Between local governments and communities
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8. The dynamics of mutual learning

8.1. Introduction: a framework for analysing mutuality in municipal partnerships

Mutual learning in city-to-city partnerships refers to the learning undertaken by all involved partners. Chapter 6 and 7 analysed learning processes and the strengthening of governance processes in Morocco and Turkey, on the one hand, and the Netherlands, on the other hand. It was necessary to consider them separately because the municipalities involved had their own objectives and there are important country-specific differences in the governance processes. On the basis of these chapters, it can be concluded that both sides did learn from the exchange, and, therefore, mutual learning did occur through the municipal partnership. This chapter will explore the mutuality in these municipal partnerships in greater detail, arguing that learning processes are in practice more dynamic than described in the previous chapters. Based on the extensive review of the literature on governance processes, knowledge exchange and learning as well as partnerships and mutuality, I have made a conceptual framework for analysing mutuality in municipal partnerships. The framework identifies three key components: (1) the different kinds of actors and their objectives for engaging in international exchange programmes; (2) the different kinds of projects at different scale levels, under the umbrella of the municipal partnership; and (3) the five dimensions for mutual learning in municipal partnerships. These three components are related to the different kinds of knowledge exchanged, the methods of exchanging knowledge and the learning that takes place. Before analysing the different types of exchanges and dimensions that play a role in mutual learning processes, I take a closer look at the objectives of the actors, as this is important in relation to the expected and unexpected learning as well as the recognition of the extent of mutual learning that takes place among the actors.

8.2. Mutuality at the partnership and project level

Based on an initial study among Dutch municipalities, carried out between February and August 2007, I made a distinction between mutuality at the level of the city-to-city partnership and mutuality at the project level (Van Ewijk and Baud 2009). I made several key arguments: (1) exchanges centred around the strengthening of local governance in terms of strengthening service delivery are mainly characterized by knowledge transfers from North to South; (2) projects related to economic development

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139 Parts of this chapter were published in *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie* (see Van Ewijk 2012) and *Habitat International* (see Van Ewijk 2009).
are likely to be relevant in both migrant source and destination countries; (3) both partner municipalities are likely to benefit from exchanges related to transnational linkages; and (4) Dutch municipalities are likely to benefit most from projects related to the integration of migrants. Looking at the interfaces between local government and civil society in broader terms, both partners are likely to benefit from the exchange. Furthermore, I argued that both parties can learn new ways to address similar and complementary issues in the exchange. It can be expected that mutual learning is likely to happen at the level of city-to-city partnerships, but might not occur at the level of specific projects within the city-to-city framework.

Possibilities for mutual learning are also related to the kinds of knowledge exchanged. Processes that enable the exchange of a wider range of knowledge provide a greater potential for mutual learning than those with limited scope. The recognition of various ‘types of knowledge’ to be exchanged is also important for mutual learning.

8.2.1. Objectives and mutuality at local government level

Despite their choice to explicitly focus on cooperating with local governments in one of the main migrant source counties, Dutch municipalities generally did not set out clear cooperation objectives. This lack of clearly defined objectives is particularly relevant because learning is less likely to occur—and even if it does occur, it is less likely to be recognized—without clearly defined objectives. For the exchange programmes on strengthening the capacity of Moroccan and Turkish municipalities, concrete projects were defined. For example, Emirdağ’s motivation to learn from Haarlem’s experience was underpinned by Turkey’s status as EU candidate country. As a candidate country Turkey has taken on the responsibility to reform its governance system (both on national and local level) to meet the numerous EU membership criteria. One of the key challenges faced by local authorities is the management of hazardous waste at local level. In fact, the Turkish national government issued a law mandating municipalities to tackle this issue. Emirdağ did not yet have a policy plan in place to deal with hazardous waste. In Morocco, several respondents also expressed that they were motivated by the need to fulfill international norms. A policy advisor responsible for health issues felt that Morocco was 40 or 50 years behind Western Europe in waste management, while, at the same time, communication techniques, like the use of internet, are up to date. Thus, from the very beginning, the Dutch-Moroccan and the Dutch-Turkish partnerships had different objectives. A native Dutch consultant with many years of experience in municipal cooperation, currently living and working in Turkey, commented:

"Usually there is vague babble about ‘we have so many Turkish people in the Netherlands’. Is this a reason to start cooperation with a city? I don’t think so. …There is a fundamental gap in the objectives in that relation. The Turks want to\[140\]

An example of learning on similar issues is when both partners learn about youth participation during the same exchange project. An example of learning about complementary issues is when one municipality learns about waste management while another municipality learns about human resource management within the same exchange project.
see money, and, when there is no money, to obtain direct knowledge. ...The Dutch side has inadequately elaborated ideas why they would like to work in Turkey. That is my experience. That is the general pattern.

As demonstrated earlier in the thesis (section 5.2.1), the availability of funds for projects on strengthening local governance in partner municipalities contributed to creating a dominant focus on fostering learning by municipalities in Turkey and Morocco. The way in which cooperation was embedded within Dutch municipalities, along with their limited capacity for international cooperation, also contributed to this orientation. The programmes themselves generally did not provide much space for learning by Dutch municipalities, as mentioned by the native Dutch consultant living in Turkey:

It [the cooperation between Dutch and Turkish municipalities] is not equal at all. Dutch policy on the accession of Turkey in the EU is completely ‘one-way traffic’. So, also support programmes are written in a one-sided manner. Turkey has to learn. ...Why shouldn’t we learn from Turkey? There is no such objective.

8.2.2. Objectives and mutuality at the project level

Cooperation focused on strengthening local governance in Morocco and Turkey

In projects primarily focusing on strengthening local government bodies in Morocco and Turkey, learning by local government bodies in the Netherlands was not clearly formulated as an objective. The absence of an official objective does not mean that mutual learning did not occur, as demonstrated in the previous chapter. Despite the focus on migrant source countries, altruism was still an important motivation for professionals to be engaged in international exchanges. Several respondents from fire departments (Amsterdam) and public-private companies working on waste management (Zeist and Haarlem) mentioned that altruism (the desire to help peer municipalities) was actually the main motivation for being engaged in international exchanges, and they indicated that they had no clear learning objectives themselves. Solidarity was not so much connected to cooperation with migrant source countries; it was tied more closely to the professional identity, i.e. being a firefighter or an expert on waste management. Professional similarities were both a motivation for engaging in international cooperation as well as a good basis for knowledge exchange (even though it did not necessarily lead to learning by both sides). A Dutch firefighter commented on the strong solidarity among peers, regardless of country of origin, and the motivation for engaging in international cooperation:

The primary reaction was, ‘there is misery in the world and we can do something.’ So we want to assist, whether it would be Burma or Turkey or ‘God knows where’. Second, when it became a real project, I feel there are always two objectives: first of all, it is just nice to do, and second, it is also solidarity among firefighters. A fire brigade always has the same kind of atmosphere...the same kind of organization, everywhere in the world. This creates strong solidarity among firefighters.
Several officers from Dutch local governments also felt it was justified to orient cooperation programmes more towards transferring knowledge from the Netherlands to Morocco or Turkey, instead of pursuing an equal exchange of knowledge. A policy officer from the Municipality of Amsterdam referred to the Netherlands’s receiving millions of dollars support after the Second World War, and the Dutch local government’s participation in other exchanges, where they learned from policy practices across the globe: ‘Morocco is in the process of democratization and wants to go forward together with other countries. Everybody wants to go forward. Then you start looking at your neighbours [for help].’

