Between local governments and communities

Knowledge exchange and mutual learning in Dutch-Moroccan and Dutch-Turkish municipal partnerships

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1. Local governments in transnational space

This is not development cooperation! (policy advisor, the Netherlands)

1.1. Introduction

‘This is not development cooperation’; ‘we share information on an equal basis’; ‘we are brothers’; ‘two cultures, one hart’ were some of the phrases I heard when interviewing policy officers, representatives of NGOs in Morocco, Turkey and the Netherlands about their city-to-city partnership. But I also heard different phrases, like ‘it is not an equal relationship at all’, or ‘it is mainly about transferring knowledge’.

City-to-city cooperation has been mainly focusing on transferring knowledge and practices from municipalities in high-income countries (known as the Global North) to municipalities in low-income countries (the Global South). From 2000 onwards, Dutch local governments have established partnerships with local governments in countries that have long been the main source of migrants to the Netherlands: Morocco, Turkey and Suriname. In addition to the general objectives of strengthening local governance in partner municipalities, these new twinning arrangements seek to promote mutual understanding between migrants and host societies, and to strengthen social cohesion and integration of migrants in Dutch municipalities through contacts and the exchange of knowledge with partner municipalities. This research is focused on the cooperation of Dutch local governments with Turkish and Moroccan local governments.

This introductory chapter describes how local governments have been engaging in international networks and international cooperation for decades—through various modes and for different purposes. The first city-to-city partnerships were established within Europe after the Second World War, with the purpose of peacebuilding and reconciliation. Later on municipal partnerships between the Global North and South, as well as between Western and Eastern Europe, were established with the main aim to contribute to poverty alleviation (Clarke 2009; Bontenbal 2009a; Hoetjes 2009). From the 1990s onwards, local governments have increasingly focused on the exchange of knowledge on urban management and policymaking, with the objective of strengthening

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1 Parts of this chapter have been published before (see Van Ewijk 2007; Van Ewijk and Baud 2009; Van Ewijk 2012).

2 In this dissertation use is made of several terms: ‘diaspora’, ‘migrants’ and ‘Dutch citizens of Moroccan and Turkish descent’. Migrants are all persons who are part of immigration and emigration flows, regardless their origin (see CBS, WODC 2006). Migrants can include both first and second generation migrants. In the Netherlands a distinction is made between Western and non-Western migrant countries. Non-Western migrant countries include Turkey and countries in Africa, South America and Asia—with the exception of Indonesia (which was formerly colonized by the Netherlands) and Japan.
local governance in the Global South. They have gradually gained recognition for this role by international agencies (Bontenbal 2010), related to the changing role of local governments as a result of worldwide decentralization and globalization processes. From the turn of the millennium, the interest to establish linkages with local governments in migrant source countries has been steadily increasing. A recent trend is for municipalities from the Global North to strengthen links with counterparts in emerging economies (e.g. Brazil).

Central to municipal cooperation is the process of knowledge exchange and learning between the different partners involved, i.e. local governments, but also between NGOs and private organizations. Hewitt emphasized the importance of the process in inter-organizational relations: 'In any consideration of inter-organizational relationships, the really important aspect is process (as opposed to, say, structure) and it is this aspect about which least is known' (Ring 1996, cited in Hewitt 2000: 63). By focusing on transnational ties between Dutch municipalities and municipalities in Morocco and Turkey (two main migrant source countries), the dimension of reciprocity in the process of cooperation can be examined. This particular approach allows for an empirical examination of whether both partners involved actually benefitted from the exchange.

Due to the connection of international cooperation policies to policies related to dealing with diversity, as well as the existence of translocal ties between populations in the Netherlands and their partner country, there is a potential to involve new partners in twinning relations. New partners might include migrant organizations that were not active in international cooperation before. An important question is whether the involvement of these new partners has stimulated social cohesion and integration of migrants. Also it should be examined whether it has helped produce new types of knowledge and new policy approaches, possibly based on greater reciprocity. This dissertation will examine the question in further detail.

By focusing on mutual learning processes of governmental and non-governmental actors involved in city-to-city partnerships between migrant source and destination countries, this research seeks to contribute to studies on city-to-city cooperation and mutual learning through partnerships. This is particularly relevant as strengthening local governance is high on the policy agenda in both migrant source and destination countries. Local governments in many source countries are facing new challenges due to decentralization and democratization processes (Sater 2007; Ulusoy 2009; Dimitrovova 2010; Ertugal 2010). Dealing with diversity and integration of migrants is one of the main challenges faced by contemporary local governments in Western European countries (Haus et al. 2005; Penninx 2005; Scheffer 2007). Moreover, local governments in Western European countries are facing important budget cuts due to the economic slowdown. This implies that the political and policy support for these partnerships has become more fragile, and opportunities for mutual exchange have become even more relevant. The Netherlands is an interesting case as the Dutch national government has been supporting municipal international cooperation for a relatively
long time, whereby support programmes have had an important impact on the municipal partnerships.

Although the focus is on knowledge exchange and learning in local governance, the research also seeks to contribute to studies on transnationalism and co-development at the local level, which connect to promoting integration of migrants in destination counties through international cooperation. This body of knowledge is still weak as most studies on co-development and transnationalism focus on the national level (Acebillo-Baqué and Østergaard-Nielsen 2011).

This chapter will first define city-to-city partnerships and provide a description of general trends in these partnerships in order to be able to provide a better understanding of municipal partnerships and their development through the years. The chapter shows how local governments have been engaging in international networks and international cooperation for decades—in various ways and for various purposes. The chapter will continue by highlighting Dutch practices, with a focus on Dutch municipalities that link up with migrant source countries. Policies in the Netherlands are worked out more elaborately, compared to policies in Morocco and Turkey, as most municipal partnerships were initiated by Dutch local governments and also supported by Dutch support programmes. At the end of the chapter a guide through the dissertation will be presented.

