Between local governments and communities

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

van Ewijk, E.

Citation for published version (APA):

General rights
It is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), other than for strictly personal, individual use, unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

Disclaimer/Complaints regulations
If you believe that digital publication of certain material infringes any of your rights or (privacy) interests, please let the Library know, stating your reasons. In case of a legitimate complaint, the Library will make the material inaccessible and/or remove it from the website. Please Ask the Library: https://uba.uva.nl/en/contact, or a letter to: Library of the University of Amsterdam, Secretariat, Singel 425, 1012 WP Amsterdam, The Netherlands. You will be contacted as soon as possible.
2. Shifts in governance and knowledge exchange and mutual learning in partnerships: Theoretical notions

For all the talk of globalisation or subaltern knowledge, and despite influential interventions in development and postcolonial studies, there has been little attempt to consider how learning between North and South contexts and constituencies might be conceived (McFarlane 2006).

2.1. Introduction

Strengthening local governance is high on the policy agenda in both migrant source and destination countries. This is related to two main global developments: the process of decentralization and the process of globalization and migration. First, worldwide decentralization processes are taking place whereby governance tasks are transferred to the local level and, as a result, local governments have become more important. Reforms related to decentralization processes bring new powers and duties to local governments, whereby governance processes are increasingly taking place through networks that include multiple actors (Baud et al. 2011; Pierre 2000; Pierre and Peters 2000; Helmsing 2000; UNDP 2003). Decentralization processes are also said to bring the local governments closer to the people (Blair 2000; Baud and De Wit 2008; Cornwall and Gaventa 2000). Second, due to globalization processes and migration, local governments also face other challenges that are, more than before, connected to developments outside national or local borders (Sassen 1998, 2001; Pries 2001; Smith 2001). One of these challenges faced by municipalities in migrant destination countries is increased ethnic and cultural diversity of their population, as a large part of the citizens have their roots elsewhere. Due to decentralization processes, which bring local government closer to the people, local governments have an important role in establishing linkages with civil society at large. Knowledge regarding various actors and civil society groups can be relevant for establishing this linkage. So, in fulfilling their new roles and addressing new challenges, local governments need to be strengthened and possibly equipped with new kinds of knowledge.

Despite major changes in the role of local governments and the connection between governance and development, the topic of local governance has long remained at the margins of most donor programmes (Baud and De Wit 2008). Chapter 1 discussed that even though local governments have gradually received more recognition for their role in international cooperation processes, their role is still limited. However, transnational cooperation on the municipal level may fill some substantial gaps, especially related to the lack of capacity at the level of local authorities (IOB 2004). Moreover, as city-to-city partnerships include exchanges (in knowledge and/or

---

25 Parts of this chapter have been published before (see Van Ewijk 2012; Van Ewijk and Baud 2009; Van Ewijk 2008).
equipment) between governmental and non-governmental actors, there are also opportunities to strengthen the interfaces between local government and civil society (Bontenbal 2009a, 2009b).

2.2. Local government in new governance arrangements

This section will focus on the role of local governments in the light of decentralization and globalization processes. Following Pierre (2000: 241), it is believed that theories on governance can help in ‘opening up alternatives ways of looking at political institutions, domestic-global linkages, transnational co-operation and different forms of exchange’. More specifically theories about knowledge exchange and learning in partnerships are elaborated in the second part of this chapter, followed by an analysis of mutuality and mutual learning in partnerships.

2.2.1. Theoretical notions on governance and decentralization

The term ‘governance’ is very broad and often is not clearly defined in the literature. Furthermore, it is used differently in various debates and key authors on governance also have different views on the state, local governments and civil society (Pierre 2000; Stoker 1998; Nuijten 2004). Pierre (2000: 3) argued that the theoretical approach to governance can be divided into two main categories: (1) the more traditional ‘steering’ conception of governance, also referred to as ‘old governance’ in ‘which questions are asked about how and with what conceivable outcomes the state “steers” society and the economy through political brokerage and by defining goals and making priorities’; and (2) the ‘modern governance’ or ‘new governance’ perspective which ‘looks more generically at the co-ordination and various forms of formal and informal types of public-private interaction, most predominately on the role of policy networks’. While in some countries the old governance form is still dominant, in others the focus has clearly shifting from the old to the new approach, or in other words from issues of ‘government’ to issues of ‘governance’.

Governments are involved in several kinds of relations, partnerships or networks. According to Pierre (2000: 4), governance ‘concerns the forms of cooperation between different parts of the state, the private sector and civil society’. This definition places a strong emphasis on cooperation between different actors dealing with local governance issues. In this view, local governments are one of the actors in the process of governance and ‘political institutions no longer exercise a monopoly of the orchestration of governance’ (Pierre 2000: 4). Van Kersbergen and Van Waarden (2001: 6) talk about horizontal shifts in governance—from public to semi-public, to private. At the same time local governments are also involved in vertical networks of governance or ‘multi-scalar networks’, referring to the relations that exists between different scale levels within

---

26 Chapter 4 will further elaborate on the specific roles and challenges of local governments in Morocco, Turkey and the Netherlands.
government (from national to local or to international bodies) (Barnett and Scott 2007, in Baud et al. 2011; Van Kersbergen and Van Waarden 2001). Lastly, local governments can be involved in ‘cross-boundary networks’, which include transnational linkages between local governments (Baud et al. 2011).

Process and forms of decentralization
Governments across the globe are engaged in a process of decentralization. Decentralization can be defined as ‘the transfer of responsibility for planning, management and resource raising and allocation from the central government and its agencies to the lower levels of government’ (Work 2002: 6). The main types or degrees of decentralization are political, administrative and fiscal decentralization. The four major forms of decentralization include deconcentration, divestment, delegation and devolution (Work 2002: 6). In the case of deconcentration only administrative tasks are delegated, while power and control of funds remain on the national level. Divestment refers to the process whereby only financial resources are delegated to the local level (e.g., contracting out certain service provision or administrative functions and privatization). In the case of delegation, authority and responsibilities are redistributed to local units of government or agencies, whereby accountability is still largely in the hands of central government. Devolution, or democratic decentralization, is the most ambitious form of decentralization whereby funds, power, tasks and responsibilities are devolved from higher to lower levels of government (Work 2006; Robinson et al. 2000). In general it is assumed that decentralization—particularly if it takes the form of devolution linked to democratization—brings governance processes closer to the people. Through enhanced local consultation with the constituents, local government bodies can adjust policies and service delivery based on the needs of their citizens (Blair 2000; Baud and De Wit 2008).

Due to decentralization processes, the roles of local governments have been changing to a more enabling role, which requires other skills and knowledge. While previously technical knowledge might have had a more prominent position, the new roles include an increased focus on management, political and legal knowledge.

The decentralization debate
Decentralization is generally perceived as a positive development which should be supported by central governments. The process of decentralization is however highly debated in the literature. While several authors have highlighted the positive effects of decentralization under favourable conditions, others have written about its constraints and pitfalls. These include critiques that decentralization is a concept originating from the Western world and might not be suitable in other locations, especially when states are weak and cannot properly support decentralization processes or, conversely, might be tempted to retain authority and resources (Nuijten 2004: 114; Oluwu 1990). Several authors have also argued that an increased role for local governments is not necessarily more beneficial for citizens. Proximity does not directly or automatically lead to a
greater sense of citizenship (Prud’homme 1995). Fjelstad (2003) found many problems and limitations in relation to decentralization processes across the globe. This is only partly explained by having limited financial resources to support the decentralization process. Issues such as mismanagement, corruption and nepotism can play an important limiting role in decentralization processes. Local elites who have gained power due to decentralization processes can also misuse this power by repressing local minorities—a concept known as ‘elite capture’ (see Baud and De Wit 2008; Swyngedouw 2005). Due to these constraints, a reassertion of central control might occur, i.e. ‘recentralization’ (Wunsch 2001: 277). Despite some fundamental concerns related to decentralization processes, international agencies generally support and actively push for increased decentralization (Smoke 2003: 13). Achieving ‘good governance’ is considered a crucial aspect in development processes.  

2.2.2. Shifts in governance: from public management to network governance

As described in the beginning of this chapter, local governments are increasingly becoming more active in a governance network—alongside with civil society organizations and the private sector—that coordinates processes of local development (Baud et al. 2011; Baud and De Wit 2008; Helmsing 2000; Pierre and Peters 2000; Pierre 2000). Local governments can delegate tasks to the private sector, NGOs or community-based organizations (CBOs) and work in ‘multi-stakeholder arrangements’ (Baud and De Wit 2008; Swyngedouw 2005). This development is clearly occurring in high-income countries, while the extent to which these processes are taking place in emerging economies varies and has not fully been explored (Baud et al. 2011). These networks and partnerships, along with the participation of citizens in local governance processes, have been receiving more attention across the globe (Batley 1996; Hordijk 2000; Cornwell and Gaventa 2000; Gaventa 2000). Service delivery, a core task of local government, is increasingly being carried out in public-private partnerships (PPPs), in which local governments and private sector actors cooperate (Batley 1996; Awortwi 2004). Generally, it is believed that private organizations are able to provide improved efficiency, as providers will have to compete to receive contracts from local governments. However, there is limited evidence that outsourcing indeed leads to greater efficiency and effectiveness, particularly for countries in the Global South (Batley 1996: 749). Awortwi (2004) showed that when the local government is not a strong ‘principal agent’, their power to enable and control the private sector providers is quite limited.