The participating non-governmental and private sector actors had their own objectives for engaging in international exchange programmes. Two waste management companies, Spaarnelanden from Haarlem and Afvalzorg from Assendelft (the later took part in the cooperation between Zeist and Berkane), were keen to share their accumulated knowledge, and indicated that they did not learn new lessons from their counterparts. Their motivation for participating in the cooperation came from their corporate social responsibility policy. According to the director of the waste management company from Haarlem, the Municipality of Haarlem is their biggest customer and only shareholder; thus, the municipality was interested to support them in the cooperation with its partner municipality Emirdag. Cooperation with a migrant source country had an additional advantage: ‘we have Turkish employees ourselves who originate from Emirdag, and our company feels that social responsibility is important. I feel you have to try to transfer your knowledge.’ Non-governmental actors had different objectives. For schools and women’s organizations strengthening social cohesion was more central, while youth organizations placed more value on combating prejudices.

As mentioned in chapter 6, although the programmes focusing on strengthening local governance in Morocco and Turkey were mainly characterized by knowledge transfer from the Netherlands to Morocco and Turkey, Dutch municipalities mentioned that exposure to another national context also provided valuable reflection on their daily work practices in the Netherlands. For example, they realized that their own work processes were dominated by preset rules and regulation, leaving little space for creativity and flexibility (Van Ewijk 2012). Thus, also within the projects that focused on strengthening local governance in Morocco and Turkey mutual learning did occur.

Economic development

Stimulating economic development can be an additional objective for cooperation right from the start of the municipal partnership, but it can also develop in the course of the exchange. In most case studies economic development was not an important objective. However, it became increasingly more important in the general international cooperation policies as the research period progressed. This applies especially for the municipalities of Rotterdam and Amsterdam. As described in chapter 5, the Municipality of Rotterdam has refocused its international relations primarily on economic
development, whereby cultural exchange is linked to economic motives. Especially the exchanges with Istanbul and BRIC countries were strengthened, while some trade delegations have also found their way to Casablanca. The Amsterdam-Casablanca partnership has also included the participation of private organizations. Amsterdam companies assisted in the construction of a new football stadium and the renovation of a theatre. In the exchange between Amsterdam and Kocaeli, economic opportunities were explored during the visits of the deputy mayor of Kocaeli to Amsterdam in 2011 and the visit of the mayor of Amsterdam to Kocaeli. However this did not clearly result in clear economic cooperation or investments. In the partnerships Haarlem-Emirdag, Zeist-Berkane and Meppel-Al Hoceima economic motives were hardly relevant during the research period. The new mayor of Emirdag (elected in 2009) was keen to explore economic opportunities, but this was not an important issue for the Municipality of Haarlem. Zeist and Berkane have worked together to establish a women’s business centre in Berkane, in order to strengthen their economic position in the community.

Cooperation with a transnational dimension
Only the cooperation between the police departments of Rotterdam and Casablanca had a clear transnational linkage, although this was not a direct translocal link. Nevertheless, the Rotterdam-Rijnmond police department indicated that one of the objectives in its cooperation with Casablanca was learning on combating terrorism, a global challenge that transcends state boundaries. A police officer from the police department of Casablanca mentioned that they were most interested in programmes in which both sides could learn, for example, crisis management and analysis of criminal activities. Interestingly, they did not perceive the interface between police and civil society—a subject seen by the Rotterdam police department as having strong potential for mutual exchanges—as an interesting subject because, in their view, the youth in Rotterdam had nothing in common with the youth in Casablanca, and they argued that the police of Casablanca already has close linkages with citizens.

Cooperation focused on strengthening social cohesion in the Netherlands
In projects related to strengthening social cohesion in the Netherlands, learning by the Dutch actors was central. The international engagement was used to explore possibilities for learning, and the participating officials hoped or expected that the exchange would increase their understanding of the position of migrants in their municipality. As described before, learning objectives were usually not clearly formulated. The following statement by a manager working at the Municipality of Meppel is illustrative: ‘It is important to professionalize issues, to do more policy-oriented work within our international cooperation. Up to now we have not been successful, but I would still like to define our objective more clearly.’

141 The majority of migrants of Moroccan descent living in Rotterdam have their origins in the northern part of Morocco, not in Casablanca.
In some municipal partnerships, Moroccan representatives of local governments and non-governmental organizations (Berkane and Al Hoceima) felt committed to strengthening the position of the diaspora, as will be discussed in the next section.

8.3. **Analysing mutuality, knowledge exchange and the dynamics of learning**

In the second part of chapter 2, I discussed the relevant literature on mutuality in partnerships and mutual learning. I described the two building blocks for learning, identified by Johnson and Wilson (2009b). The first is having sufficient professional similarities between partners, in order to establish a basis of genuine dialogue and trust. The second is the existence of sufficient difference between the two partners, in order to have something to share. They also made an important distinction between two types of mutuality. The first type is related to complementary inputs and equal partnership conditions, i.e. viewing mutuality as an ‘espoused value’. The second type is related to the benefits of the partnership, i.e. viewing mutuality as a ‘grounded incentive’. These forms of mutuality are interrelated. When partners bring complementary resources that are relevant for the partnership, it increases the potential for mutual learning. Furthermore, chapter 2 described that mutual learning requires genuine interest in the partner municipality and an openness to learn on both sides of the partnership (Robinson et al. 2000). Also, various partnership conditions—like 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). It was argued that city-to-city cooperation has the potential to provide a more or less equal exchange, in which mutual trust has a central position (due to the peer-to-peer approach and longstanding relations) (Brinkerhoff 2002a, 2002b; Van Ewijk and Baud 2009). These partnership conditions were analysed in chapter 6.