1.2. Defining municipal partnerships

Approximately 70% of municipalities worldwide have established linkages with municipalities in other parts of the world (UCLG 2006). The most common form of city-to-city partnership is based on an agreement between two local governments aiming to work together and encourage the exchange of information and activities between their staff (the colleague-to-colleague approach). Usually there is long-term commitment and most municipal partnerships have a lifespan of several years, whereby relations can be gradually deepened and extended over the years (Van Lindert 2009). Hafteck (2003: 334), who favours using the term ‘decentralized cooperation’, proposed the following definition: ‘Decentralized cooperation consists of substantial collaborative, relationships between sub-national governments from different countries, aiming at sustainable local development, implying some form of exchange or support carried out by these institutions or other locally based actors’. Quite similarly, town twinning was defined by Clarke (2009: 496) as the ‘construction and practice, by various groups and to various ends, of relatively formal relationships between two towns or cities usually located in different nation states’.

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3 The international exchange between local governments is known under different names, such as town twinning, city-to-city cooperation, city links, jumelage or decentralized cooperation (Hafteck 2003).
These ‘various ends’ or objectives are broad. Usually the main objective is to contribute to local development and capacity building of local government bodies. Objectives can also include alleviating poverty, peacebuilding, civil society strengthening, economic development and raising public awareness on global issues and international cooperation (also referred to as ‘global citizenship’). Activities can range from cultural exchange programmes to support programmes on waste management, water and sanitation, housing and public administration. Although it is acknowledged that municipalities in the North, or the Western world, can learn from their partner municipalities, objectives in the North have been generally rather altruistic and strongly related to delivering development assistance to the South (Bontenbal 2009a; Johnson and Wilson 2006). In the following chapter mutuality in city-to-city partnerships is further elaborated. The objectives of engaging in international exchange programmes and activities within the municipal partnerships have changed over time as well, which will be discussed in the next paragraphs.

Town twinning usually includes ‘various groups’, for example local administration and civil society actors as well as private and community-based organizations. The involvement of several actors implies exchanges can both occur vertically and horizontally. In the case of ‘vertical exchanges’ two local government bodies or non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from two different geographic locations exchange knowledge or goods (also called inter-municipal learning by Devers-Kanoglu 2009). ‘Horizontal exchanges’ refer to the exchanges between governmental and non-governmental organizations within one geographic location (also called intra-municipal learning by Devers-Kanoglu 2009). Having multiple exchange levels provides different opportunities for exchange and learning (Johnson and Wilson 2006; Devers-Kanoglu 2009; Bontenbal 2009a). National governments and local government associations can play a supportive role in providing a mandate and resources for international cooperation at the local level. National governments can also restrict international exchanges. Figure 1.1 presents the various actors that play a role in municipal partnerships.
The ‘constructions and practices’, which are defined by Clarke (2009) and described above, or the ‘forms of exchange’, used by Hafteck (2003), can both include exchanges of knowledge as well as exchanges of financial resources and/or equipment. The process of knowledge exchange and learning between colleagues is usually central in city-to-city partnerships. Several authors have written about the strength of ‘peer-to-peer’ or ‘colleague-to-colleague’ exchanges in which peers or colleagues in the North and South exchange experiences and knowledge. Although the context of their work fields differs significantly, the actors involved—like firefighters, police officers and social workers—share some common characteristics and are able to ‘speak the same language’, which can provide a base for a more equal relationship (Johnson and Wilson 2007, 2009; Bontenbal 2009a; Van Lindert 2009; Van Ewijk and Baud 2009). On the negative side, municipal officers might lack the expertise necessary for working successfully on the international level. Moreover, time and resources for international exchange are often limited (Hewitt 1999; Bontenbal 2009a). Exchanges in the form of financial resources or equipment usually focus on transferring resources from high-income countries to low-income countries. For example, civil society actors can raise money for a particular kind of project in their ‘sister municipality’ in the North, or local government bodies in the North can directly support their partner municipality financially or with equipment.

By involving ‘various groups’ over longer periods of time and by building on peer-to-peer knowledge exchanges, local governments are said to fulfil a rather unique role in international cooperation (Van Lindert 2009; Baud et al. 2010). Their specific
characteristics set them apart from other modalities of international cooperation, such as bilateral cooperation and cooperation through multilateral channels (Van Lindert 2009: 173). Develterre (2009) argued that the numerous initiatives of alternative actors in development cooperation (including local governments, private initiatives, labour unions and migrants) do not receive much recognition in research. The focus is mainly on Official Development Assistance (ODA), including bilateral aid (first pillar), multilateral aid (second pillar) and ‘professional’ aid by co-financing agencies (third pillar). Develterre argued that the ‘mixed bag’ of the alternative actors can be shared under a specific category, which he labelled a ‘fourth pillar of decentralized development cooperation’. In his view, this fourth pillar should receive greater recognition as the number of initiatives by these actors is substantial and growing. Some of the ‘fourth pillar actors’ have always had an open approach to both contributing to development in countries in the Global South as well as benefiting from international exchange. While the focus of Dutch Official Development Assistance has long been mainly on supporting countries in the South by the first, second and third pillar, own objectives or ‘enlightened self-interest’ have recently become more central and are even formulated as a precondition for engaging in development cooperation (Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken 2013). Another interesting development is the policy of more actively involving ‘fourth pillar actors’, especially companies. The unique role of some of these fourth pillar actors is an interesting subject for research.

1.2.1. City networks and clusters

Establishing city-to-city partnerships across borders is just one of the ways local governments are engaged in international exchange programmes (Tjandradewi and Marcotullio 2009; Bontenbal 2010; Van der Wusten and Mamadouh 2010). Local governments can also maintain vicinity networks with neighbouring municipalities, establish multilateral networks within their own country or across borders (e.g., Citynet and Eurocities), or be involved in city clusters (such as the UNESCO World Heritage Cities, the Child Friendly Cities network) (Campbell 2009). Local governments started to cooperate across national borders in networks mainly with the purpose of sharing knowledge and building up new knowledge (Bontenbal 2010; Van der Wusten and Mamadouh 2010). Many European local governments are also involved in networks within the European Union. Van der Wusten and Mamadouh (2002) highlighted to the stimulating role played by the EU in establishing local governance networks. There is a large body of literature on transnational networking of cities that focuses on finance and trade as well as information and communication technology (Castells 1996; Townsend 2001, in Bontenbal 2010: 462; Tjandradewi and Marcotullio 2009). As this research focuses on city-to-city cooperation as a form of bilateral municipal partnership across borders, it draws heavily on the literature about this specific type of partnerships.
1.2.2. Terminology
Various terms are used to refer to the international exchanges between local governments, including town twinning, city-to-city cooperation, city links, jumelage and decentralized cooperation (Hafteck 2003). Each term has a slightly different connotation, and terms are often used interchangeably and not consistently. There is also little consistency in the way that local authorities see their partnerships (Clarke 2009). The various national and international organizations involved in town twinning—the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) and the International Union of Mayors (UIM)—have had an impact on the various labels attached to the partnerships as well as the types of partnerships established (Bontenbal 2009; Hafteck 2003).