27 There are different views on what comprises ‘good governance’, but it is generally seen as containing several key concepts: citizenship and inclusiveness, accountability and transparency, and effectiveness and efficiency (see UNESCAP www.unescap.org/pdd/prs/ProjectActivities/Ongoing/gg/governance.pdf; UN Habitat http://www.unhabitat.org/content.asp?typeid=19andcatid=25andcid=2097).
Cornwall and Gaventa (2001: 32) argued that in order to achieve ‘good’ participatory governance people and institutions need to be brought together: having a responsive local government implies having a strong civil society that can express its views and needs. Rebuilding this relationship calls for ‘working on both sides of the equation’ (Cornwall and Gaventa 2001: 32), i.e. strengthening local institutions while at the same time enhancing the empowerment of civil society to participate in local decision-making. Gaventa (2002: 30) stressed that ‘in both South and North there is a growing consensus that the way forward is found in a focus on both a more active and engaged civil society which can express demands of the citizenry, and a more responsive and effective state which can deliver needed public services’. Spaces for citizens to participate in local development and local governance can be invited (by local governments), claimed (by civil society) or negotiated between government and civil society actors (Scott and Barnett 2009; Baud and Nainan 2008). Ackerman (2003) argued that the best way to utilize the energy of society is to invite societal actors to participate in the core activities of the state—also referred to as ‘co-governance’. Knowledge on civil society actors is required in order to build bridges between government bodies and civil society. Transparency, accountability and responsiveness of local governments are necessary for achieving good relations between state and civil society (Cornwall and Gaventa 2001). In many low-income and middle-income countries, citizens have been organizing themselves to arrange facilities that are not provided by governments. In various Western European countries the state has long provided many facilities; however, due to budget cuts it is gradually withdrawing and leaving more to its citizens. Today, ‘active citizenship’ is high on the policymaking agenda (Tonkens 2008).

2.3. **City-to-city cooperation as a tool for strengthening governance processes**

City-to-city partnerships usually include various actors, a feature that is generally recognized as an important strength of municipal partnerships in the literature. This implies a potential to strengthen both governmental bodies and other actors.

2.3.1. **Evidence of strengthening local government bodies**

Previous findings on city-to-city partnerships indicated that the partnerships have strengthened local government bodies in the South at relatively low costs. Important preconditions for successful partnerships are the allotment of sufficient time and resources throughout the project cycles and the availability of political and public support (Hewitt 2000, 2002). There is no overwhelming agreement in the literature about the role of C2C cooperation in the strengthening of certain local governance functions. For example, while some authors see municipal financial practices as benefitting from municipal partnerships, others dispute this claim.28 Most authors argue

---

that municipal partnerships have contributed in particular to the improvement of tax collection, administrative efficiency, urban planning and service provision (e.g., waste management and housing) in local governments in the South (Bontenbal 2009a; Van Lindert 2009; Johnson and Wilson 2009; Baud et al. 2010; Hewitt 1998, 2000). Tjandradewi and Marcotullio (2009), in their study on Asian C2C cooperation, found that the cooperation was most beneficial in the areas of environment and health as well as education and social services. According to their research there was little interest in the areas of gender, municipal finance and economic development.

While there is strong evidence of strengthening of local governments in the Global South, there is less evidence of strengthening local governance processes in the North. Most municipal partnerships are specifically focused on strengthening local governance processes in the South. Johnson and Wilson (2009) and Hewitt (1999a) are among the few authors who have focused on examining the strengthening of local governance in the Global North. Johnson and Wilson found interesting forms of learning on urban planning in the United Kingdom (Daventry), which emerged through mutual exchange processes with their partner municipality in Uganda (Ingala). Through the international exchanges and exposure to another context, the officers involved became aware of ‘the social dimension of technological design and working with colleagues in a different context to solve problems’ (Johnson and Wilson 2009: 214). Hewitt showed, in a study of partnerships between municipalities in Canada and Chile, that C2C partnerships can also have a negative impact on local government bodies in the North. In their study, the lack of support for C2C within and outside the municipal administration negatively impacted the involved Canadian municipal officers, who experienced feelings of discouragement and even guilt due to the negative reactions from their colleagues others.

2.3.2. **Evidence of strengthening civil society initiatives**

The involvement of various non-governmental actors is acknowledged as a strength of city-to-city partnerships (Hewitt 2000; Van Lindert 2009; Bontenbal 2009a). It is said to foster global citizenship and to provide opportunities for mutual learning (Hewitt 2000; UNDP 2000). However, there is limited evidence that civil society initiatives are strengthened through international exchanges in the framework of municipal partnerships. One of the reasons is that the initiatives of civil society organizations are generally small scale and concrete, focusing on improving the living conditions in municipalities in the Global South. The initiatives are also hindered by lack of funding and lack of professional knowledge on working with partners in the South and poor understanding of development needs (Bontenbal 2009a: 243). Bontenbal’s argument is that the potential of C2C as a form of development intervention is not sufficiently utilized.
2.3.3. **Strengthening local government–civil society interfaces**

Most local governments support the engagement of civil society, although it should be noted that the involvement of non-governmental actors is not necessarily appreciated by all representatives of local governments. Tjandradewi and Marcotullio (2009) found that community participation was not considered very important by urban managers for successful C2C partnerships. There are few empirical studies that address local politics and political representation in city-to-city partnerships, which, according to Bontenbal (2009b), is possibly related to the sensitivity of the subject. Northern partners might opt to rather focus on ‘safer’ technical issues than the potentially more controversial topics of accountability and citizen participation. A study by Hewitt (2004) demonstrated that the city partnership with Charlesbourg (Canada) stimulated an emerging ‘culture of information’ in Ovalle (Chile), largely absent in many other Latin American municipalities. Hewitt (2004: 630) concluded that despite the limitations of lack of financial resources and persistent problems with corruption, ‘international cooperation at the local level can provide a vital service by providing developing-world municipalities with the tools and the confidence to take initial steps towards increasing public participation in governance’. Bontenbal (2009a: 262) found that the way municipal projects were implemented was very relevant for fostering more participative forms of local governance. She argued that C2C partnerships can lead to the reinforcement of local government–civil society relations, which may not be a direct outcome of C2C interventions but rather an indirect outcome of programmes aimed at strengthening local governments and civil society. She concluded that it is, therefore, also important to assess these indirect effects.

There is even less evidence of strengthening in the interfaces between government and civil society in the Global North. Informing civil society about the municipal partnerships and raising public awareness on global issues can arguably be perceived as a way for local governments to reach out to civil society actors. Johnson and Wilson (2009: 216), building on the work of Cornwall and Gaventa (2000), argued that contributing to global citizenship is indeed ‘part of promoting an active citizenry with the right and responsibility to help “make and shape” our lives from local through global scales, rather than the right only to “use and choose” local services’.

It can be concluded that city-to-city cooperation has a potential to promote learning by both governmental and non-governmental actors. Moreover, C2C provides conditions for strengthening of the interfaces between governmental and civil society actors on both sides of the partnership. Support programmes and research have (with a few exceptions) mainly focused on strengthening local government bodies in the South.

2.4. **Local governments in a globalizing world**

There is an ongoing debate whether municipalities in the West should be involved in international cooperation. Opponents argue that international cooperation should be
left to national and specialized organizations; local governments should focus on issues within their municipal borders. Proponents argue that the world does not stop at the municipal borders, that processes are interlinked and that local governments can fulfil a unique role in international cooperation. This debate cannot be seen in isolation from debates on globalization, migration and transnationalism, which will be briefly discussed in this section. It should be stressed that local governments are embedded in ‘multi-level spatial and institutional configurations’ including the nation state and world regions. Changes taking place globally are just one of the kinds of changes local governments are facing, and not necessarily the main or decisive factor (Child Hill and Fujita 2003: 207).

2.4.1. Beyond the nation state and geographic borders
Due to globalization, migration and increased diversity, national and local governments face various challenges connected to developments outside local and national borders. There is a large and expanding body of knowledge on globalization and transnationalism, which emphasizes global linkages (see Sassen 1998, 2001; Vertovec 1999, 2001; Pries 2001; Mazzucato et al. 2004, Mazzucato 2005; Blunt 2007; Nell 2007; Mügge 2010, 2012).