Based on the literature described above, the following dimensions—which are expected to play a key role in affecting mutual learning in city-to-city partnerships between migrant source and destination countries—were identified: (1) similarity between professionals, necessary for establishing dialogue and trust; (2) differences between partners (something new to learn) as well as recognition and appreciation of differences; (3) complementary resources brought in by the participating partners; (4) process-based building of trust through continuous collaboration; (5) power and equality (Van Ewijk 2012). This chapter analyses mutual learning in Dutch-Moroccan and Dutch-Turkish municipal partnerships based on these five dimensions. In addition to the five dimensions based on the literature, I would like to add the ‘existence of translocal linkages’ as a dimension that is particularly relevant for cooperation between migrant source and destination countries.
8.3.1. Similarity between professionals
The previous chapter described that similarities between professionals were important in facilitating knowledge exchange and learning, and the previous section also referred to similarities as an important motivation for international engagement (like the firefighters assisting their peers in other countries). This process of knowledge exchange could be predominately one way (knowledge transferred from one actor to another), but it could also be mutual, whereby both involved partners learn from each other. Similarity between professionals proved to be important for mutual learning because the involved partners had a good understanding of each other’s work. An example of learning connected to similar topics was the exchange between women’s organizations from Meppel and Al Hoceima, which involved exchanges of knowledge regarding training approaches. The obtained knowledge was useful both in Meppel and in Al Hoceima. An example of learning regarding different issues was the exchange between the fire departments of Amsterdam and Kocaeli, in which firefighters in Kocaeli mainly learned about hazardous material management, while Dutch professionals learned by reflecting on their own organizational practice and the use of procedures in the Dutch municipality. For both types of mutual learning, professional similarities provided opportunities for mutual learning. As described in chapter 7, learning between peers was not always facilitated, and some opportunities for mutual learning were not utilized.

8.3.2. Differences between partners and the recognition and appreciation of difference
Johnson and Wilson (2009b) argued that differences between partners are the main source of learning. As described in the previous chapter, differences did indeed trigger various forms of learning in all involved parties. Some Dutch municipalities, however, felt that the different context in Morocco and Turkey also limited possibilities for mutual learning. The appreciation of differences to learn from was an important facilitating factor for learning to take place. Whether the participating individuals valued these differences as a source for learning varied greatly. A policy officer working at the international desk of the Municipality of Amsterdam indicated that municipal officers were not very interested to visit their partner municipality Kocaeli, as they were sceptical about what they could learn from the exchange. On the other hand, they were very keen to visit the partner municipality Seoul (South Korea), a large and modern metropolis. Whereas some individuals expressed that they did not learn much, others felt that they could identify various possibilities for learning. The former head of the housing department of Amsterdam explained:

One of those guys [a partner in Kocaeli] said, ‘Do you feel we are way behind as everything [in the Netherlands] is very formalized in procedures and books?’ I said, ‘well I learn here every day.’ He asked, ‘What?’ I said, ‘I learned here to improvise and about what really matters and what does not. We have put
everything in procedure books and we think we can control things, but what if the procedure book cannot be found, what will happen in that case?

Generally there was some tension in the interest of Dutch municipalities to, on the one hand, cooperate with partners in areas which were relatively economically well developed and with more (perceived) similarities and, on the other hand, the focus to cooperate with partners that are less developed and arguably in more need for new knowledge and/or other forms of assistance. For example, the most popular Turkish partner municipalities were located in the western part of Turkey, where the level of development is generally higher and there were less perceived difference than in the eastern part of Turkey.

Several respondents indicated that the agenda for work visits were also set up in such a way that knowledge transfer from the Netherlands to Morocco and Turkey was central. There was no space in the programme for exploring mutual learning possibilities. The director of an NGO in Al Hoceima also indicated that their Dutch counterparts were usually very focused on ‘assisting’ partners in Morocco, and thus not very open to what the Moroccan partners could offer.

8.3.3. Complementary resources: mutuality as ‘espoused value’

The complementary resources contributed by the participating partners were identified by Johnson and Wilson (2009) as ‘espoused value’ mutuality. As described in the previous chapter, there was a large disparity in the contribution of financial resources: generally the Dutch local governments had more funds at their disposal, a small municipal budget line for international exchange and additional funds from Dutch support programmes. Both in Morocco and Turkey, budget allocations are centralized, and most local governments do not possess independent financial resources for international cooperation. Non-financial resources were brought in by Moroccan and Turkish counterparts, such as voluntary work hours, contributions in kind and small donations by non-governmental actors. Generally, representatives from Dutch municipalities had a good understanding of these differences, especially as the bulk of the exchange expenses were covered by support programmes. Some policy advisors (from Meppel and Zeist) felt that the limited financial contribution by their partner municipality did have a negative impact on the partnership. For example, they felt uncomfortable covering project costs both when visiting and when hosting their partner municipality. In the words of a policy advisor from the Municipality of Meppel, ‘I felt it was a little cold [in Al Hoceima], while we offered them a warm bad. I feel that city links should be based on the principle of equality.’

Equality in the process of knowledge exchange and learning was also seen as having an important impact on partnership processes. According to the international

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142 Some expenses were covered by the coordinator of international cooperation and the mayor, using their own private funds (interview coordinator international cooperation Berkane).
coordinator of the police department of Rotterdam, it was important to try to achieve reciprocity within the partnership, because it is related to dignity, respect as well as pride, and influences the exchange processes between the partners. The former coordinator of international affairs in the Municipality of Rotterdam said, ‘It is a more mature relationship to explore what you [the counterpart] what gain and how I also can benefit. This way it is also more sustainable.’

A one-sided focus on learning by Dutch actors only also occurred, particularly in the exchange between actors in the Netherlands as well as other Western European countries and the north of Morocco, a major migrant source region. This region receives many delegations from Western Europe, consisting of people working on issues related to social cohesion and the integration of migrants and who want to know more about this region, in order to increase their understanding of the migrants’s background. Several respondents, mainly Dutch respondents of migrant origin involved in the municipal partnerships and Dutch respondents living in Morocco, expressed that people in the north of Morocco spend a lot of time on accommodating and assisting all the visits from abroad (including the visits by Dutch municipalities), even though there were no clear benefits for their own local community. These visits were generally exploratory and not backed up by support programmes. The visitors were warmly welcomed and day-to-day programmes were set up, which took a lot of time from the daily work schedule of professionals from governmental and non-governmental organizations in Morocco. Several respondents (migrants involved in municipal partnerships, the director of the Morocco Institute in the Netherlands as well as Dutch consultants living in Morocco) shared that the people in the north of Morocco were getting somewhat tired of the many delegations. The visits raised expectations, in most cases without adequate follow-up: many visitors mentioned they wanted to start an exchange programme without adequate project development or budget planning prior to the visit. The director of an NGO in Berkane (Morocco) shared his frustration:

Most of the time they [representatives from the Municipality of Zeist] insisted on the fact that they have a very important Moroccan community in Zeist, and then they started talking about the problems coming from this Moroccan community. This is a little bit selfish. It’s like the problem is inside Zeist, and they think of Berkane as a remedy for these problems. This is kind of subjective. You are thinking more about your problem than about the cooperation.