All of these commonly-used terms have their limitations (Bontenbal 2009: 35). The term city-to-city cooperation or partnerships might lead to misunderstandings as the term ‘city’ does not reflect the entire range of local governments involved; also smaller cities and towns are involved in such partnerships (Hafteck 2003). However, this term is widely used, both in policy circles and the academic debate (Bontenbal 2009; Tjandradewi et al. 2006; Tjandradewi and Marcotullio 2009; Buis 2009; De Villiers 2009; Van Lindert 2009). The term ‘decentralized cooperation’ can also lead to confusion as it is usually not limited only to local government bodies. The term ‘twinning’ is avoided for the same reason, as it is widely used in development practice and refers to cooperation efforts between institutions, universities, hospitals and other public entities (Bontenbal 2009; Jones and Blunt 1999; Askvik 1999). The terms ‘municipal international cooperation’ or ‘international municipal cooperation’ might be conceived as cooperation only between local government bodies (see Villiers 2006). I will mainly make use of the terms ‘municipal partnerships’ and ‘city-to-city-cooperation’ (abbreviated as ‘C2C cooperation’), whereby ‘municipal partners’ can include both local governments and non-governmental actors, and ‘city’ can also include medium-sized and smaller municipalities.

1.3. Exploring academic research on municipal partnerships

For a long time C2C was hardly addressed in academic research, despite the fact that many local governments across the globe were involved in international cooperation. Shuman (1994) wrote that C2C was like a well-kept secret in international relations. Since 1994 a body of knowledge has emerged, with a growing number of empirical studies (see Johnson and Wilson 2006, 2009a, 2009b; Wilson and Johnson 2007; Hewitt 1998, 1999a, 1999b, 1999c, 2000, 2002, 2004; Tjandradewi et al. 2006; Tjandradewi and Marcotullio 2009; Van Lindert 2009; Bontenbal 2009a, 2009b, 2010; Devers-
This small but growing body of knowledge on city-to-city cooperation reflects the increased recognition of the importance of local governments in international cooperation. Several studies on C2C have also been published by practitioners working on city-to-city partnerships (Schep et al. 1995; UNDP 2000; UN Habitat 2001, 2006; Green Game and Delay 2005; Buis 2009). While most scientists have mainly focused on the efforts to strengthen local governance in the Global South through city-to-city partnerships (Hewitt 1999; Tjandradewi et al. 2006; Bontenbal 2009; Van Lindert 2009), others have explicitly focused on knowledge exchanges and mutual learning on local governance issues through municipal partnerships (Johnson and Wilson 2007; 2009; Devers-Kanoglu 2009; Bontenbal 2009a, 2009b; Van Ewijk and Baud 2009). Chapter 2 will reflect on the main findings and conclusions that can be drawn based on this body of literature.

The connection between international relations policies and policies on citizenship and integration at the local level is a relatively new phenomenon in Western Europe. As a result, there is hardly any scientific research on decentralized cooperation between migrant source and destination countries. The ‘presence of ethnic minorities’, i.e. the increased heterogeneity in migrant destination countries, was cited in 1995 for the first time as one of the main factors supporting the expansion of city-to-city cooperation (Schep et al. 1995). Schuman (1994: 57) argued that ‘as a result of this increased heterogeneity, many local communities are confronted with the issues surrounding the position of migrants (refugees and workers) and local reactions to them. These issues have also drawn increasing numbers of municipalities into dealing with certain exigencies of international affairs’. Green et al. (2005) identified community coherence as a benefit for local authorities in the UK to be involved in international exchange programmes. Evans (2009) described some examples of partnerships between local governments from migrant source and destination countries, citing the example of the London Borough of Southwark, which asserted that their link with their partner in Sierra Leone improved cohesion within their own diverse population, including the large community of citizens originating from Sierra Leone. Another example mentioned in this publication is the linkage between the London Borough of Tower Hamlets and Sylhet City Corporation in Bangladesh, which was set up due to the large Bangladeshi community living in this part of London.

Such examples focus on city-to-city partnerships between local governments in migrant source and destination countries. Local government policies which connect international relations to social cohesion and diversity can also take other forms; local governments can support ‘co-development’ initiatives by migrants and migrant organizations without being engaged in international exchanges themselves. ‘Co-development’ refers to initiatives that both support development in migrant source

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5 Special mention should be made of the PhD research carried out by Marike Bontenbal (frequently quoted in this publication) which focused on the challenge of strengthening urban governance in the South through North-South city partnerships. The research includes case studies of cooperation between municipalities in the North (in the Netherlands and Germany) and municipalities in Nicaragua, South Africa and Peru.
countries as well as development in migrant destination countries. It is assumed that the engagement of immigrants in international cooperation projects has a positive impact on their integration in destination countries (Østergaard-Nielsen 2011). Although the literature does provide several examples of local governments in migrant destination countries supporting such co-development initiatives and associated policies in migrant source countries (see Lacroix 2008; Acebillo-Baqué and Østergaard-Nielsen 2011), there is little empirical evidence and structured data on the impact of these kind of initiatives.

The following paragraph will go back in time to discuss the geographical and thematic shift in international cooperation policies, in order to place the partnerships between migrant source and destination countries in a historical framework.

1.4. **History of city-to-city cooperation**

Local governments have been engaging in international networks and international cooperation for decades—in various ways and for various purposes. The starting point in time is often placed at the period right after the Second World War, and the geographic starting point within Europe (Hoetjes 2009). Authors like Dogliani (2002), Gaspari (2002) and Zelinsky (1991), however, have asserted that international relations between local governments have a longer history and actually started within and from Europe at the beginning of the 20th century (Bontenbal 2009a). The main objective of these first municipal linkages was to lobby for socio-economic improvements (initiated by working class movements) and ‘to strive for unity of all people in a universal brotherhood’ (Dogliani 2002; Gaspari 2002, quoted in Bontenbal 2009a: 33).