Fukuyama argued that globalization can be perceived as a source for social capital, as all sorts of people, groups and activists can operate transnationally. It might include indigenous habits and practices, but also brings new ideas, habits and practices ranging from ‘accounting standards to management practices to NGO activities’ (Fukuyama 2001: 19). Migrant flows have had a significant impact on the composition of citizenry and human development (in both migrant source and destination countries) as well on the interconnectivity between places.

Local authorities are the geographical spaces where the local and global connect, materializing new questions that might require new knowledge and new policies. A new challenge is how to deal with the increased ethnic or cultural diversity in migrant destination countries, as migrants and their children make up an increasingly larger part of the population. Stimulating social cohesion and participation by different groups within society is generally regarded as one of the main challenges of contemporary local governments in migrant destination countries (Haus and Heinelt 2005; Vemeulen and Penninx 2000). Also translocal linkages and movement of people between migrant source and destination countries can pose a challenge (e.g., health care, housing, education etc.). It might be difficult to reach out to citizens and to adapt the offered services for people who do not live permanently in one location.

There are two main discourses that focus on the impact of global linkages. One is the ‘globalization discourse’, which is based on the assumption that national borders, boundaries and identities are becoming increasingly less significant. In this perspective, globalization and the nation state are treated as ‘mutually exclusive’. Basch et al. (1994, quoted in Vertovec 1999) use the words ‘de-territorialized nation states’ to describe the expanded activities and intensified links between migrants, home country politics and
The second is the ‘transnational discourse’ argument, in which borders, state policies and national identities remain equally relevant. Within this debate globalization and the nation state are seen as ‘mutually constitutive’ (Smith 2001; Mügge forthcoming). According to Vertovec (1999: 447), transnationalism describes ‘a condition in which, despite great distance and notwithstanding the presence of national borders (and all the laws, regulations, and national narratives they represent) certain kinds of relationships have been globally intensified and now take place paradoxically in a planet-spanning yet common—however virtual—arena of activity’.

Theories on transnationalism focus on the relations and connections between individuals and organizations in different spaces, thus helping conceptualize and understand ‘disjointed spaces’ (Mazzucato et al. 2004: 157). The term transnationalism is mostly used at (1) the national level, for example, government policies formulated by sending countries aiming at influencing remittances and fostering loyalty among the diasporas; and (2) the individual level, for example, the initiatives by individual migrants and migrant communities. However it can also be applied to a local or institutional level, like the initiatives of local governments. Portes et al. (1999: 220) argued that the existing literature on the subject tends to mix these various levels and that the local level is understudied. These observations were mirrored at a seminar focusing on transnational dynamics at the local level (Bielefeld, 29-30 November 2012).

Several authors have written about transnational linkages between migrant groups and their locations of origin, specifically in relation to the challenges these links poses for existing government structures (Mügge 2010, 2012; Glick Schiller 2002; Mazzucato 2005). Mazzucato et al. (2004: 157) argued that ‘as a result of cross-border flows, new social, economic, political and cultural spaces are being created that cannot be superimposed on the geographic space of the nation’. Glick Schiller (2002) has focused on the relation between ‘transborder citizens’, i.e. those who participate in social and political processes in more than one state and thus impact the systems of law and governance at the two different national levels. Mügge (2010, 2012) builds on the work of authors like Fitzgerald (2005) and Lucassen and Penninx (2009), who argued that sending states actually reinforce their borders by actively engaging in transnationalism. Sending states have formulated different policies towards transnational engagement, varying across states and historical periods. Mügge (2012) showed that these policies are related to general ideologies of nationhood and citizenship, particularly regarding the question whether migrants and their descendants are still considered part of the nation.

Based on research on Turkish state policy towards transnationalism, Mügge (2011: 33) concluded that the differences of sending state policies over time can be explained by three factors: (1) the shift from temporary migrants or guest workers to permanent migrants; (2) the changing political climate in the host state; and (3) one-off political events that trigger ad hoc activation of government policy.
2.4.2. Localizing the global

Globalization does not cover everything and does not connect all places with each other. Linkages between localities and institutions are geographically specific or partial (see Sassen 1998, 2001; Robertson 1994; Pries 2001; Nell 2007; Held et al. 1999). Pries (2001: 14) stressed that ‘the dialectics of globalization and localization’ stand in contrast to ‘too-global globalization thinking’. Nell (2007: 202) introduced the term ‘locally specific transnational ties’, defined as ‘active formal and informal ties between individual, collective and governmental actors between emigrants and non-migrants originating from the same region’. She argued that the transnational local-local connections have been understudied. According to Sassen (2001: 188), ‘it is this specificity that we need to study along with macro-structures, and for which we need to develop particular categories of analysis’. Based on research conducted on Mexican migrants in the United States, Fitzgerald (2002: 33) found that ‘identification with a distant, cross-border hometown is often more situationally relevant to members than identification with the homeland’. Looking at the identification of migrants and the feelings of belonging in migrant destination countries, the local level is clearly important, but it is often neglected in scientific and policy debates. Van der Welle (2011) found the identification of young citizens of foreign descent living in Amsterdam is much stronger with the city they live in (Amsterdam) than with the country (the Netherlands). Entzinger (2006) found similar results for youth of foreign descent living in Rotterdam.

The importance of the 'local' in both sending and receiving countries is clearly applicable to the linkages between the Netherlands and Morocco and Turkey. For example, the majority of Moroccan migrants in the Netherlands were born in the Rif area, in the northern part of Morocco. Likewise, a migrant community living within one specific municipality in the Netherlands can originate from a single municipality or region in Turkey. The first Moroccan and Turkish guest workers were recruited or migrated on their own initiative in the 1960s and 1970s from particular areas. These first migrants were followed by waves of family members. This process of family formation continues to this day (Nell 2007). In 1984 more than half of all Turkish migrants living in the municipality of The Hague had their roots in the Elazig Province in the East Anatolia region and the District of Karakocan in the Southeastern Anatolian region (Den Exter 1993, in Nell 2007: 199). These translocal linkages are also reflected in some of the city-to-city partnerships established. The majority of Turkish migrants currently living in the Dutch municipality of Almelo originate from the area around Denizli, and came to the Netherlands through recruitment policies during the expansion of the textile industry. A similar link is found between Turkish migrants with roots in Emirdag who today live in Haarlem (Van Ewijk 2007).

In her study on locally specific transnational ties of Turkish and Turkish-Kurdish migrants in the Netherlands, Nell (2007: 213-214) distinguished between (1) ‘collective’ locally specific transnational ties, which can be upgraded to the government level; and (2) ‘individual’ transnational ties, which can be translated into locally specific transnational connections. In the first case, the local ties of Turkish migrants in the
Netherlands became institutionalized in official city-to-city partnerships, and, in the second case, Dutch politicians from Turkish origin took the lead to motivate their municipalities to start cooperation with a specific town or region, employing their ‘social capital’ in this location.

2.4.3. Maintained translocal linkages
Migrant often maintain translocal linkages with the areas of origin. In many cases they contribute financially to their families ‘back home’. In some cases migrants are also involved in setting up projects in their areas of origin, with the objective to stimulate development and/or alleviate poverty (Østergaard-Nielsen 2011; Nijenhuis and Broekhuis 2010; Lacroix 2008, 2009; Weil 2002). They can also maintain strong political linkages (Mügge 2010, 2012; Nell 2007). Money transfers from migrants ‘back home’—known as remittances—vastly outnumber the monetary value of official development assistance (ODA). Officially recorded remittances to developing countries were USD 381 billion in 2011 (World Bank 2012), while the budget of ODA in the same year was USD 134 billion (OECD 2011). The role of migrants in development initiatives has increasingly gained the attention of multilateral agencies, intergovernmental bodies, national governments and development agencies as well as academics. It is argued that migrants can make an important contribution to initiatives in migrant source countries, because they possess specific human, social and cultural capabilities (see De Haas 2006; Østergaard-Nielsen 2011; Nijenhuis and Broekhuis 2010; Weil 2002; Aangeenbrug 2012). However, Nijenhuis and Broekhuis (2010) argued that the body of knowledge is still too limited to draw strong conclusions. According to Mohamoud (2010) the contribution of diaspora organizations to the development of the homeland could be much stronger if they partner with sub-national development actors, such as NGOs, private sector and local governments (both in the host and home countries).