8.3.4. Process-based building of trust through continuous collaboration
The possibility of building up trust to facilitate the process of knowledge exchange is acknowledged as one of the strengths of city-to-city cooperation in the literature. Municipalities are usually cooperating for a longer period of time, gradually building trust and also friendship. At the time of research most municipal partnerships had been active for five years or more. Regular contact was considered important for nurturing trust. Partners had to get to know each other and learn about each other’s expectations. A policy officer from the municipality of Amsterdam commented, ‘You have to invest a
lot in the contacts and gain mutual trust...the investment has to be large before being able to benefit through the exchange. So, it is very good to invest in one area instead of hopping from area to area and from project to project.’ An assistant professor at the Kocatepe University Afyon (Turkey) also emphasized the value of long-term engagement:

The sharing among us was beyond the limits of the project. Every team met the members of the other team so we were like a big family. We trusted each other, and we were dealing with problems together, trying to find a joint solution. Two different countries, cultures and languages...sometimes we had difficulties in the communication. Sometimes we were unable to express ourselves precisely and we were sometimes misunderstood because of language limitations. However, as the time went by, we have gotten to know each other better, and thus we saw each other’s aims and desires more clearly. Therefore, we increasingly trusted each other more, which was crucial for the success of the project.

The extent of trust and friendship also had an impact on efficiency. Several respondents mentioned that they enjoyed working together with their partners abroad, which was also reflected in the extra voluntary hours professionals from Moroccan, Turkish and Dutch municipalities were prepared to invest. A policy officer from the Municipality of Haarlem commented:

You have to enjoy the work. This, I think, is the essence of these kinds of projects. If it is not nice to do, it would be just ‘a paid job’, and in that case the effect will be different. The added value is that you do something completely different next to your daily work, which is refreshing, and you work with very different cultures, which is just very nice to do. ...In fact it is more like a group of friends than business...this is the essence...otherwise you wouldn’t spent your evening hours on the cooperation.

The Dutch-Moroccan and Dutch-Turkish municipal partnerships had an additional asset: the translocal linkages that exist between the two countries through the migrant communities (see also the next section). This asset had a positive impact on the process of building trust, particularly in the partnerships based on a direct translocal linkage. In the exchange between Meppel and Al Hoceima, the presence of the Moroccan delegation was helpful in the discussion of issues related to the integration of Moroccan migrants. For instance, a meeting was organized in the Mosque of Meppel where the mayors of Meppel and Al Hoceima, along with other representatives from Al Hoceima, met and exchanged views with citizens of Moroccan descent. The former mayor of Al Hoceima indicated that the exchange between representatives of Moroccan municipalities and Dutch municipalities helped open up discussion spaces. During a meeting with the Moroccan delegation, migrants were speaking honestly and openly about the problems they face in the Netherlands. As mentioned in the previous chapter this was also observed in the exchange between women from Al Hoceima and Meppel on youth drug
abuse in Meppel. Also the Dutch delegations helped bring sensitive subject into the open, like the issue of youth participation in Berkane.

Whereas peer-to-peer learning related to the strengthening of local governance in Morocco and Turkey was extensive and trust could be built up with frequent contacts, limited use was made of one-to-one contacts and the building up of trust in the exchange related to strengthening social cohesion in the Netherlands. Visits of Dutch officials who deal with social affairs to Morocco and Turkey were often exploratory and did not have substantial follow-up.

Despite the generally favourable partnership conditions, confusion or disruptions in communication did occur frequently, especially in the Dutch-Moroccan partnerships. Cultural differences and the associated diverse expectations of the involved partners were mentioned as important aspects that influenced the process of knowledge exchange and learning. The former ambassador of Turkey mentioned that the Dutch are often not aware of their cultural characteristics—being extremely direct, not diplomatic and often blunt in their communication. The former Dutch consul general in Casablanca and South Morocco (now retired, but still living in the country) described this cultural difference: 'The Dutch say what they think and do what they say'. He added that Moroccans are generally friendly and dislike conflicts, which sometimes leads to postponing solutions. He observed that such cultural differences sometimes led to disappointments by Dutch cooperation partners. However, nurturing personal contacts and patience often results in acceptable solutions for both partners. Dutch respondents often referred to the frustration of not receiving replies to their proposal inquiries, especially outside of face-to-face exchanges, which discouraged them from taking further actions. They strongly felt that mutual engagement was necessary for projects to succeed. In Berkane relations were really put to the test because of different expectations towards a project to stimulate exchange between Dutch and Moroccan youth. The project involved the joint construction of a communal garden at the local hospital. The partners from Berkane were expected to prepare the site before a Dutch group of students would arrive to build the garden together with a group of youth from Berkane. While Zeist coordinated the project activities from the Netherlands, Berkane was preoccupied with other priorities (especially because of local elections). As a result the preparations in Morocco were completed at a very late stage in the project, which created a lot of frustration on the Dutch side. In the cooperation between Dutch and Turkish municipalities such cultural differences played a less dominant role.

Interestingly the aspect of cultural differences was hardly mentioned by Moroccan and Turkish respondents in their response to questions regarding the partnership’s characteristics and processes. Although respondents might not have

143 He indicated that recently cultural differences appear to play a decreasing role, especially in economic exchanges. Morocco is modernizing and members of the younger generation, especially business people, increasingly speak English and are learning to better deal with the direct approach of the Dutch.

144 As was discussed in section 6.2.1 several professionals, particularly in Morocco, had no direct access to computer and/or internet facilities.
wanted to criticize their partners directly, their positive attitude is likely to be also related to their familiarity with ‘dealing with the Dutch’,¹⁴⁵ and to the emergence of good relationships over time. This was confirmed in my own observations during direct exchanges and by the interviews. Exchanges took place in a good atmosphere, in which the involved actors felt free to express their own views. The coordinator of international affairs from Berkane, for example, described the cooperation with the Dutch as pleasant and open, and felt that language barriers could easily be overcome. He compared his experience of ‘dealing with the Dutch’ with his experiences with French counterparts, which was more difficult due to the legacy of the colonial past.