Many linkages were established after the Second World War within Europe, with the main objectives of peacebuilding and reconciliation. Linked to this movement, the Council of European Municipalities (CEM) was founded in 1951 by fifty European municipalities. Together they strived to achieve ‘European integration in accordance with the principles of subsidiarity and local democracy through the encouragement of municipal exchanges and projects’ (Bontenbal 2009a: 33). In the United States, President Eisenhower stimulated establishing ‘sister cities’ in the 1950s and 1960s with the objective of peacebuilding, and in 1967 Sister Cities International (SCI) was founded (Bontenbal 2009; Mamadouh 2002; Vion 2002).

Municipalities in the Global North started cooperating with municipalities in developing countries from 1969 onwards, triggered by a UN campaign (Shuman 1994). In the 1980s and 1990s, closer ties between municipalities in the Global North and South as well as ties between local governments in Western and Eastern Europe were established (Hoetjes 2009). This was the period of solidarity movements between the Global North and South as well as between Western and Eastern Europe in which altruistic objectives and cultural exchanges were usually central in municipal

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6 The Union of Local Authorities, the main supporting and coordinating body of municipal international cooperation, was also established around that time (in 1913).
partnerships. Many Dutch municipalities established linkages with Nicaragua and South Africa at that time (Schep et al. 1995). Most of these partnerships have now existed for over 20 years (Van Lindert 2009). Nicaragua and South Africa are still ‘C2C champions’, with 20 and 12 municipal partnerships respectively (Bontenbal 2010).

Dutch municipalities also established many linkages with municipalities in Central and Eastern Europe to express solidarity at the time of the Cold War. The end of the Cold War, marked by the collapse of the Iron Curtain, did not end the established municipal partnerships within Europe; most local governments in Western Europe were committed to contributing to the institutional reforms initiated in their partner municipalities (Bontenbal 2009; Buček and Bakker 1998). Economic interest was also an objective for the continuation of these partnerships (Giezen 2008; Cremer et al. 2001; Bontenbal 2009a). Later on, when the European Union was enlarged and several countries from Central and Eastern Europe became members of the European Union, existing relations were invigorated and new relations were established (Hoetjes 2009).

From the 1990s onwards, local governments have increasingly focused on the exchange of knowledge on urban management and policymaking with the objective of strengthening local governance in the Global South. For municipalities in the North, strengthening local governance and stimulating development in the South is often linked to raising citizen awareness in the North and to deepening ‘their understandings of patterns and processes that maintain global equity’ (Van Lindert 2009: 173). Municipal partnerships are believed to offer good possibilities for raising public awareness on global issues, and most city-to-city partnerships are characterized by a relatively high level of involvement of the general public on both sides of the partnership. Linking international relations policies to policies on citizenship and integration at the local level is a relatively new phenomenon in Western Europe; most ties started at the turn of the millennium. They can be placed in a broader scope in which international cooperation is increasingly connected to objectives of municipalities in the North, and altruism is no longer the leading motivation for engaging in international cooperation.

The shift in the geographic and thematic focus of municipal partnerships in the course of time leads to some municipal partnerships becoming inactive while new partnerships are being established. New ties can both replace old ties and be added to existing ones. Clarke (2011: 117), therefore, argued that the growth of city-to-city partnerships does not reflect a history of ‘stages’ but rather one of ‘supplementations’ as the total number of city-to-city partnerships have increased over time. According to Hoetjes, the term ‘wave’ is best applicable to describe the shift in focus and number of city-to-city partnerships. A ‘wave of twining initiative and activity presents itself, it takes root and leaves a sediment, a layer, which is then superseded, and sometimes pushed away, by a new wave etc. If one takes a snapshot at a specific moment in time, one will see the newest wave, but also the previous one petering out, and different layers/sediments underneath’ (Hoetjes 2009: 159).

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7 These links expressed solidarity with the Sandinista Revolution in Nicaragua and the Local Governments against Apartheid movement, aimed against apartheid-era South Africa.
Van Lindert (2009: 179) illustrated that a particular city-to-city partnership can also evolve over time, with the focus and objectives changing during the course of the partnership. He focuses on the partnerships between Utrecht in the Netherlands and León in Nicaragua, which started off ad hoc but developed towards a ‘fully fledged professional relationship of development-oriented international cooperation’.

1.5. Increased recognition of local governments as development agents

1.5.1. Global developments and international recognition

The city-to-city partnerships established from the 1980s onwards cannot be seen in isolation from the worldwide decentralization and globalization processes. Decentralization reform has brought new powers and responsibilities to local governments in many countries, with local governments gradually becoming important actors in governance networks. Because it was first launched in the Global North, decentralization is generally stronger in this part of the world. Many countries from the Global South followed this decentralization path at a later stage, stimulated by countries from the North. At the same time, transnational and translocal linkages between various actors have been strengthened due to globalization processes.

As a result of these worldwide decentralization and globalization processes (to be discussed in more detail in chapter 2), local governments have gradually received more recognition for their role in development processes within their own country but also for their role in international cooperation (Bontenbal 2010). The increased attention given to the role of local governance in development processes is reflected in donor policies and programmes. Local governments and local government associations have, for instance, received more attention in the policy dialogues of World Bank programs, such as the Cities Alliance network. Their role was also confirmed in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005) and the Accra Agenda for Action (2008), when United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) became a permanent member of the OECD/DAC Working Party on Aid Effectiveness. The European Commission, one of the largest donors, also ratified the European Charter on development cooperation in support of local governance in 2008 (Baud et al. 2010). Interestingly one of the largest and most influential private initiatives, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, awarded USD 7.5 million in 2009 to the US-based Sister Cities International to ‘help address urban development issues in African cities’ (Sister Cities International 2009).

Despite the recognition of the role local governments can play in development processes and the many local governments involved in international cooperation, local governments remain minor actors in terms of their contribution to financing aid activities. The total amount of aid provided by local governments in all Development Assistance Committee (DAC) countries totalled USD 800 million in 2002 and USD 1.2 billion in 2003. This accounts for 1.2% and 1.75% of total official development

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8 The Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda (which outline the most important guidelines for development cooperation policy) urge for harmonized, aligned and result-driven donor strategies.
assistance (ODA) respectively (OECD 2005). Despite the relatively small budgets, city-to-city partnerships can have important leverage effects because they build on existing institutions (Baud et al. 2010).