There is also a growing body of knowledge that connects transnational engagement to integration processes in migrant host countries. These initiatives are also known as ‘co-development initiatives’. Many authors have shown that being engaged in migrant source countries can have a positive impact on migrant integration in destination countries (Portes et al. 2008; Lacroix 2009; Bermudez 2010; Østergaard-Nielsen 2011; Mazzucato 2005; Snel et al. 2006). These findings are particularly relevant because in political discussions—and especially in debates on policymaking—the involvement of migrants in projects in source countries is perceived as a danger for the process of integration in destination countries. According to Acebillo-Baqué and Østergaard-Nielsen (2011), most studies on co-development and transnationalism focus on the national level, while the body of knowledge connecting transnational engagement to integration processes in migrant host countries at the local level is still weak.
2.4.4. Globalization versus increased inward orientation

Globalization does not necessarily lead to more open and internationally oriented citizen perspectives. In contrast, citizens at the local level might feel threatened by the new developments, by increased diversity due to the presence of a large number of migrants, and by complexity and new forces beyond their control. This can lead to feelings of fear resulting in a more inward orientation. Clarke (2011) argued that people are more likely to respond positively to one another in situations of proximity and more likely to harm one another when distance comes between them. This can include distance in absolute space, but also via the ‘distancing technologies and architectures of modernity’ (Clarke 2001: 119). Putnam (2007) showed that increased diversity is negatively correlated to social capital and community involvement. People living in ethnically diverse communities are more likely to have an inward orientation and less trust in other people in their neighbourhood than more homogenous communities. This inward orientation and lack of trust and social capital are expressed as reduced trust in local administration, local leaders and the local media as well as reduced trust in the power of their influence. At the same time worldwide processes and products are becoming increasingly connected due to globalization. Most people are not aware of the relationships they have with distant others while at the same time their consumption of goods has multiple kinds of international linkages (Clarke 2011; Corbridge 1993).

As described in the previous chapter, during the course of the last decade Dutch society clearly showed the characteristics of becoming more inward oriented (Scheffer 2007; Duyvendak et al. 2008). The economic slowdown period (starting in 2008), combined with the neo-liberal political agenda of right-wing political parties, have resulted in stronger voices within society advocating for stricter restrictions on immigration to the Netherlands. At the same time expenditures on international cooperation, both within and outside the European Union, are increasingly being questioned and actually being scaled back. Despite the ongoing globalization processes, nation state thinking has persisted.

One of the strengths of city-to-city partnerships acknowledged in the literature is that through municipal partnerships this ‘distant stranger’ is brought nearer, and abstract or ‘far away events’ are made palpable. City-to-city partnerships can be used as a tool to make citizens aware of the relations they have with others in different parts of the world, in turn fostering ‘global citizenship’ (Bontenbal 2009a; Van Lindert 2009; Hoetjes 2009). Clarke (2009: 497) argued that town twinning can, therefore, be conceptualized as ‘a device for producing topological proximity between topographically distant places’. He also highlighted that this device is currently under pressure due to economic developments.

It can be concluded that globalization processes produce tensions—despite increasing the connections between geographic spaces and people—which can lead people to experience a growing sense of distance. Transnational networks between cities can be one of the devices to build bridges between different geographic spaces. At a time when this device could fulfil an important role in the Netherlands, political and
public support for municipal international cooperation is fragile, because of an increased inward orientation, compounded by economic challenges. Having set out the main debates related to governance, decentralization and globalization and its repercussions for local governments and civil society, I will continue by focusing on knowledge exchange and mutual learning in municipal partnerships.

2.5. Knowledge exchange and learning in partnerships

Over the past two decades, working in ‘partnerships’ and knowledge as a resource for development have been central concepts in the policy field and theoretical debates on international and development cooperation. The year 1996 was marked as the beginning of a new discourse of knowledge-based aid, set out by World Bank president James Wolfensohn who declared that his organization would henceforth be the ‘knowledge bank’ (King and McGrath 2003). At the same time, partnerships have been discussed extensively in terms of their possible benefits and limitations in the international cooperation field. Working in partnerships is generally seen as working on a more equal basis compared to donor-recipient relations (cf. Baud and Post 2002; Brinkerhoff 2002a, 2002b; Fowler 1998, 2000; Johnson and Wilson 2006; Robinson et al. 2000). In the literature on governance networks, little attention is being paid to learning models, especially to mutual learning and transnational linkages (Baud et al. 2012). Torfing et al. (2012), for instance, mainly refer to interactive governance networks and power dimensions in networks. The body of knowledge that specifically focuses on knowledge exchange and mutual learning through municipal partnerships is still small but growing (Johnson and Wilson 2006, 2009a, 2009b; Wilson and Johnson 2007; Van Ewijk and Baud 2009; Bontenbal 2009a, 2009b). The following paragraphs will conceptualize knowledge and learning, discuss ways of exchanging knowledge and explore how it is used in the debates on partnerships and mutual learning.

2.5.1. Different models of producing and disseminating knowledge

When discussing the possibilities for knowledge exchange and mutuality in C2C networks, we have to recognize what types of knowledge exist as well as the models within which different types of knowledge are produced and disseminated. The classic linear model of knowledge dissemination is associated with a global North-South ‘transfer of knowledge and technology’, assuming that codified knowledge in the North is ‘universally applicable’, and can be distributed globally. Many authors have criticized this type of model, which ignores the context in which knowledge is produced and the associated limits to its use (cf. Baud 2002; De la Rive Box 2001; Rip 2001). Alternative models assume that knowledge production and dissemination is based on interaction between researchers, people and organizations, who are both sources and users of various types of knowledge. These models recognize that types of knowledge range from the local, craft and practice-based knowledge (Chambers 1997) to the more generalized,
‘cosmopolitan’ knowledge produced by scientific communities (cf. Rip 2001). Baud has added the ‘middle range’ of embedded knowledge, built up and circulated at the level of sub-national regional ‘districts’ (Baud 2002; Helmsing 2000). This can include both ‘technical knowledge’ applicable to particular sectors (e.g., manufacturing or provision of public services, such as health or education) as well as contextualized cultural knowledge (such as ‘ways of doing things’ and local norms and standards).30

2.5.2. Ways of exchanging different kinds of knowledge
Knowledge in municipal partnerships can be exchanged in various ways: (1) peer-to-peer exchanges between colleagues working on a particular subject; (2) meetings and workshops for groups organized by the local governments involved; (3) field visits to places and organizations of thematic interest; (4) attending conferences and other events organized by third parties (e.g., local government associations); (5) training courses for officers of local government bodies, for instance in the framework of support programmes; and (6) through exchanges of written translations of documents (adapted from Bontenbal 2010: 466-467). Learning can occur in more formal learning settings, such as seminars and organized field visits, but can also occur informally, for instance during contacts at dinner and while travelling. Moreover, learning can be linked to set projects (intended learning) but can also transcend the objectives of these projects (unintended learning).

The methods by which knowledge is exchanged are related to the kinds of knowledge exchanged. In the literature a distinction is made between tacit, embedded and generalized or codified knowledge. Tacit knowledge is internalized by people; it concerns ways of doing things which people often are not aware of. Practice-based knowledge is often tacit; it is understood by an individual but has not been systemically expressed (e.g. by writing it down) (King and McGrath 2004: 6; Verkoren 2009). Although parts of this knowledge can be made explicit by writing them down, access to this type of knowledge is largely personalized and depends on face-to-face contacts. In contrast, codified and generalized knowledge ‘has been explicitly and systematically expressed’ (King and McGrath 2004). This knowledge is also referred to as universal knowledge; it is documented and therefore more widely accessible than tacit knowledge. Implicit knowledge ‘refers to knowing what is socially and culturally appropriate in a given circumstance’ (Verkoren 2008: 80). This knowledge is important when considering the exchange between different geographic localities with different cultures. ‘It represents implicit codes of behavior that are often not universal but culturally specific—whether to an organizational culture or a national or regional one’ (Verkoren 2008: 80). Implicit knowledge can also be referred to as contextual embedded knowledge; knowledge which is embedded in a certain context. This kind of knowledge

30 While the body of literature on knowledge construction, production and exchange at the level of economic clusters is extensive and well developed (cf. Evers 2008), the ideas on knowledge production in the setting of urban local governments and in the exchange between local governments need to be further explored (Baud et al. 2011).
is usually important in the exchange between practitioners, like engineers, entrepreneurs or policy advisors. It ranges from tacit to more codified or generalized knowledge, and learning can occur in multiple ways.

### 2.5.3. Kinds of learning

Different views exist about how to define when learning has actually taken place. From the perspective of Argyris (1999: 68), real learning only occurs 'when the invented solution is actually produced'; this implies that in his view learning has not taken place when someone discovers a new problem or invents a solution to a problem without implementing the solution. Other authors put less emphasis on the actual implementation of lessons; according to Smid and Beckett (2004: 406) learning can be defined more broadly as 'knowledge acquisition or acquisition of new behavior'. In the exchange of knowledge on governance processes it may not always be possible to implement lessons learned. People might become aware of certain issues, they might obtain new ideas but they might not be able (yet) to put these ideas into practice. For instance, they might be restricted by financial constraints or the mandate of the government body might be limited. As people may share this obtained knowledge with others or put it into practice at a later stage, I argue it is still fair to conclude that learning has occurred.