8.3.5. **Power and equality**

Power differences between Dutch, Moroccan and Turkish actors did not play an important role in the exchange processes. Generally speaking, there was an open exchange in which the partners felt free to express their views. Especially in exchanges between peer groups, equality was highly valued as a good base for mutual learning. In the exchange between the youth of Zeist and Berkane, for example, the Dutch youth had very positive experiences: ‘we were just there talking and exchanging’, and ‘the school was very similar to a school in the Netherlands’. Most respondents in Morocco and Turkey emphasized that there was an equal exchange. In the words of the director of the organization dealing with waste management in Al Hoceima, ‘Our relationship is not based on a rich country and a poor country [view]. It is not about that at all. It is more about exchanging.’ Although working on an equal basis was highly valued by all, in practice it sometimes proved difficult to achieve truly equal and mutual partnerships. Several respondents from Dutch municipalities (the Police Department Rotterdam-Rijnmond and the Municipality of Zeist) indicated that, at the time of research, the relationship was largely based on transferring knowledge to their partners, while they hoped to benefit from the relationship later on. So, they anticipated mutuality within the relationship to develop in the long run. Only a few respondents referred to power differences as an important element determining the extent of the mutual exchange. One of them was the director of an NGO in Berkane:

> We are dealing with two different communities. We are dealing with a community that has a long history in democracy, in financial independence, in relations with the population. And we, as another community, just started the democracy process, and it’s going to take a long time to come to its mature phase. …Seventy percent of the decision-making comes from Zeist, because it is in a very powerful position, and the Municipality of Berkane sometimes just follows, because they think more about the financial support.

¹⁴⁵ *Dealing with the Dutch* by Jacob Vossenstein (1997) is a popular book on the cultural characteristics of the Dutch people.
The coordinator of international affairs from Berkane was indignant when a councillor and a municipal officer from the Municipality of Zeist were against a follow-up of the exchange programme between the youth from Zeist and Berkane. The representatives of Zeist felt that the costs were relatively high for programme benefits that were very difficult to demonstrate. The municipal officer from Berkane was in favour of conducting an exchange programme on a yearly basis. He indicated that the people of Berkane took good care of the Dutch youth and that the youth had a fruitful collaboration. He added that also Berkane had provided financial support, not just Zeist.

In one case the Dutch experts involved showed a more or less ‘paternalistic’ attitude. However, in the observed case there was an open and lively exchange of views, and the Turkish counterparts felt free to express their own views. Some Moroccan and Turkish respondents felt that the Dutch counterparts underestimated their existing capacity. A municipal officer from Berkane, who had been working for 22 years on environmental and health issues, believed that Europeans often saw their partners in the South as having very limited knowledge. This sentiment was shared by an environmental engineer from Afyon Province: ‘I really wonder how they see us. ...Do they think that we are ignorant or uninformed about the environment?’ On the other hand, the type of terminology used by some local participants indicated that they felt unequal. For example, regarding the topic of waste management in Emirdag (Turkey) a policy officer shared, ‘we are babies’; and in Berkane (Morocco) a policy officer commented, ‘we are 40 or 50 years behind Europe’.

In Table 8.1 the key dimensions in mutual learning are presented. In the analysis of the interviews, the five dimensions for mutual learning based on the literature were used as a guide.
Table 8.1 Analysis of mutual learning in Dutch-Moroccan and Dutch-Turkish municipal partnerships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mutual learning dimensions</th>
<th>Importance of dimensions in achieving mutual learning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Professional similarities</strong>&lt;br&gt;(dialogue and trust)</td>
<td>• <strong>Strong</strong>: subjects of fire safety and waste management&lt;br&gt;• <strong>Limited</strong>: few direct peer-to-peer contacts for focused learning on local governance in the Netherlands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Differences and Recognition and appreciation of difference</strong></td>
<td>• <strong>Strong</strong>: difference is an important source for learning for all actors on both sides. This applies for technical issues, processes and learning regarding cultural issues and diversity.&lt;br&gt;• <strong>Limited</strong>: in some cases there were too many perceived differences for adequate learning. This applies particularly for learning by Dutch local governments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Complementary resources</strong></td>
<td>• Support programmes provided funds&lt;br&gt;• <strong>Limited</strong>: financial resources brought in by Moroccan and Turkish municipalities but complementary resources in kind were provided (hospitality, time)&lt;br&gt;• <strong>Limited</strong>: budget and capacity by Dutch municipalities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Process-based trust</strong>&lt;br&gt;(long-term collaboration)</td>
<td>• <strong>Strong</strong>: particularly for exchanges focusing on strengthening governance processes in Morocco and Turkey&lt;br&gt;• <strong>Moderate</strong>: for projects established relatively recently&lt;br&gt;• <strong>Limited</strong>: for exchanges focusing on strengthening governance in the Netherlands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Power and equality</strong></td>
<td>• <strong>Limited</strong>: Generally open and ‘equal’ relations despite differences in resource contributions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Translocality</strong></td>
<td>Translocal linkages were important for broadening the scope of the exchanges. Translocal linkages provided more opportunities for mutual learning.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8.4. **Mutuality in relation to translocality**

As described in the first paragraph of this chapter, the existence of translocal linkages was identified as an important additional dimension for mutual learning in Dutch-Moroccan and Dutch-Turkish municipal partnerships. These translocal linkages will be explored in this section.

8.4.1. **Commitment from both sides to address social cohesion**

At the beginning of this chapter, I argued that learning on diversity was particularly relevant for the Dutch actors involved. Moroccan and Turkish municipalities did not learn much from these exchanges, but it must be mentioned that respondents in Berkane and Al Hoceima (former and current mayors, policy advisors, representative of women’s organizations and others) did feel committed to contributing to the integration of the Moroccan communities living in their partner municipalities. The former mayor of Al Hoceima felt that Morocco had a role to fulfil, and, using the metaphor of a family after a divorce, he described Morocco and the Netherlands as the parents, and the migrant
community as the children trapped between two parents (in this case cultures): ‘It was obvious that these people did not have a good relationship with their father or their mother. ...It’s not their fault; it is the parents.’