1.5.2. National policies: the Netherlands
The existence of a supportive framework at the national level is important for accommodating and stimulating city-to-city partnerships within countries as well as contributing to professionalism and recognition of C2C cooperation. The Netherlands is among the few West European countries that support municipal linkages through nationally funded programmes, which have provided both knowledge and financial resources (Baud et al. 2010). Nitschke et al. (2009) analysed the fragmented practices in Germany, which has no such comprehensive framework, with city-to-city cooperation being mainly driven by civil society actors. Evans (2009) demonstrated that local governments in the United Kingdom have received increased support by the national government, which positively contributed to the engagement of local governments in international affairs. Hoetjes (2009) wrote about the Dutch national government support for local governments, which effectively made them ‘part of the scene’. Van Lindert (2009) argued that one of the crucial factors for the gradual consolidation of the city link between Utrecht (the Netherlands) and León (Nicaragua) has been the broad-based political and administrative support on the Utrecht side of the link. Continuous commitment, which was fed by support programmes financed through the national government, was essential for securing long-term, integrated development programmes (see also Bontenbal and Van Lindert 2009). 9

National policy support for city-to-city cooperation in the Netherlands has been particularly important because at the local level only limited financial resources are reserved for international exchanges. Funding from the national government usually accounts for 60–70% of the financial budget for exchange programmes, while the Dutch local government covers the remaining part (Buis 2009). 10

National policies towards city-to-city cooperation have changed significantly over time. Bontenbal (2010) identified three phases to describe the changing attitude of the Dutch central government towards international cooperation at the local level. The first phase started in 1993, with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs funding city-to-city cooperation. The second phase was initiated around the turn of the millennium, with the questioning of the effectiveness of city-to-city cooperation. At the same time there was a qualitative change as city-to-city partnerships were becoming more mature and professional (see also Buis 2009). The third phase, from 2004 onwards, follows the evaluation of this national policy, which had an important impact on the development of policies and support programmes thereafter (IOB 2004).

9 Several articles were published jointly in a special issue on city-to-city cooperation in Habitat International 2009, 33 (2).
10 These figures do not take into account the various resources of non-governmental actors and the resources made available by partner municipalities in the Global South.
The International Cooperation Agency of the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG International) has played a central role as the executive agency and coordinator of the nationally funded support programmes. Its GSO programme (1993–2004) and GST programme (1998–2005) supported a wide range of actors and themes in several countries. Based on an evaluation carried out by the Dutch Policy and Operations Evaluation Department (IOB) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (published in 2004), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs advised VNG International to focus on specific themes directed to strengthening local government bodies in the Global South and in Central and Eastern Europe. As a result VNG International developed two new support programmes (LOGO East and LOGO South) focusing on a limited number of countries and select themes.12

A special mention is deserved for the involvement of non-governmental actors and strengthening public support within these programmes. Strengthening public support for international cooperation was an additional objective in the GSO and GST programmes, although funds to support these activities were never made available. However the programmes did provide space to finance the involvement of non-governmental actors, for instance, in exchange missions to the partner municipality. LOGO South and LOGO East focused purely on strengthening local government bodies, implying there was no space for strengthening public support and involving non-governmental actors.

1.6. The shifts in focus by Dutch local governments

Approximately 77% of all Dutch municipalities are involved in international cooperation (VNG 2009), and nearly all of the municipalities with more than 50,000 citizens had established international relations (VNG International 2009: 10). In addition, 20% of municipalities participated in one or more international networks, with Eurocities being the most important one (VNG 2009: 27). A survey conducted in 2006 revealed that even though the vast majority of local governments has been involved in international cooperation, only 21% formulated international cooperation policies, and only 10% of municipal efforts was directed towards developing countries (NCDO 2006). Table 1.1 presents the numbers for Dutch municipalities involved in international cooperation

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11 GSO is the abbreviation of Gemeentelijke Samenwerking met Ontwikkelingslanden (Municipal cooperation with developing countries), and GST stands for Gemeentelijke Samenwerking met Toetredingslanden (Municipal cooperation with accession countries to the EU).
12 LOGO South was evaluated in 2010 by Utrecht University and University of Amsterdam (Baud et al. 2010).
13 In 2009 the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG) conducted an internet-based survey among all Dutch local governments about international policies. Fifty-one percent of municipalities (227 out of 442) participated in the survey. Respondents included policy officers responsible for international affairs, policy officers of line departments and others.
14 Ninety-six percent of municipalities with 50,000–100,000 inhabitants and all municipalities with more than 100,000 inhabitants were engaged in international cooperation (VNG International 2009: 10).
according to region. As the table demonstrates, there are numerous linkages with municipalities in the Global South and Eastern Europe.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Number of Dutch municipalities involved in international cooperation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>West Europe (old EU member states)</td>
<td>71 2005, 78 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central and Southeast Europe (new EU member states)</td>
<td>74 2005, 74 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe, non-EU member states (including Turkey)</td>
<td>25 2005, 20 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Global South (Africa, Asia, Latin America)</td>
<td>35 2005, 31 2009</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: VNG 2009

In the course of the decades, new ties have been replacing previous efforts, but also have been added to existing ones. Thus, stages were combined with supplementations (Hoetjes 2009; Clarke 2011) (see section 1.1). Two separate developments can be identified: (1) international solidarity is being promoted mainly by focusing on strengthening local governance in the South; and (2) since the turn of the millennium, municipalities have increasingly explored possibilities to ‘use’ international cooperation as a tool for working on programmes and projects within their own municipality (Van Ewijk 2007; Hoetjes 2009; Schriemer 2003). Related to the first trend, more linkages with new and candidate member states to the European Union have been established. Another development is the engagement of Dutch municipalities to contribute to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Following the second trend, international development is increasingly being related to securing benefits for their own municipality in the Netherlands. The number of ties with municipalities in the main non-Western countries of migration to the Netherlands has grown, as well as ties with economic development as a central goal. Some municipalities, especially the largest ones, have explored linkages with the BRIC countries (see Bontenbal 2010; Hoetjes 2009; Van Ewijk 2007).

