees within the NVWA. These networks can be used to exchange information or other resources needed to perform the inspection job. The majority of the informal interactions in these networks relate to practical situations and are aimed at preventing inspectors from being played off against
one another. These informal networks are also often used when the (working) relation, in particular the working relation with the institutionalized information sources is not good or the reachability of these sources is low. This reachability is especially important as inspectors are often confronted with situations in which they need to act quickly.

Particularly interesting are the findings that these informal contacts also contribute to the anticipatory socialization of newcomers and potential newcomers. This is not self-evident, as inspectors often use the institutionalized settings and sources, for which one has first to be part of the organization, to build their informal networks. The contribution of informal networks in the anticipatory socialization stage appears to be a direct consequence of the often strong connections between veterinarians. The strong professional identity socialized during their training and the fact that only one university in the Netherlands offers a program in veterinary medicine increases the strength of the connections and ties between veterinarians. Therefore, potential inspectors usually know someone working in the NVWA whom they can contact for information.

I discussed above the individualized interpersonal information sources. The individualized information settings in the localized context of the organization revolve around the experiences and interactions between inspectors and different departments/facilities of the NVWA. The data show that especially the interactions around planning, ICT and facilities, in combination with the latest merger and the consequences of this merger, cause inspectors to experience inefficiencies in the organization and to feel the impact of these inefficiencies on their work. This whole set of interactions teaches inspectors that these problems are of a more structural nature, influencing their perception of the organization negatively. This becomes especially apparent when focusing on the data of the longitudinal panel. The first round of interviews shows a positive perception as a result of mainly the selection procedure and training program. However, these inspectors’ experiences in their first year make them develop a more nuanced understanding of the NVWA as an organization. The perception of the NVWA as inefficient is further intensified as most inspectors compare it to working in a veterinary practice which often is relatively small and where issues can be arranged direct and on an ad hoc basis. This is further intensified by a strong
professional identity that is defined by pragmatic and hands-on attitudes, and used as a point of reference against which to compare the NVWA.

As indicated earlier, the process can be summarized by the adage: ‘actions speak louder than words’. The organization can state that certain information sources and settings provide employees with specific types of information or support. However, if this does not happen it will reflect negatively on the organization. The general conclusion inspectors draw from the different individualized information settings in the localized context of the organization in relation to their veterinarian background is that the NVWA as an organization is bureaucratic and inefficient.

6.5.3 PROACTIVITY

The research findings show that proactivity is very important in the organizational socialization process of veterinary inspectors. The data show that a minimum level of proactiveness by inspectors is required to utilize the institutionalized interpersonal information sources, especially as the physical and psychological distance between the work floor and the organization (i.e. internal actors) is large. Consequently, inspectors have to be proactive in their information and feedback seeking behaviors. Moreover, proactivity is evoked when institutionalized information sources and settings are considered inefficient. Then the proactive behaviors are mainly aimed at mutual development and changing the role and environment. For example, inspectors develop coping strategies to deal with inefficiencies with regard to planning (re-scheduling), ICT (specializing), or lack of face-to-face contact (organizing intervision or meetings at road side restaurants). The inefficiencies mentioned above lead inspectors, among other things, to assign importance to (informal) network building increasing the importance of individualized information sources and settings for the socialization content of inspectors.

Interestingly, the data show an influence of proactivity not only of the inspectors themselves, but also of proactive behaviors employed by institutionalized interpersonal information sources, on the socialization content of inspectors. For example, proactive behaviors of the company inspectors leading to changing in work procedures at companies have an impact on the socialization content of inspectors through this change in work procedure.
6.6 CONCLUSION

The analysis in this chapter leads us to some conclusions regarding the question of how interactions in the localized context of the organization contribute to the socialization of inspectors. The general conclusions derived from the analysis pertain to the importance of perceived organizational support, employees’ proactivity, and experienced reality in the field for the organizational socialization of employees.

A first general conclusion is that individuals’ experiences of encounters with institutionalized and individualized information sources and settings influence how they perceive the organization. For example, problems with schedules or team leaders who are considered incompetent negatively influence inspectors’ perceptions of the NVWA as an organization. In turn, good performance (team leader, senior inspector, and company inspectors) and sometimes even the presence (e.g. training program) of institutionalized information sources and settings can lead inspectors to experience organizational support. The training program is interpreted as a sign of the importance the organization attaches to the work of veterinary inspectors. Positive feedback and trust from institutionalized information sources, for example team leaders, also increases feelings of support, especially among newcomers. However, even the more experienced inspectors feel wronged when the institutionalized information sources do not provide them with feedback. These findings all indicate the important role of organizational support in the socialization process.

Secondly, the analysis of the organization as a localized context shows the importance of inspectors’ proactivity for their socialization content. This is at least partially the result of the physical and psychological distance between inspectors and organization. Most interactions with the formal networks are indirect (e.g. phone, email) and therefore require a lot more proactiveness when one needs information or feedback. Moreover, there are proactive behaviors specifically focused on circumventing the inefficiencies in the organization. For example, when institutionalized learning moments do not provide inspectors with all the necessary information at organization, team, and job level to function properly in the organization, personal networks are used. In this respect network building is of pivotal importance as actors in these networks can help inspectors to find
answers to their questions (e.g. specialist) or are involved in the solutions (e.g. rescheduling or switching). The accessibility of the actors in these networks is important for their effective use. However, in cases where inspectors need to check their course of action and no interpersonal sources are available, written sources are used.

Finally, the acceptance of socialization content as true is reliant on constant interactions in which institutionalized information is assessed against the reality experienced, for example, with regard to the attitude to enforcement or the sharing of information. In this respect, internships, for example, can constitute a risk if the perceptions of the mentor are inconsistent with the organizational message. This experienced reality in the field is the focus of the next chapter.

In short, with regard to the proposition (2b) that the localized context of the organization provides employees with the socialization content desired from an organizational perspective, the analysis in this chapter shows that this is not necessarily true as individualized learning moments or the perception of institutionalized information sources as incapable can sent contradictory messages to the inspector. Similarly, for the proposition (3b) that institutionalized learning moments contribute positively to employees’ knowledge of the organizational socialization content there are mixed findings. Yet, the proposition (3c) that individualized learning moments impact on employees’ knowledge of the organizational socialization content is confirmed. Moreover, regarding proposition 4a the analysis in this chapter shows the importance of proactivity for the socialization content of inspectors.