Most authors argue that learning take place through a process of action and reflection (Wilson and Johnson 2007; Marsick and Watkins 1990: 8; Schön 1987; Kolb 1984). For instance, Wilson and Johnson (2007: 254) argued that 'learning is not simply a matter of linear knowledge transfer from one party to another, but a process of joint knowledge construction through interaction and conscious reflection'. To help identify 'those moments or dynamics through which learning has the potential to occur', Johnson and Wilson (2009: 212) use the concept of 'action learning space', which is conceived as 'a social space that enables joint learning and action with other people, whether mediated by technology or not'.

The focus on the importance of reflection is specifically related to more formal learning settings in which people have clear intentions to learn, as reflection requires that people involved in learning processes are aware that they are actually learning. Informal and incidental learning, on the other hand, take place without much conscious reflection (Marsick and Watkins 1990: 8). Devers-Kanoglu (2009) argued that this informal learning is generally an important way of learning in partnerships, although it is generally not recognized. She felt that intended learning is

---

31 Kolb (1984), with his famous learning cycle, stressed the importance of both grasping experience, through concrete experience and abstract conceptualization, as well as transforming experience, through reflective observation and active experimentation.

32 Informal learning can be defined as 'any activity involving the pursuit of understanding, knowledge and skills which occurs outside the curricula of educational institutions, or the courses or workshops offered by educational or social agencies' (Livingstone 1999: 51).
overemphasized, while unintended learning is overlooked in municipal partnerships. She called for an open approach to analysing learning, including informal learning.

Related to the different models for disseminating and producing knowledge described above, knowledge or practices can be (1) transferred, copied or transplanted from one location to another one; (2) slightly adapted; or (3) used as inspiration for formulating novel ideas (Dolowitz and Marsh 1996). The first form is related to a form of learning whereby practices observed in one locality are believed to function in a similar way in another context. The second form is similar to ‘single-loop learning’ that occurs when ‘matches are created or when mismatches are corrected by changing actions’, and the third form is related to deep, double-loop or transformative learning, which occurs when ‘mismatches are corrected by first examining and altering the governing variables and then the actions’ (Argyris 1999: 68). Such ‘transformative learning’ occurs when new experiences challenge established assumptions and values; based on this new knowledge, existing knowledge and approaches are fundamentally changed (Schugurensky 2000). Lessons can be drawn by searching across time (from analysing past experience) or across place (searching for lessons within and outside a region or a country). Learning is often connected to learning from good practices but it can also include negative learning, i.e. learning what not to do (Dolowitz and Marsh 1996).

Based on their research on voluntary learning in CBOs, Mündel and Schugurensky (2005: 188) identified several forms of obtaining new skills as a form of learning: instrumental skills (such as using computers, writing proposals), process skills (such as working with others, working with diversity), factual knowledge about specific issues (such as environmental regulations), dispositional learning (such as changes in attitudes and values) and political/civic learning (in the context of their research this kind of learning moves beyond the context of ‘small group democracies’ and deals with broader local, regional, national and international contexts).

2.5.4. Building blocks for learning
Based on the works of Habermas (1929–) and Foucault (1926–84), Johnson and Wilson have identified two main building blocks for learning in partnerships that I found to be very useful for analysing mutual learning in municipal partnerships: (1) the existence of sufficient professional similarity between partners, needed for establishing a basis of genuine dialogue and trust; and (2) the existence of sufficient differences between the partners, in order to have something to share. Johnson and Wilson (2009a: 26) argued that ‘it is difference, not communality that is ultimately the source of learning and new knowledge’. In exchanges between practitioners from different localities, learning through differences can be particularly relevant as it triggers a form of ‘outside the box’ learning, not possible without the confrontation with another geographic area and social reality. The other context or other persons can function as a mirror, and such ‘mirroring’ might be helpful to increase the understanding of one’s own culture and society. It is helpful to consider one’s own situation from a different perspective through processes of ‘alienation’ (Wulf 2001, quoted in Devers-Kanoglu 2009). Following Wulf’s
argumentation, municipal cooperation bears immense potential for learning from differences. City-to-city cooperation implies that interaction takes place and partnerships are formed among people from different backgrounds. This may enable or foster a conscious and critical reflection on issues that are not questioned anymore, and could be an important source for deep or double-loop learning.

The process of exchanging knowledge between different human beings is complex in itself as knowledge is subjective: ‘the words allocated to a particular piece of knowledge may mean different things to different people’ (Verkoren 2008: 79). Therefore, exchanging knowledge and learning requires explanation of what precisely is meant by the individuals or organizations involved. The process of knowledge exchange between two different localities with different cultural characteristics is even more complex, as differences in language and culture can complicate what is understood by the individuals involved. Also, actors with different cultural background are likely to have different views and attach different values to key issues, like hierarchy in relationships (Scollon et al. 2012; Jandt 2004; Hofstede et al. 2010).

2.5.5. Dissemination and institutionalization of knowledge
An important subject in studying knowledge exchange and learning in partnerships is to examine the extent to which knowledge becomes institutionalized within the organization. It would enable more actors to internalize such knowledge, making the accumulation of knowledge less vulnerable to changes (e.g. staff turnover). As an additional step, it is possible to examine the extent of organizational learning that is taking place. Organizational learning is a wide concept that can include organizational adaptability and flexibility, the openness to experiment, readiness to rethink processes, and the adjustment of the organizational set-up (Argyris 1999).

Jones and Blunt (1999) concluded that the twinning method has potential advantages over other methods of ‘development cooperation’ in offering enhanced possibilities for organizational learning and sustainable capacity building, as it involves exchanges between similar kinds of organizations. However, one of the weaknesses or challenges of city-to-city cooperation is precisely the dissemination of knowledge within the local government; in most cases a limited number of individuals are involved (Bontenbal 2009a; Johnson and Wilson 2006; Jones and Blunt 1999). The practitioner-to-practitioner approach within C2C cooperation, with its associated activities (such as on the job training and study visits), provides no mechanism for dissemination within

---

33 Hofstede et al. (2010) identified four main dimensions of difference between the cultures of various countries: power distance, individualism, uncertainty avoidance and masculinity. Later on he added long-term orientation and indulgence versus restraint to his model.
34 When a staff member departs from an organization, it does not necessarily mean that the knowledge is lost for the sector as a whole, as many professionals who change jobs remain within the same sector (Baud et al. 2010).
35 Some scholars adopted a sceptical stance towards the notion of organizational learning. An important question is if ‘organizational learning’ is a contradiction in terms as the individual might be considered the only proper agent of learning (Argyris 1999).
the organization (Wilson and Johnson 2007; Jones and Blunt 1999). Although exchange forms can also include training of trainers formats that incorporate dissemination in the project design; hardly any reference is made in the literature on city-to-city partnerships to this kind of exchange.

Knowledge sharing within the city hall can also serve as a form of ‘justification’ of the international engagement, instead of knowledge sharing for learning purposes. Bontenbal (2009a: 220) concluded that the transfer of knowledge and lessons learned in the North-South city partnerships she studied was restricted in the Northern municipalities, ‘either because it is not considered applicable to the own organizational context or because colleagues do not take an open approach to getting informed’. An important question which emerges from the literature is to assess to what extent dissemination of knowledge takes place when there are no mechanisms to stimulate it.

2.6. Partnership processes

Earlier I labelled cooperation between municipalities as a form of ‘partnership’. In this paragraph, I first discuss the way the term partnership is generally used and the connotations it generally has in policy debates and academic research. Then partnership processes and the dimensions that play a key role in the process of knowledge exchange and mutual learning are discussed. Keeping in mind that partnerships between municipalities are a specific kind of partnership, some interesting lessons can be drawn from the general theoretical debate on partnerships.

2.6.1. Defining partnerships

Forms of international relations include (1) networks, defined as a relatively loose form of cooperation, characterized by horizontal exchanges of information, lacking a hierarchy and long-term commitment (De la Rive Box 2001); (2) cooperation, a form of organized interaction towards a common end for mutual benefit (De la Rive Box 2001); and (3) partnerships, defined here as ‘highly structured forms of cooperation, with long-term commitments, concrete activities, a form of contract and autonomous participating partners’ (Baud 2002: 155; Penrose 2000). Partnerships have been discussed extensively in terms of their possible benefits and limitations (cf. Baud and Post 2002; Brinkerhoff 2002a, 2000b; Fowler 1998, 2000; Hordijk and Baud 2006; Johnson and Wilson 2006; Robinson et al. 2000). According to Fowler, ‘authentic’ partnership imply a joint commitment to long-term interaction, shared responsibility for achievement, reciprocal obligation, equality, mutuality and balance of power (Fowler 1998: 3). Furthermore—and to make a distinction from exclusively commercial relationships—they contribute either directly or indirectly to a public goal (linking these relationships to governance). Partnerships include both formal and informal arrangements, for instance those that are supported by the rule of law and those that are embedded in
establishing social practices (Baud and Post 2002: 220). In practice, the broad term ‘partnerships’ can mean ‘different things to different people’ (Robinson et al. 2000: 13).