Also, these two trends in international cooperation can be found in the framework of the same municipal partnership. A survey conducted by VNG in 2009 illustrated these developments. Solidarity ‘with those less fortunate elsewhere’ was still mentioned by 61% of the respondents as the main motive for being engaged in international cooperation with municipalities in the Global South. These figures were 18% for cooperation with Central and Eastern Europe’s ‘new EU member states’, and 40% for cooperation with ‘non-EU European states’ (including Turkey). Another prominent motive was the strengthening of municipal organizational capacity (52% for

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15 Motivated by a campaign initiated by VNG International and NCDO in 2007, 152 municipalities (covering 54% of the Dutch population) labelled themselves as ‘a millennium municipality’ (see www.millenniumgemeenten.nl, last accessed March 2012).
16 BRIC stands for the emerging economy countries of Brazil, Russia, India and China.
cooperation with the Global South, 32% for cooperation with new EU states, and 50% for cooperation with non-EU European states). Fostering sustainable development 'there and here' was particularly important for cooperation with the Global South (65%), while 'promoting European citizenship' (learning from each other) was mentioned as the most important motive for cooperation with the new EU states (73%) and the non-EU European states (60%) (VNG 2009: 22–27). Figures are likely to have shifted after 2009 due to the economic slowdown in Europe.

1.6.1. Cooperation with migrant source countries

The relatively recent focus of establishing city-to-city partnerships with the main migrant source countries is related to the presence of large first- and second-generation migrant groups in the Dutch municipalities. In the 1960s and 1970s, migrants from Morocco and Turkey were recruited to work in the Dutch industrial and agricultural sector. The majority of these migrants stayed in the Netherlands and brought their families to their new home country (Vermeulen and Penninx 2000; Entzinger 2006). A third large migrant group, with roots in Suriname, has a different migration history. Suriname is a former colony of the Netherlands, only gaining independence in 1975. The biggest wave of migration occurred just before and after the country gained independence (Choenni and Harmsen 2007).

The largest ‘migrant groups’ living in the Netherlands today are still of Moroccan, Turkish and Surinamese descent. In January 2011, 389,000 had their roots in Turkey 356,000 Dutch citizens had Moroccan origin; and 345,000 were of Surinamese descent (of a total population of 16,700,000) (Gijsberts et al. 2012). Table 1.2 shows the number of migrants (first and second generation) that originated from these three countries as well as migrants who have their roots in other non-Western migrant source countries. Smaller migrant groups that arrived in the last 40 years include groups originating from the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba, China, Indonesia, Ghana and Cape Verde. In the last 10 years, two major groups of migrants have arrived in the Netherlands. First, as a result of the accession of several Eastern European countries to the European Union, a growing number of migrants from these countries have established themselves in the Netherlands. Second, due to long periods of instability, conflict and war, migrants have arrived from Sudan, Ethiopia, Iran and Iraq.

Table 1.2 Number of migrants living in the Netherlands in 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main migrant source countries</th>
<th>Turkey</th>
<th>Morocco</th>
<th>Suriname</th>
<th>Other non-Western</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>380,000</td>
<td>356,000</td>
<td>345,000</td>
<td>668,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second generation (share)</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Gijsberts et al. 2011

In the large municipalities like Amsterdam and Rotterdam approximately half of the population is of non-native origin. Several smaller municipalities, especially those that
used to have large industries within their constituencies (like Haarlem, Gouda and Deventer), also have a significant number—comprising 20–25% of the population (Figures from various websites: CBS 2011; Gemeente Amsterdam O+S 2010; Gemeente Haarlem 2011; Gemeente Gouda 2010; Gemeente Deventer 2010).

The majority of city-to-city links with migrant source countries (25 in total) are with the three main non-Western migrant source countries: Morocco, Turkey and Suriname. Other important migrant countries where Dutch municipalities have established relations include Aruba and the Netherlands Antilles\(^{17}\) and Ghana, while there are a few links with Cape Verde and Indonesia (Van Ewijk 2007).\(^{18}\) The four largest municipalities also have links with more than one city (see chapter 5).

1.6.2. **Dutch-Moroccan and Dutch-Turkish municipal partnerships**

City-to-city partnerships between Dutch and Turkish municipalities are of relatively recent origin; they were established around the turn of the millennium (Van Ewijk 2007).\(^{19}\) Although most such municipalities in the Netherlands are engaged in bilateral city-to-city partnerships, some municipalities also developed policies based around supporting civil society initiatives in various migrant source regions. Figure 1.2 illustrates the geographic location of the three countries.

17 The Netherlands Antilles consists of several islands. Aruba, Curaçao and Sint Maarten are independent countries within the Kingdom of the Netherlands, while Saba, Sint Eustatius and Bonaire have the status of special municipalities of the Netherlands since 2010.
18 There are also numerous ties with Central and Eastern Europe, which were established before they became migrant source countries. Recently many of these ties were ended.
19 There are a few exceptions, for example, Almelo (the Netherlands) and Denizli (Turkey) have had a partnership since 1975.
The linkages were set up in various ways: (1) Dutch local governments taking the initiative; (2) partnerships established through municipal platforms; and (3) civil society actors establishing first contacts. Exogenous factors have triggered both local governments and civil society actors to set up municipal partnerships. The majority of such partnerships were initiated by Dutch local governments; in some cases members of the Turkish or Moroccan community approached the local government to start a partnership (Van Ewijk 2007; Nell 2007). Several Dutch-Moroccan municipal partnerships were formed out of the Morocco Municipal Platform. The platform was established when several Moroccan municipalities approached VNG International to start collaboration with Dutch local governments. Initially several Dutch and Moroccan municipalities joined the platform without forming direct city-to-city linkages, with one-to-one municipal partnerships being established at a later date.