Transnational linkages were important for the extent of involvement. Whereas the commitment and willingness to assist Dutch partner municipalities on issues related to the integration of migrants was relatively high in the municipal partnerships Zeist-Berkane and Meppel–Al Hoceima, the international coordinator from the police department of Casablanca mentioned that, while they were willing to assist the Rotterdam police, they felt that the youth in Casablanca ‘had nothing to do’ with the youth in Rotterdam. In the Haarlem-Emirdag partnership, which has a clear translocal linkage, various exchanges related to the position of migrants in Haarlem were being explored, with the Emirdag Foundation (based in Haarlem) and the NGO TEMA (based in Emirdag) playing important roles. However, these explorations were not followed up and also were not backed up at the local government level. Exchanges on social cohesion and integration did not occur because the partnership was mainly centred on waste management. In the exchanges between the youth of several Dutch and Moroccan municipalities, combating prejudices and discussing the reality of life in Europe were mentioned as underlying project objectives. Although it was confirmed by the youth that a vivid exchange about life in Europe and Morocco occurred, no conclusion can be drawn about the wider impact of these exchanges.¹⁴⁶

8.4.2. **Co-development: connecting international cooperation and integration**

In the case studies, the number of migrants involved in the municipal partnerships was limited, and migrants who were involved as facilitators or interpreters usually fulfilled a key role within the municipality. Despite some positive examples, limited use was made of the potential to actively engage a larger group of migrants in the municipal partnerships. Some Dutch municipalities not included as case studies developed policies based on their support for civil society initiatives. Prominent examples include the municipalities of The Hague and Nijmegen, while the Municipality of Breda had such policies in place only for two years. Also the Municipality of Rotterdam has supported civil society initiatives by the migrant community in the past. These initiatives usually are small-scale private initiatives, with the characteristics of ‘co-development initiatives’ (at the nexus between development actions in both migrant source and migrant destination countries). Authors like Portes argued that being engaged internationally usually stimulates integration in host societies, instead of impacting integration negatively. There are some indications that the involvement of migrants in the

¹⁴⁶ There were some examples of clear impacts on a personal level. At a conference in Morocco, I met a young Moroccan man who had been planning to immigrate to Europe but decided to start a small business in his hometown instead. He mentioned that the inspiration for this change came through the contacts he had with youth from the Netherlands in the scope of the municipal exchanges. According to the former coordinator of the Municipality of Zeist and a youth worker in Utrecht, the exchange also had a clear positive effect on two Dutch young people of Moroccan descent, who were motivated to put their lives back on track in the Netherlands after they participated in the exchange programme.
international exchange programmes at local government level did indeed increase their involvement in their Dutch municipalities of residence. An NGO activist from Rotterdam described the contacts that people had to make in their own municipality, in order to implement projects in their country of origin:

If you want to realize something in Morocco you are working very hard here. In case they want to do something with a hospital, I say, ‘search for a hospital in Rotterdam that is interested in cooperating with you’. In the case of collections [of money] I say, ‘go talk with the school of your son or daughter, maybe they are willing to assist, or do something in your neighbourhood’. People are working hard here to realize projects in Morocco...that is the reason I feel that integration and international development just strengthen each other. People are very proud and happy when it [the project in Morocco] is realized. It really moves people and that way they also feel more confident here.

A citizen of Moroccan origin, who was a key resource person in the Zeist-Berkane partnership, mentioned that through his involvement in the municipal partnership he started to think about what he could change in Zeist and started to organize cultural activities to stimulate the emancipation of the Moroccan migrant community. Respondents from several municipalities with support programmes to stimulate and facilitate initiatives from migrants (Nijmegen, Breda, The Hague and Rotterdam) referred to the importance of guiding and assisting these initiatives. In many cases the small voluntary initiatives needed support to set up good projects (e.g., formulating objectives, searching for local partners, assuring sustainability etc.) The municipalities played an important role in supporting and facilitating migrant initiatives. As discussed in chapter 2, initiatives in which governmental and non-governmental actors were involved were also the most successful ones. Due to the budget cuts however, local governments are more and more reducing their contributions, which increases the burden on civil society actors. Cutbacks are not only seen in international relations, but also in other policy fields within the Netherlands. The policies on international cooperation fit the new role of local government, i.e. more limited engagement in civil society processes. Unfortunately, this shift also implies that one of the key strengths of city-to-city cooperation, the involvement of both governmental and non-governmental actors, is being utilized less and less.

8.5. Mutuality at different scale levels

8.5.1. Mutuality beyond the municipal partnerships: combating prejudice
International cooperation between the partner cities was related to a more abstract level, which can be described as ‘getting to know the other’ and combating prejudices. It appears that the municipalities had limited knowledge about each other’s context, and both partners stressed the importance of building bridges. This willingness is related to
both Turkey’s EU candidate country status, and the general political climate in the Netherlands, which shifted sharply to the right, becoming less tolerant towards people from different ethnic backgrounds (especially after some key recent events, like 9/11 and the murder of filmmaker Theo van Gogh).

Phrases widely used in Morocco and Turkey—like ‘two cultures, one hart’ (Emirdag) and ‘we are all brothers’ (Berkane)—were often used to illustrate the common spirit and friendship between the actors involved in the municipal partnerships. The Dutch, generally more straightforward and more sober in their language, did not use these kinds of phrases, but they did refer to the importance of ‘getting to know the other’ and combating prejudice by establishing contacts at the local level. Although it can be argued that combating prejudice is relevant in exchange programmes between all countries, it was particularly relevant in the exchange between the Netherlands (a migrant destination country) and Morocco and Turkey (major migrant source countries), due to the existence of translocal linkages and a large migrant community in the host country. Moreover, the debates on the position of migrants, and in particular the role of Islam in the Netherlands, have become quite harsh. Despite these caustic debates, which widen the gulf between Europe and countries like Morocco and Turkey, these countries are also considered the ‘new neighbours of Europe’ and seen as places of economic interest. Their political and economic importance makes building bridges a worthwhile effort.

8.5.2. Local and project level perspective
Specific exchange programmes, such as the cooperation on waste management, were also related to the wider objective of ‘getting to know the other’ by working together on concrete issues at local level. A policy advisor and coordinator at the Municipality of Haarlem shared his thoughts:

You have to start somewhere otherwise it will only be papers and intentions. You have to start working with each other and getting to know each other. ...The essence is the contact between the two municipalities, and we achieve this through the waste management problems. ...Other issues might follow. In the end, the benefit is that the differences between Turkey and Europe—and in this case especially the Netherlands—are experienced as less threatening.

The deputy mayor of Berkane and the mayor of Zeist agreed at a seminar held in Zeist (April 2011) that connections ultimately are about universal humanistic values, such as peace, love, happiness and equality. The director of a Moroccan environmental NGO described the importance of the connections quite poetically: ‘I cannot see who I am without knowing you.’ A policy officer from Meppel felt that, in the end, the added value of the exchange between women in Meppel and Al Hoceima was that women strengthened each other’s capacity to face life’s challenges, so that their ‘children can grow up in a liveable world’. Also a respondent working on health issues at the provincial level in Berkane emphasized that the hospital garden project was actually
about something much bigger, in this case combating prejudices and enlarging their worlds.