2.6.2. **City-to-city cooperation as a particular kind of partnership**

Partnerships can include all kinds of partners, ranging from NGOs, authorities and private organizations. Within the governance and decentralization debate, partnerships usually refer to relationships between public and private organizations (PPPs), relationships between public organizations and NGOs, or a combination of both (multi-actor arrangements). Within the theoretical debate on development cooperation, the focus is mainly on linkages between NGOs and more specifically on co-financing agencies in the North and their partner organizations in the South. The term is a preferred alternative to variations on the ‘donor-recipient’ or ‘donor-beneficiary’ relationship (Penrose 2000: 246). Arguably the term has become a ‘something and nothing word’: it suggests equality between partners and conceals existing power differences (Fowler 1998).

The majority of ‘city partnerships’ are North-South partnerships and West-East partnerships, i.e. partnerships between high-income countries and middle- or low-income countries. An important difference between NGO partnerships and municipal partnerships is that international cooperation is the core of the work of professional NGOs focused on international cooperation, while it is a minor—and often partly voluntary—activity for the municipalities involved. Their main focus of work lies within their own constituencies. As was pointed out in the previous chapter, municipal partnerships have another specific characteristic—the exchange between peers or colleagues. Although the context of their work differs significantly (locations, extent of decentralization and corresponding challenges), the involved actors (municipal officials, teachers, police officers, social workers etc.) share some common characteristics and likely ‘speak the same language’, which can be a base for a more equal relationship (Johnson and Wilson 2007, 2009; Bontenbal 2009a; Van Lindert 2009; Van Ewijk and Baud 2009). Municipal partnerships also work through existing peer organizations.

It should be noted that the ‘North-South partnership model’ is more applicable to the Dutch-Moroccan partnerships than to the Dutch-Turkish municipal partnerships included in this research. First of all, the geographic orientation of the latter is West-East instead of North-South. Second, and more importantly, Turkey is classified as a ‘upper middle-income country’ with steady economic growth, and in many ways holds a rather specific position, which sets it apart from other counties. Lacoste (2006: 227) argued that ‘the North-South model experiences a stumbling block in the very exceptional case of Turkey’ (cited in UCLG 2008). Due to the geopolitical and global economic power shifts, whereby many countries in the South experience steady economic growth and many countries in the North experience economic slowdown, the traditional North-South model is also breaking down. This noted, as will be discussed in chapters six and seven, there still was a clear orientation on transfer of knowledge from the Netherlands to Turkey in the case studies. Moreover, general partnership
processes—including aspects such as trust, power and friendship—are equally relevant in these partnerships. Thus, although applied with some caution, the literature on North-South partnerships can still provide useful insight in relation to these partnerships.

2.6.3. Partnership processes
Authors like Hewitt (2000) and Vincent and Byrne (2006) emphasized that for effective learning to occur stakeholders should spend enough time engaged in the relationship. Moreover, they stressed that inter-organizational relationships will only succeed when the parties involved have a clear idea about the objectives and what they are prepared to invest in the relations in order to meet these objectives. The responsibilities and roles of all stakeholders should be clearly defined in order to make progress in the cooperation (Hewitt 2000: 65; Vincent and Byrne 2006: 395). While these aspects might seem straightforward, in practice this is less apparent.

An important question raised in the academic debate is whether equal partnerships between organizations in the North and South, or between high-income and middle/low-income countries, are at all possible. Several authors point to difficulties in achieving genuine partnerships based on equity, shared objectives and mutual benefits. Important aspects in partnerships are ‘trust, equality and power’ between the partners involved (Bontenbal 2007; Fowler 1998, 2000; Johnson and Wilson 2006; King and McGrath 2004; Robinson et al. 2000; Vincent and Byrne 2006; Wilson and Johnson 2007). Several authors have emphasized the importance of trust in the exchange of knowledge and in establishing good partnerships (Smith et al. 1995; Harris 2000; Wilson and Johnson 2007). Trust is defined as ‘the mutual confidence between the actors that one will not act opportunistically and damage the other’ (Wilson and Johnson 2007: 255, based on Harriss 2000: 235-236). Trust is seen as key to collaboration and dialogue and in establishing successful partnerships (Vangen and Huxham 2003; Vincent and Byrne 2006). Repeated engagement is considered necessary to sustain and nurture trust (Vangen and Huxham 2003; Wilson and Johnson 2007), while flexibility, appreciation of diversity and openness are important aspects for the development of relations grounded in mutual trust and respect (Robinson et al. 2000).

Equality is mainly associated with resources and respect as well as openness to learn. As will also be discussed in section 2.6.3, partnerships have the greatest potential for mutual learning on an equal basis when partners bring in ‘complementary resources’ (Johnson and Wilson 2009; Baud and Post 2002). Jansen (2004: 167) argued that in knowledge exchanges the central questions focus on ‘the content of the knowledge that is being generated, applied, transferred, and collected—or neglected—and about who is involved in, or excluded from, certain knowledge processes’. Although ‘power and equity’ are said to be important aspects of the process of knowledge exchange between partners, King and McGrath (2004: 7) argued that it is also important to avoid an approach in which the power of agency is overstated and initiative is denied to Southern actors. This calls for an open approach to verify if and how power relations play a role in the relations between the municipalities included in this research.
As described before, municipalities in the North and South are institutions of the same kind, reaching a perceived high level of mutual understanding as they share a common base, and are usually involved in long-term partnerships (Brinkerhoff 2002a, 2002b; Van Ewijk and Baud 2009). This helps to partly overcome the usual inequality of North-South cooperation and fosters a greater comprehension of pertinent issues and how to tackle them (Bontenbal 2009a: 231). Based on the partnership literature—especially on the work of Johnson and Wilson—I suggested that three inequalities in partnership can be especially important in the context of city-to-city partnerships: (1) unequal recognition of different types of knowledge, in which implicit and tacit knowledge is perceived as less important than codified knowledge (knowledge inequalities); (2) differences in material and financial resources, which can be at the basis of power differences but can also work to reduce the capabilities of Southern partners to implement changes in practice; and (3) Northern partners often consider themselves to have more advanced knowledge than their Southern counterparts (Van Ewijk and Baud 2009).

2.7. Mutuality in city-to-city partnerships

‘Mutual’ refers to ‘a feeling or action experienced or done by a party towards the other and to something held in common by two or more parties’ (Oxford dictionary). Mutuality is strongly related to reciprocity, which is defined as ‘the practice of exchanging things with others for mutual benefits, especially privileges granted by one country or organization to another’ (Oxford dictionary). Mutual benefits in city-to-city cooperation include ‘mutual learning’, which can be defined as ‘learning by both partners involved’.

2.7.1. Learning in the Global South and the Global North

Several authors have argued that knowledge is often transferred in one direction—from wealthier, more powerful countries to the poorer, less powerful countries (McFarlane 2006; Dolowitz and Marsh 1996). This inequality also marks many city-to-city linkages. The principal objectives for the North to be engaged in C2C have for a long time mainly been linked to altruism and have focused on ‘delivering development assistance’ (Bontenbal 2009a). Usually the objective of strengthening local governance in municipalities in the South is central (Johnson and Wilson 2006, 2009; Bontenbal 2009a; Devers-Kanoglu 2009; Van Lindert 2009). Most projects focus on improving service delivery (e.g. waste management) and other core tasks of municipalities (like tax collection and increasing transparency). Generally, the practices of municipalities in the North or in high-income countries are regarded as ‘best practices’ that the partner municipalities in the South (or low- or middle-income countries) can learn from. In addition, Northern civil society actors have organized themselves rather well to raise money for assisting small-scale development projects, such as building schools. Learning
from the South was never formulated as an objective by organizations in the North. As a result practices in the South were also not conceptualized as 'potential source for learning' in the North (cf. Johnson and Wilson 2006: 222). Also, support programmes have focused primarily on strengthening governance processes in the South (Johnson and Wilson 2006).

The focus on North to South transfer, which has traditionally dominated the municipal partnership, did not imply that there were no benefits for municipalities in the North. Possible benefits include ‘soft’ benefits, like greater cultural awareness, friendship and mutual understanding, together with the personal benefits for professionals from the North (Johnson and Wilson 2006: 74). The benefits most often mentioned—and arguably seen as the most important—are cultural awareness and the fostering of global citizenship (UNDP 2000; Van Lindert 2001; Bontenbal 2009a). Partnerships established at the local level have generally been recognized as important sites for educating the public in the North on issues related to inequality, poverty, sustainability and development in the South. City-to-city partnerships usually involve non-governmental actors; by establishing linkages with particular geographic locations abstract issues in a ‘faraway place’ can become more concrete and tangible (Bontenbal 2009a: 51). ‘The South’, ‘Africa’ or ‘Latin America’ thus becomes a very tangible and visible image in the eyes of citizens in the North. In 2000, more than half of the medium-size municipalities in the Netherlands and 92% of the municipalities with over 100,000 inhabitants that are engaged in international exchanges implemented activities to raise domestic public awareness of these efforts (VNG 2000). However, measuring the success of raising global citizenship through partnerships proved to be difficult (Bontenbal 2009a: 37).