The decision for Dutch local governments to get involved in cooperation with migrant countries was both related to policies on strengthening integration and social cohesion as well as to international cooperation policies. Related to the first policies, the principle goal to link up with municipalities in the main migrant sending countries followed the idea that increased cooperation would improve the integration of migrants, strengthen social cohesion as well as strengthen connections between governmental and non-governmental actors in the Dutch municipalities (Van Ewijk 2007; Nell 2007). Furthermore, Dutch local governments wanted to learn how to deal with the increasing diversity within Dutch society. The following quote by Job Cohen, the former mayor of Amsterdam, is illustrative:

> Over the last 30 years our city has changed rapidly as regards demographics. This change has consequences that affect life, work, education, accommodation, recreation and so on. Amsterdam has changed in terms of religion, too. Islam has emerged alongside the Judeo-Christian tradition, although the majority of Amsterdammers claim not to be religious. For the City Council of Amsterdam, responding to this transformation is a huge challenge. As it needs to ensure that all these new Amsterdammers feel like true Amsterdammers, just like the ‘old’ ones. This means, among other things, that we need to enter into a dialogue with one another. It also means that we need to familiarize ourselves with the new Amsterdammers’ countries of origin and get to know their culture and their traditions. I am convinced that this can help strengthen the contact between our citizens and the Municipality.\(^{20}\)

The efforts in establishing linkages between groups in society are also related to major events in recent history, the most important are 9/11 (11 September 2001) and the murder of filmmaker Theo van Gogh in Amsterdam (2 November 2004). As a result of

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\(^{20}\) Speech by the former Mayor of Amsterdam Cohen held at the meeting organized to discuss Turkey's accession to the EU at Kocaeli town hall (Turkey) on 12 September 2006.
these developments, the general political climate in the Netherlands became less tolerant towards people with a different ethnic background. A growing number of mainly lower class Dutch citizens felt threatened by the new developments, increased diversity and complexity, and by global forces beyond their control. This has resulted in a more inward-looking orientation and increased tensions within Dutch society (Scheffer 2007; Duyvendak et al. 2008). As a consequence, Dutch municipalities have been looking for ways to stimulate dialogue with immigrant groups and build bridges between different groups in society. Chapter 2 will further discuss these efforts in more detail.

Setting up partnerships with migrant source countries is also related to the increased attention given to securing legitimacy for the international activities of municipalities, as these activities are closely scrutinized by local politicians and a part of the electorate. At the time when most partnerships were being established, political and public support for city-to-city cooperation was particularly fragile (IOB 2004). The new links provided Dutch municipalities with more opportunities to benefit from international exchanges, making it easier to justify their engagement with municipalities abroad. While most Dutch-Moroccan and Dutch-Turkish municipal partnerships were added to existing ones, some also replaced existing links that were terminated (Van Ewijk 2007; Van Ewijk and Van Lindert 2010). Johnson and Wilson also point to the importance of mutuality for the stability of city-to-city partnerships. In case local governments cannot demonstrate mutual gains in terms of core functions, it becomes difficult to justify their continuation (Johnson and Wilson 2006: 75).

Natural disasters provided an important external trigger for establishing links between local governments in the Netherlands and their counterparts in Morocco and Turkey. The earthquakes, one in 1999 in the Marmara region in Turkey and another in 2004 in the area around Al Hoceima in Morocco, motivated the Turkish and Moroccan communities to organize themselves to collect money for assisting the victims. Also local politicians (e.g., councillors and aldermen of Turkish descent) voiced their concerns raising awareness for these events within their municipalities (further discussed in chapter 5). Some of these contacts and exchanges also led to longer lasting partnerships, following the new trend of establishing linkages with migrant source countries. Moroccan and Turkish local government generally have less space to develop their own policies and are more closely tied to their respective central governments. The fact that several Moroccan municipalities approached VNG International to start collaborations with Dutch local governments is rather unique. As was discussed above, several Dutch-Moroccan municipal partnerships were formed out of the Morocco Municipal Platform. The objectives for Moroccan and Turkish municipalities to be engaged in international exchange programmes were mainly focused on strengthening local governance in terms of service delivery, like the improvement of waste management.

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21 For example, the Municipality of Amsterdam and the Municipality of Rotterdam ended their partnerships with Managua in Nicaragua and Durban in South Africa respectively, in favour of links with municipalities in migrant source countries, new EU countries and/or BRIC countries.
1.6.3. The number of Dutch-Moroccan and Dutch-Turkish municipal partnerships

By the beginning of 2011, seven Dutch local governments were working with one or more partner municipalities in Turkey, and five Dutch local governments were partnered with one or more municipalities in Morocco (see figure 1.3). Participating municipalities included the Netherland’s largest cities (Amsterdam and Rotterdam, with 780,560 and 612,500 inhabitants respectively) (CBS 2011) as well as smaller to medium-sized municipalities, with 30,000–160,000 inhabitants. In some cases the partner municipality in Morocco and Turkey had a more or less similar population size as their Dutch partner municipality (see also table 5.1). Several other local governments did not maintain municipal partnerships but supported civil society initiatives in main migrant source countries or particular geographic areas. The Municipality of The Hague, for instance, formulated a policy to support initiatives from civil society focusing on several main migrant source regions in Morocco (Al Hoceima, Nador and Taza) and in Turkey (Konya and Elazig). These bonds are shown in table 1.3, but they are not reflected in figure 1.3. It should also be noted that some established linkages have already been abandoned before the research was carried out, like the cooperation between the Municipality of Zoetermeer and the municipal department of Fatih (Istanbul). These are also not incorporated in figure 1.3.

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Figure 1.3 Dutch-Moroccan and Dutch-Turkish municipal partnerships as of March 2011
Table 1.3 Cooperation between Dutch municipalities and partner municipalities in Morocco and Turkey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dutch municipality</th>
<th>Turkish municipality</th>
<th>Moroccan municipality</th>
<th>Supporting co-development initiatives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alkmaar</td>
<td>Bergama</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Almelo</td>
<td>Denizli</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amsterdam</td>
<td>Kocaeli</td>
<td>Casablanca</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delft</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Adapazari (Turkey)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deventer</td>
<td>Luleburgaz, Edirne,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>South East</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gouda</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Imzourene</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haarlem</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Emirdag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meppel</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Al Hoceima (&amp; Figuig)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nijmegen</td>
<td>Gaziantep</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rotterdam</td>
<td>Istanbul</td>
<td>Casablanca</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utrecht</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>In Morocco, Turkey (no specific region)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Hague</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Al Hoceima, Nador and Taza (Morocco); Konya and Elazig (Turkey)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zeist</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Berkane</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Dutch-Moroccan municipal partnerships**