The director of the Netherlands-based Morocco institute pointed to the importance of exchanging at several levels, which directly impacts the socio-psychological framework and creates ‘breathing space’ in society: ‘If you cut the lines you can expect rigidity and provincialism.’ The mayor and policy advisors in Berkane indeed referred to Zeist as their ‘door’ and ‘ambassador’ to Europe. Respondents in Berkane also explained that the moral support they received from Zeist was important. This sentiment of ‘je suis avec vous’ (I am with you) was very valuable, according to the mayor of Berkane. Several respondents also mentioned that contacts with Western European counterparts were important for understanding the other’s ideas and ways of reasoning.

The motive of combating prejudices at the international, national and local level was often not formulated as an objective in project documents and was, therefore, not directly accessed. Nevertheless, it was an important underlying overall objective, not directly linked to specific exchange programmes. A Dutch consultant living in Turkey, who was involved in several exchanges between the Netherlands and Turkey, explained:

People return to the Netherlands with the idea: ‘much more is going on in Turkey than I anticipated, the country is more modern than I anticipated’. I feel that this is something very positive, as many people start to think differently about European cooperation. I know people who went there thinking negatively and returned thinking positively. More than the other way around. That is a side effect; it is not [written] in a programme for cooperation.

Nearly all of the respondents who visited Morocco or Turkey in the framework of the municipal partnerships confirmed that they had different ideas about Morocco or Turkey, and that they were positively surprised. In the words of a policy advisor from the Municipality of Zeist, ‘100 images are being replaced by 100 different ones’.

Youth exchanges
The exchange between the youth was particularly important for establishing contacts and exposing the participants to each other’s worlds. The predominant image of the Netherlands or Western Europe in the north of Morocco is often idealistic, while, on the other hand, the Dutch often have a negative image of Morocco. The interviewees felt that the programmes were important for overcoming stereotypes, described as ‘breaking down the walls between two worlds’. The contacts helped in creating a vision more attuned to reality on both sides. Respondents referring to this impact included young people, policy officers from local governments and employees of embassies, both in the Netherlands and Morocco. A teacher and president of an NGO in Zeist, who also had a central role in the exchanges, explained:

For the Moroccan students, before the project started, they had some stereotypical concepts. Dutch society was money, people were really rich...or
drugs, they all talked about coffee shops. Or when young Dutch Moroccan arrived here in fancy cars, that would convince young Moroccan to emigrate. ...They all see Dutch society as a bank...that can give money to anyone arriving there. But when they started meeting, things have really changed. Through the contacts they could really experience Dutch life. Not all that glitters is gold. And, also the human aspect as well. Not all Dutch people are against Moroccans, or against Arabs, or against Muslims.

This view was confirmed by youth from Zeist and Berkane, a second-generation migrant living in Zeist commented that most young people in Morocco thought that young people of Moroccan descent had an easy life in the Netherlands. She explained that young people are working very hard to study or to earn a living. She also talked about the dual position of most young people in the Netherlands and felt that this slightly changed the image Moroccan youth had about life in the Netherlands:

I was born and raised in the Netherlands and still they don’t see me as 100% Dutch. So I told them we really live in-between two worlds and that we do not really belong anywhere. And then they started to think: ‘yes, actually that is true.’

A youth member of a theatre group confirmed that Al Hoceima’s youth have been living with false stereotypes and unrealistic expectation of starting a new life in Europe. Also the Dutch youth had their misconceptions challenged and, by the end of the project, had experienced a change in their attitudes towards Morocco:

They had a totally different idea about Morocco. ...They thought that everyone was walking with headscarves and that everybody was old fashioned. And when they came there, they were really in shock. It was...even somewhat more modern than we are here in the Netherlands. ...When we went to that school, in the lunch break, everybody came together; it was just like a secondary school in the Netherlands. ...I thought that actually everybody should go there, not only where the tourists go, but also [to experience] ordinary life.

8.5.3. The perspective at the national and international levels
At the national government level, the importance of building bridges and creating connections between the Netherlands, on the one hand, and Morocco and Turkey, on the other hand, was also mentioned as essential for creating a better understanding and for increasing cooperation, including economic development. City-to-city partnerships were perceived as an important tool for strengthening these connections. The Dutch ambassador based in Rabat referred to the negative image of Moroccans in the Netherlands, which is to a large extent based on Dutch perceptions (amplified by extensive media coverage) of a relatively small group of young Dutch citizens of migrant origin. He expressed that the Dutch government was willing to broaden and deepen relations between Morocco and the Netherlands because of the large Moroccan community in the Netherlands. The Netherlands still has limited cooperation with
Morocco, especially compared to other European countries with large Moroccan migrant communities (e.g. France, Belgium and Spain). A representative from the Dutch embassy in Ankara, who also has extensive experience working in other parts of the world, said that the representatives of Dutch local governments made connections with their Turkish counterparts very easily. There was a lot of enthusiasm on both sides, which he felt was not very visible in contacts with other non-migrant source countries.

At a conference on municipal partnerships between Dutch municipalities and municipalities in migrant source countries (January 2009) the former Ambassador of Development Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs argued that building trust and dispelling misconceptions is very important, and should be regarded also as an economic investment. He referred to the guiding principles of the primarily Eastern Europe-focused MATRA programme: (1) building trust between citizens and administration, and (2) taking away the fear towards Eastern European countries and building bridges between Western and Eastern Europe (Van Ewijk 2009). It can be argued that one of the very first driving forces behind establishing city-to-city partnerships, namely strengthening linkages and peacebuilding processes in Europe after the Second World War, also plays a key part in the relationships between Dutch municipalities and municipalities in Morocco and Turkey. So, instead of identifying waves in time (see Hoetjes 2009), I would rather propose to focus our attention on the main motivations why actors chose to participate in C2C cooperation—which change in intensity and importance through time.

**8.6. Altered relations and more equality?**

In the past decade (and especially from 2008 onwards) two main developments have had an important impact on the resources provided by Dutch, Moroccan and Turkish municipalities. First of all, local governments faced important budget cuts due to the financial crisis in Western Europe. At the same time, important support programmes for international cooperation, which Dutch local governments could draw on (LOGO East and MATRA), came to an end. While Western Europe still is in the middle of an economic slowdown, Morocco—and especially Turkey—has experienced steady economic growth. These developments follow global trends, whereby traditional divisions between the ‘developed’ and ‘developing’ world are increasingly losing their meaning. These changes have a clear impact on the municipal partnerships between these countries.