Other ways of benefiting from the partnerships by local governments in the North might include reflections on their own work processes or thinking outside the box, possibly leading to other work practices (Proctor 2000: 323; Bontenbal 2009a: 40). Johnson and Wilson (2006) referred to the work of Rositer (2000) who mentioned that Northern partners can also benefit by adapting Southern participation processes, learning from innovations in decentralized governance in the South, adapting Southern anti-poverty agendas to the Northern context as well as by learning about user involvement in service provision in the South (Johnson and Wilson 2006: 74). By cooperating with both governmental and non-governmental actors in one location, relations between these actors can also be strengthened (Van Ewijk and Baud 2009; Bontenbal 2009a; Spence and Ninnes 2007), and partnerships can also be used by cities to enhance their international profile (Jones and Blunt 1999). C2C is also said to positively contribute to job satisfaction and enhancement of certain skills, such as language skills and skills for engaging in international cooperation (Tjandradewi et al. 2006; Hewitt 2004; Bontenbal 2009a). Although various forms of benefits by local

36 As most donor programmes mainly focused on transfers from North to South, it was assumed that the North and the South partner municipalities had different learning benefits, for example ‘hard’ in the South (like improvement of services) and ‘soft’ in the North (cultural exchanges).
governments in the North are described, the empirical findings on the actual reported benefits are scarce. It should be noted that many of the examples just mentioned, like fostering global citizenship and enhancing an international profile, are also relevant for partner municipalities in the South. They are highlighted here in the context of possible forms of learning in the North as they are specifically mentioned as sources for learning by municipalities in the North in the publications.

2.7.2. Explaining the North-South orientation in learning

Despite the possibilities for learning in municipalities in the North, in practice these benefits remain limited in scope. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, this one-sided focus is related to the central objective of most C2C partnerships—to strengthening local governance in municipalities in the South—which is fed by altruism and support programmes. Johnson and Wilson (2006) mention the influence of funding agencies (such as the EU, the Commonwealth Local Government Forum and the World Bank) on the formation of North-South municipal partnerships in line with Agenda 21 initiatives in the mid-1990s. These partnerships focused primarily on the transfer of knowledge and other resources from North to South. Other factors might also be important for the extent of mutual learning that takes place. Mutual learning requires genuine interest in the partner organization and an openness to learn on both sides of the partnership (Robinson et al. 2000). Often a narrow focus on learning exists as ‘one of the greatest challenges in inter-organizational relationships is to put aside our preconceived notions about others and be open to new ideas and new ways of doing things’ (Hewitt and Robinson 2000: 324).

In addition to the various partnership conditions described before—trust, equality and power—are important for mutual learning in partnerships (Fowler 1998, 2000; Robinson et al. 2000; Vincent and Byrne 2006; Wilson and Johnson 2007) another important contribution that should be mentioned is resources. Partnerships are considered to have the greatest potential for mutual learning (as a grounded incentive) when partners bring in complementary resources that are seen as useful for the other members of the partnership (known as espoused value) (Johnson and Wilson 2009; Baud and Post 2002). This has also been called ‘potential synergy’ (Hastings 1996). Inequalities inherent in North-South partnerships can limit such synergy. These complementary resources include the different knowledge that the actors bring into the learning, which are not necessarily valued equally (Johnson and Wilson 2006: 79). Previous research findings have also demonstrated that the involvement of civil society, including citizens and citizens groups, in municipal partnerships increases the chances of achieving mutuality between partners.

Geographical divisions, like 'Third World' or 'Global South', are sometimes seen as obstacles for the process of learning between organizations. Policymakers expect to find greater benefits in the 'common values' or 'similarities' within the Global North or within the Western world (McFarlane 2006); thus, the potential to learn from differences is not always recognized (Johnson and Wilson 2009a, see also section 2.4.3).
Dolowitz and Marsh (1996: 355) argued that if policy transfer occurs within relatively closed international policy communities (instead of introducing and integrating new ideas), the lesson drawn simply reinforce the existing system. The same ideas will simply circulate among like-minded nations. As mentioned before, major power shifts have occurred across the globe. While countries in the Global North experienced economic slowdown and stagnation, many countries in the Global South—particularly the emerging economies—experienced economic growth resulting in blurred dividing lines between the North and South. Whether or not this has also paved the way for more openness in exploring learning opportunities worldwide is an interesting new field for further research.

2.7.3. The ‘ideal’ versus the ‘sceptical’ view on mutual exchange

There are different views regarding the possibility of achieving mutual exchange in municipal partnerships. As described in the first chapter, city-to-city cooperation has the potential to foster equal exchange (with mutual trust in a central position), due to the peer-to-peer approach and longstanding relations (Brinkerhoff 2002a, 2002b; Van Ewijk and Baud 2009). Moreover, the exchange between peers provides the opportunity for exchanging tacit and embedded knowledge. However, paternalism and donor-dominated agendas are seen as having a negative impact on the exchange within the partnerships and on mutuality (UNDP 2000; Spence and Ninnes 2007; Bontenbal 2009a). Bontenbal (2009a) referred to a paradox and permanent tension resulting from the North-South structure in municipal partnerships. On the one hand, there is a mechanism of equal horizontal exchange between peer organizations, while on the other hand, there is predominance of a classic linear model of aid distribution from the North to the South. Johnson and Wilson (2006) referred to a ‘mutuality gap’ based on a distinction between two general views related to mutuality in municipal partnerships. The first view can be described as the ‘ideal view’ and is based on possibilities for mutuality, while the second view, the ‘sceptical view’, assumes that mutuality is not possible because of inequalities—especially unequal power relations. The extent to which a given partnership approaches the ideal or sceptical can be described as a mutuality gap (Johnson and Wilson 2006: 71).

A myth of mutual learning?

Bontenbal (2009a, 2009b) and Devers-Kanoglu (2009) argued that the discourse on mutual learning in municipal partnerships has overemphasized possible learning benefits in the North, which has raised expectations, even though mutual exchange seems to be merely a desirable outcome. Bontenbal (2009a: 256) argued that ‘a myth of equality and mutuality emerges, based on the belief that the North is compensated with learning for the financial and technical assistance delivered to the South and fed by the

37 The views are based on the work of authors like Penrose (2000), Brinkerhoff (2002a, 2002b), Fowler (2000) and Harriss (2000).
use of a common discourse understood by both partners’. In Bontenbal’s view (2009a: 231) there is little risk that a lack of mutuality harms the effectiveness of capacity and skills exchanges. ‘If learning and capacity development is achieved in the South and the political and strategic organizational objectives of engaging in C2C are met by the North, C2C offers benefits and opportunities to both North and South. As such the need for mutuality, e.g. to make partnerships and commitment more enduring is met, which sustains partnership structures’. She also argued that ‘if learning in the North is not an objective, it implies that the question whether mutuality in learning is evident in C2C is not relevant, at least not from a policy perspective’ (Bontenbal 2009a: 230).

However, mutual learning opportunities are considered particularly relevant for sustainability and in relation to public and policy support for municipal partnerships (UNDP 2000; Johnson and Wilson 2006, 2009). ‘The features which we have found common to successful links are community-wide participation, commitment by all parties to their link, mutual understanding and the concept of reciprocity’ (UNDP 2000). Moreover, policies and objectives of engaging in municipal international cooperation are likely to change in the course of time, and mutual learning opportunities can become more important. As the political support for municipal partnerships in the Western world has become more fragile in the last five years (fed by the economic slowdown), mutuality and mutual learning within partnerships have indeed become more relevant, both at the national and the local level (Van Ewijk 2012). It could also be argued that it would be complacent behaviour by Northern partners as well as a waste of resources if the partners in the North feel they cannot learn much from peers in the Global South or in the East. This issue becomes particularly interesting now that global political and power shifts are occurring at a rapid rate turning the world ‘upside down’.

Mutual learning has been central in most partnerships between local governments in migrant source and destination countries. Hoetjes (2009) argued that the answer to the question which is the most appropriate yardstick to measure the success of a twinning is particularly complicated for these ‘diaspora-related twinnings’, because they have more diverse objectives. Hoetjes raised some pertinent questions: Is it improving the relationships between Dutch and Moroccan, Turkish and other colleagues? Is it only a solution for problems with immigrant groups inside the Netherlands? If this is so, is the success to be determined only by, and on, the Dutch side? What role is to be given to the Moroccan and other partner? In general are twinnings to be evaluated only from the European/Dutch/donor perspective or from both sides? As will be discussed later on, despite mutual learning objectives, these kinds of questions are generally not well thought out in practice.