Between 2000 and 2010, municipalities in the Netherlands and in Morocco joined forces in the Platform for Municipal Cooperation Netherlands-Morocco, which was hosted by VNG International. The platform in Morocco was initially funded by the NGO Cordaid (VNG International 2001). The platform was created to accommodate the interest of Dutch municipalities to exchange with local governments in Morocco. This interest was related to the many Dutch citizens of Moroccan descent who live in Dutch cities and towns, the great social and political changes of Morocco during the reign of King Mohamed VI, and the economic and political impact of migration from Morocco to Europe (VNG International 2005). During the first years of the platform, The Royal Netherlands Embassy in Morocco and the Interchurch Peace Council (IKV) were partners of the platform. NCDO supported activities in 2005 when four centuries of international relations between Morocco and the Netherlands were commemorated. Later on only Dutch municipalities participated. Initially twelve Dutch municipalities participated in the platform.²³ The platform was ended in 2011. In Morocco a parallel platform was set up with several municipalities, but due to political changes the platform stopped functioning after a few years.²⁴ For cooperation with Morocco, several municipalities made use of the MATRA programme on youth participation and waste

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²²This list might not be complete.
²³Amsterdam, Utrecht, Den Haag, Rotterdam, Veenendaal, Zeist, Bergen op Zoom, Meppel, Arnhem, Zaltbommel, Gouda and Leidschedam.
²⁴Maarif, Sidi Maarouf and Ben Msik (all three are city districts of Casablanca), Nador and Al Alaroui, Zaio and Midar (villages in the municipality of Nador): Figuig, Berkane, Larache, Oujda, Assilah, Guercif, Jrada, Al Hoceima and Imzourene (village in the municipality of Al Hoceima), Tetouan-Alazhar and Dahir.
management (2007–2010) as well as of a programme on waste management financed by the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation. Partly based on contacts established within the platform, the following municipal partnerships were established: Rotterdam with Casablanca; Amsterdam with Casablanca and with Larache; Gouda with Imzourene; Zeist with Berkane; and Meppel with Al Hoceima.

Dutch-Turkish municipal partnerships

Seven Dutch municipalities were engaged in city-to-city partnerships with cities in Turkey: Almelo with Denizli; Deventer with Luleburgaz, Edirne and the Union of Southeast Anatolia Region Municipalities (GABB); Alkmaar with Bergama; Haarlem with Emirdag; Nijmegen with Gaziantep; Rotterdam with Istanbul; and Amsterdam with Kocaeli (Izmit). For cooperation with Turkey, Dutch municipalities could draw on the LOGO East programme (2005–2010). The two local government associations, VNG International and the Union of Turkish Municipalities (UTM), played a central role in the process of knowledge exchanges between Dutch and Turkish municipalities. They organized several joint conferences in which Dutch and Turkish municipalities exchanged information. The Dutch municipalities involved in international cooperation with municipalities in Turkey also established a municipal platform to exchange experiences and coordinate their international efforts. The Turkey Municipal Platform was disbanded when the LOGO East programme was finalized.

1.6.4. Current developments and future perspectives

In 2010 Marike Bontenbal wrote quite optimistically, ‘a future lies ahead for Dutch city-to-city cooperation with the Global South’ (470). This optimism was based on her findings of a gradually increasing financial support and professionalism in the aid efforts of local governments, focused in the three main future trends: (1) a growing interest by Dutch local governments to cooperate with local governments in migrant sending countries; (2) city diplomacy (mainly related to democracy building and conflict prevention in the Global South); and (3) the effort by Dutch municipalities to secure tangible benefits from international cooperation. These trends are interrelated. A survey conducted by VNG in 2009 by and large confirmed these trends. The survey showed that 67% of respondents expected the emphasis on the importance of the needs of their own municipality as a starting point for international cooperation would increase in the next governing term (2010–2014). Sixty-four percent indicated that the intensity of cooperation with municipalities in migrant source country would remain the same (23% thought it would increase, and 13% felt it would decrease). Furthermore, nearly half of the respondents (48%) thought that the interest to cooperate with BRIC countries would increase (VNG 2009: 31). This trend also follows the national policies on international cooperation, which show an increased focus on connecting international cooperation to economic development.

In 2010 and 2011, Dutch local governments faced major budget cuts, which have also influenced international policies and city-to-city partnerships. Although this research did not include a systematic survey of these developments, there are strong
indications that policies did change. According to a 2011 survey among municipalities with city links within Europe, half of the municipalities mentioned that the budget cuts affected existing city linkages (VNG 2011). The trends described by Bontenbal seem to be confirmed, especially regarding the stronger emphasis on cooperation with BRIC countries. There are no indications that the number of city linkages with migrant source countries significantly decreased, but budgets and staff were cut—directly related to both the budget cuts and changes in integration policies, with the phase out of support programmes focused on specific migrant groups (see chapter 4). The future might not be as bright as Bontenbal predicted.

1.7. A guide through the dissertation

This chapter started by introducing the topic of city-to-city partnerships and the relevance of this study, followed by a short exploration of city-to-city cooperation in the development debate. The chapter continued by highlighted the main developments and trends on Dutch policies and practices, with a particular focus on municipal partnerships between, on the one hand, the Netherlands as a migrant destination country and, on the other hand, Morocco and Turkey as the main migrant source countries. The research draws on two main theoretical bodies of literature (described in more detail in chapter 2). The first part of the chapter 2 focuses on relevant theories regarding governance and decentralization processes, especially highlighting the role of local governments in governance arrangements. Globalization processes in relation to local governments and other actors within their constituencies are briefly discussed. The second part of chapter 2 focuses on the main theories on knowledge exchange and mutual learning in partnerships. The chapter concludes by presenting a framework for analysing mutual learning in municipal partnerships. The research tools, for example case studies and qualitative research methods, are set out in the third chapter. Chapter 4 describes the institutional and political frameworks in Morocco, Turkey and the Netherlands. This information is necessary for obtaining a better understanding of the contextual factors in which local governments and other actors, like NGOs, operate. The case studies included in this research are presented in chapter 5, which specifically focuses on the involved institutional and individual actors. Chapter 6 analyses the process of knowledge exchange and learning in Dutch-Moroccan and Dutch-Turkish partnerships by focusing first on the learning on the Moroccan and Turkish side of the partnerships, followed by an analysis of knowledge exchange and learning on the Dutch side. Chapter 7 discusses the strengthening of local governments, the strengthening of local government–civil society interfaces and the strengthening of broader governance networks. Furthermore, the process of mutual learning and especially the dynamics of mutuality in the partnership are elaborated in chapter 8, followed by the conclusions in chapter 9.