First, the financial crisis in the Western world poses a threat to municipal international cooperation. Because Dutch local governments face important budget cuts, they are under pressure to reduce their budgetary allocations for international cooperation or end the partnerships altogether. Second, the combination of budget cuts

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147 Several additional support programmes for strengthening local governments in Morocco and Turkey were initiated, but these programmes were not open to bilateral municipal cooperation.
in the North and increased financial capacity in the South can actually increase opportunities for mutual exchanges, by narrowing the gap between partners. As described in chapter 6, according to a survey carried out in the spring of 2011, the budget cuts of 2010 and 2011 did indeed have an impact on Dutch-Moroccan and Dutch-Turkish partnerships. Generally, the extent of the exchanges between Dutch and Moroccan/Turkish municipalities was scaled down, and some of the respondents described the current the situation as placing the partnerships ‘on hold’. Noting this fact, it should be emphasized that all of the case study municipalities continued to cooperate with their partner municipalities because they saw great value in the mutual exchange. Opportunities for mutual exchange at project and partnership level seemed to have contributed to fostering public support and policy tools for these partnerships in the Netherlands.

From the analysis of the case studies, it can be concluded that the budgets of Amsterdam and Rotterdam for international cooperation decreased slightly, and both municipalities plan to focus more on economic development. Amsterdam and Rotterdam did continue their partnerships in Morocco and Turkey, but with some changes. The extent of the exchanges between the government bodies of Rotterdam and Casablanca decreased slightly, and focus moved more towards economic development. Cooperation between Amsterdam and Kocaeli continued, and new topics for exchanges were being explored, including city marketing and economic development. Zeist, Meppel and Haarlem maintained their limited budget of approximately EUR 4,000 per year for cooperation with their Moroccan/Turkish counterpart. Economic growth in Morocco and Turkey is yet to lead to a significant increase in their financial contribution at the local level, largely because the management of local budgets is highly centralized. In one case, however, the Turkish partner municipality did increase its financial contribution to the exchange. The Municipality of Kocaeli usually covers the cost of their flights to Amsterdam (the hosts provide the accommodation arrangements), and when Amsterdam staffers visit Kocaeli for exchange visits, the Municipality of Kocaeli covers all lodging and meal costs. This is an example of financial equality, albeit limited to only one case.

8.7. Conclusions

Chapter 8 focused on the question to what extent knowledge exchange in Dutch-Moroccan and Dutch-Turkish municipal partnerships lead to mutual learning at different scale levels. Although several forms of mutual learning occurred in the Dutch-Moroccan and Dutch-Turkish partnerships, the main focus was on strengthening local governance in Morocco and Turkey. The research illustrated the effectiveness of peer-to-peer learning models as there were professional similarities which facilitated mutual understanding and engagement. These findings also confirm earlier research in which the specific strengths of the peer-to-peer learning model in city-to-city cooperation were
described (Johnson and Wilson 2006, 2009; Bontenbal 2009a; Van Lindert 2009; Van Ewijk and Baud 2009).

In the Dutch-Moroccan and Dutch-Turkish municipal partnerships, the potential of mutual learning was only partly used as the strength of peer-to-peer learning was not fully exploited, this applied particularly to the exchange focusing on learning by the Dutch actors. The different contexts in the Netherlands, on the one hand, and Morocco and Turkey, on the other hand, were both an asset to learning (the participants were inspired by the different approaches and practices in the partner municipality) as well as a limitation to learning (as participating professionals did not find enough common ground for linking lessons to their own work practices). Some policymakers felt that it was easier to learn by cooperating with countries with more similarities. An important limitation to learning by Dutch practitioners was arguably also the lack of openness to draw lessons on practices in Morocco and Turkey. These obstacles are discussed by authors like McFarlane (2006) and Robinson et al. (2000). Still, in the Dutch-Moroccan and Dutch-Turkish municipal partnerships several forms of mutual learning were clearly visible.

Exchange programmes were mainly financed by Dutch municipalities and by Dutch support programmes. Moroccan and Turkish local governments had no—or a very limited—budget for international exchange programmes. However, they did appoint municipal officers to coordinate international exchange programmes, did facilitate the exchange programmes, and were generally very welcoming hosts. Other important complementary resources were also provided in kind by non-governmental actors. Despite these complementary resources, several projects were still characterized by donor-recipient dynamics, which limited mutual learning. Ultimately, the small municipal budget for international cooperation of Dutch local governments, combined with the heavy influence of support programmes, also limited the extent of learning by Dutch actors. These findings contribute to earlier research findings in which the impact of support programmes on the exchange between municipalities was described (Johnson and Wilson 2006).

It can be concluded that for several projects there was both an ‘equal’ exchange between peers, combined with a donor-recipient perspective. This was identified by Bontenbal (2009a) as the paradox of horizontal exchange between peer groups and the predominance of linear models of ‘aid’. The exchanges which were not supported by programmes had a more open learning perspective, however as discussed in chapter 6, in many of these exchanges mutual learning was constrained by a lack of structural support and clear objectives.

Process-based building of trust through continuous collaboration, a key characteristic of city-to-city cooperation, was important in the exchange programmes that focussed on strengthening local governance in Morocco and Turkey. However, this potential was not always used for learning by Dutch municipalities. In many cases visits to Morocco and Turkey were exploratory, and few long-lasting partnerships were
established. Power differences did not play an important role in the exchange processes: usually exchanges were very open and cordial, especially between peer groups.

In addition to the five dimensions, developed from the literature, the existence of translocal linkages played a key role in Dutch-Moroccan and Dutch-Turkish municipal partnerships. This was reflected in (1) the involvement of Moroccan municipalities in issues related to the integration of migrants in Dutch society; (2) co-development initiatives initiated by migrants; and (3) the perceived importance (at both project level and municipal partnership level) of ‘getting to know the other’, combating prejudice and building bridges. It can be argued that this is a form of nurturing global citizenship, which is particularly relevant for furthering the relationships at local level between the Netherlands and Morocco/Turkey, due to the large migrant communities that live in the Netherlands. This aspect appeared particularly relevant and was recognized as an important objective and outcome at various scale levels in the Netherlands, Morocco and Turkey. This form of learning should, therefore, be added to the various forms of learning identified in chapter 6. The dimensions playing a role in relation to mutual learning are captured in the adjusted conceptual framework in figure 8.1.

*professional similarities, recognition of differences, complementary resources, process based trust, power & equality,