2.8. A framework for analysing mutuality in municipal partnerships

As discussed earlier, mutuality is mentioned as an important aspect in sustaining and building equality in partnerships, but often it is not clearly defined. Based on insights
obtained through studying a wide body of literature and based on an initial inventory study, I composed a framework for analysing mutuality in municipal partnerships: (1) by identifying different kinds of projects at different scale levels under the umbrella of the municipal partnership; (2) by identifying different kinds of actors and their objectives for being engaged in international exchange programmes; and (3) by identifying five dimensions for the dynamics of mutual learning in municipal partnerships.

2.8.1. Mutuality at project and partnership level

Based on an initial exploratory study (see Van Ewijk 2007), I distinguished between mutuality at the level of the city-to-city partnership and mutuality at the project level. Furthermore, to make the different dimensions of mutuality more explicit, I identified four main types of projects within city-to-city partnerships between Dutch municipalities and municipalities in migrant source countries: 38 (1) projects related to strengthening local governance (service delivery, public administration and citizen participation); (2) economic development projects; (3) projects on transnational linkages and mobility; and (4) projects on integration (of citizens of migrant origin into migrant destination countries) (Van Ewijk and Baud 2009). It should be noted that the dividing lines between these types of projects are not that clear cut in practice.

Furthermore, I argued that projects central to strengthening local governance in the South are part of all city-to-city partnerships. The cooperation is likely to be mainly characterized by knowledge transfer from North to South. Projects related to economic development are likely to be relevant in both municipalities and have a potential for mutual learning, although they are not widely present and most municipalities are still only exploring possibilities to set up such projects. Projects related to transnational linkages are generally oriented to relationships between Dutch and migrant countries. Both partner municipalities are likely to benefit from the exchange. Dutch municipalities are likely to benefit most from projects related to the integration of migrants. As suggested above, both partners can learn on similar or complementary issues in the exchange. For example, a municipality in the South might learn on issues related to waste management, while the municipality in the North learns on issues about human resource management. The processes through which C2C cooperation takes place can also influence outcomes. Processes in which exchanges of a wider range of knowledge can be carried out have a greater potential for mutual learning than those that remain limited in their scope and recognition of ‘types of knowledge’ to be exchanged. This finding suggests that mutual learning is likely to happen at the level of the C2C partnership, but might not occur clearly at the level of specific projects within the C2C framework. Mutual learning is also more likely to take place if the process of knowledge exchange results in identified outcomes for both partners. It also means that the types of

38 This classification is not exclusive. C2C partnerships can include projects of different types, and project can also be interlinked.
knowledge more likely to be exchanged and recognized are tacit and ‘embedded’ forms of knowledge, rather than codified generalized knowledge (Van Ewijk and Baud 2009).

2.8.2. **Mutuality in exchanges between governmental and non-governmental actors**

Municipal international cooperation involves cooperation between local governments and other actors, including NGOs and private organizations. Through the involvement of both governmental and non-governmental actors, knowledge exchange and learning takes place between these organizations in the North and South/East, but also between organizations from the same location, i.e. within the Northern and the Southern municipality. So, there is inter-municipal cooperation, which takes place through interaction and partnerships between the respective municipalities, groups and individuals involved, and ‘intra-municipal cooperation which takes place through interaction and partnerships among individuals and groups on a local level’ (Devers-Kanoglu 2009: 203) (see also figure 3.1). My research is focused in particular on inter-municipal learning. It does also look at the relations between the governmental and non-governmental actors and the extent to which these relations are strengthened as a result of international engagement, but a thorough analysis of learning processes taking place between governmental and non-governmental actors within the same geographic location is outside the scope of this research.

While in the exchanges between local governments, knowledge exchanges between professionals and the strengthening of local governance usually have a central place, most exchanges between NGOs focus on raising funds and donating goods. Johnson and Wilson (2009) pointed at the fundamental differences in these kinds of exchanges: in the first type the focus is primarily on professional learning and knowledge sharing between practitioners, while in the second type it is on public engagement. They refer to these differences as ‘complex sides’, as they revolve around the tensions between engagement and aid, i.e. between ‘the creation of conversational and action learning spaces’ and the provision of aid (Johnson and Wilson 2009: 216). This complexity calls for making a clear distinction in the types of actors and their objectives to be involved in the exchange processes, to get a better understanding of the mutual learning that occurs in the framework of municipal partnerships.

2.8.3. **Mutual learning dimensions**

Furthermore, based on the literature on knowledge exchange and mutual learning in partnerships described above, the following dimensions are expected to play a key role in affecting mutual learning in city-to-city partnerships between migrant source and destination countries: (1) similarity between professionals, which is necessary for establishing dialogue and trust; (2) differences between partners, enabling them to learn from each other, and the recognition and appreciation of differences; (3) complementary resources brought in by the participating partners; (4) process-based
building of trust through continuous collaboration; and (5) power and equality (Van Ewijk 2012).

These ‘mutual learning dimensions’, combined with the identification of the types of actors involved and the different types of projects at different scale level, will be the guiding dimensions for analysing the extent of mutual learning taking place between municipalities in migrant source and destination countries.

2.9. Conclusions

This chapter described the ongoing worldwide decentralization processes that have resulted in increased importance of local governance (Pierre 2000; Pierre and Peters 2000; Baud 2004; UNDP 2003; Helmsing 2000). These reforms bring new powers and duties to local governments and stimulate local authorities to move beyond their traditional roles, whereby local governments are expected to function more as ‘enablers’ and several actors are involved in governance processes (Baud et al. 2011). Due to globalization and migration, local governments in migrant destination countries also face ‘new’ challenges that are more than before connected to developments outside the national or local borders (Sassen 1998, 2001; Pries 2001; Smith 2001). One of the challenges for local governments in high-income countries is the shift in the composition of the population in their municipalities and corresponding increase in diversity, as large parts of the population now consist of citizens who have their roots elsewhere. This shift is particularly relevant as, at the same time, decentralization processes are said to bring the local governments closer to the people and related issues (e.g. citizen participation) are receiving more attention.

City-to-city partnerships include exchanges (in knowledge or equipment) between governmental and non-governmental actors, and can occur at both the inter-municipal and intra-municipal level. These links provide the potential to also strengthen the interfaces between local government and civil society actors within one municipality (Bontenbal 2009). In the literature different knowledge dissemination models are identified, ranging from a classic linear model of transferring knowledge and technologies from North to South to models emphasizing the importance of the context in which knowledge is produced and the limits it sets to applying this knowledge (Rip 2001; De la Rive Box 2001; Baud 2002). Different types of knowledge exchanged in municipal partnerships have been identified, ranging from tacit knowledge, implicit or context-embedded knowledge, and codified and generalized knowledge (see also Baud et al. 2011). Partnerships processes—such as equality, power and trust—are known to affect the knowledge exchange and learning (Fowler 1998, 2000; Robinson et al. 2000; Vincent and Byrne 2006; Wilson and Johnson 2007).

City-to-city partnerships between migrant source and destination countries are of relatively recent origin. The main reason for local governments to initiate these partnerships was the assumption in municipalities from the Global North that
cooperation with migrant source countries would (1) stimulate the integration of migrants in host societies, and (2) strengthen the connections between governmental and non-governmental actors (Van Ewijk 2007). Because in these partnerships Dutch local governments have their own objectives for engaging in international cooperation, there is potential for new types of knowledge being exchanged as well as increased possibilities for mutual learning. By focusing on mutual learning processes of governmental and non-governmental actors involved in Dutch-Moroccan and Dutch-Turkish municipal partnerships, this research seeks to contribute to studies on city-to-city cooperation and mutual learning through partnerships. An analytical framework was set out to analyse mutual learning in municipal partnerships: (1) by identifying different kind of projects at different scale levels under the umbrella of the municipal partnership; (2) by identifying different kinds of actors and their objectives for engaging in international exchange programmes; and (3) by identifying five dimensions for the dynamics of mutual learning in municipal partnerships. These three components are related to the different kinds of knowledge exchanged, the ways of exchanging knowledge and the learning taking place. Based on the insights from the literature and theory review, the following main thesis question was formulated:

*How does knowledge exchange in Dutch-Moroccan and Dutch-Turkish municipal partnerships lead to mutual learning by local governments and other actors involved, and to what extent does the international engagement lead to the strengthening of local governance?*

The research behind this thesis focuses on the strengthening of local government bodies, the establishment of new government arrangements and the strengthening of local government–civil society interfaces in the local governments under scrutiny. The specific research questions and the methodology will be described in the next chapter.