Between local governments and communities

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

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9. Conclusions

9.1. Introduction

Local governments have been engaging in international networks and international cooperation for decades—in various ways and for various purposes. Bilateral municipal partnerships, or city-to-city (C2C) cooperation, is a specific form of governance networks or decentralized cooperation defined by Clarke (2009: 496) as the ‘construction and practice, by various groups and to various ends, of relatively formal relationships between two towns or cities usually located in different nation states’. Starting as a method to promote peacebuilding and reconciliation after the Second World War and followed by a focus on poverty alleviation, the main purpose of these partnerships since the 1990s has been the strengthening of local governance through a process of knowledge exchange and learning (Clarke 2009; Bontenbal 2009a; Hoetjes 2009). One of the key characteristics is the exchange between peers and the long-lasting nature of these partnerships, which helps build trust. Research has shown that municipal partnerships can indeed be an effective tool in strengthening local government bodies (Bontenbal 2009a, 2009b; Van Lindert 2009; Hewitt 1998, 2000; Johnson and Wilson 2006, 2009). Furthermore, it has been argued that C2C can also provide benefits in the North, especially for creating global citizenship (see Johnson and Wilson 2006). The research on C2C partnerships has, however, mainly focused on the strengthening of local governments in the Global South, which also is the main aim of most municipal partnerships. Only a few studies have focused on learning by municipalities in the Global North and on mutual learning processes.

This study focuses on mutual learning processes between local governments in migrant source and destination countries, specifically on Dutch-Moroccan and Dutch-Turkish municipal partnerships. These partnerships are of relatively recent origin, and most ties were established about a decade ago. The main motivation for local governments in the Global North to be engaged in these partnerships was the assumption that through cooperation with migrant source countries (1) the integration of migrants in host societies could be stimulated and (2) the connections between governmental and non-governmental actors would be strengthened (Van Ewijk 2007). For local governments in migrant source countries strengthening local governance in terms of service delivery and working in partnerships with non-governmental actors are usually the central goals.

Most municipalities have formulated international cooperation policies—either with or without the involvement of civil society actors (Bontenbal 2009a). The involvement of multiple actors is usually seen as one of the key strengths of municipal partnerships (Van Lindert 2009), because it makes it possible for exchanges to occur both vertically (between actors from different municipalities) and horizontally (between governmental and non-governmental actors within one municipality) (Devers-Kanoglu
International agencies have gradually recognized the role local governments can play in strengthening local governance processes, related to the changing role of local governments due to the worldwide decentralization and globalization processes (Bontenbal 2010).

The ongoing decentralization reforms have brought new powers and responsibilities to local governments, whereby governance processes are increasingly taking place through networks of multiple actors (Baud et al. 2011; Pierre 2000; Pierre and Peters 2000; Helmsing 2000). Decentralization processes are also said to bring local governments closer to the people (Blair 2000; Baud and De Wit 2008; Cornwall and Gaventa 2000). Mandates, roles and budgets of local governments are related to the type and extent of decentralization (ranging from deconcentration to devolution) (Work 2002: 6). While in Western countries the extent of decentralization is generally strong, in many countries in the Global South governance processes are still quite centralized.

Due to globalization processes and increased migration, local and national governments also face other challenges, which are more than before connected to developments abroad (Sassen 1998, 2001; Pries 2001; Smith 2001). One of these challenges is the increased ethnic and cultural diversity in migrant destination countries, as large parts of the population have their roots elsewhere. Good governance in a decentralized setting requires the strengthening of both local governments and civil society (Gaventa 2000). Local governments have an important role in establishing linkages with civil society, which requires profound knowledge regarding the various actors and the composition of civil society.

Municipal partnerships between migrant source and destination countries have two key characteristics that distinguish them from other municipal partnerships: (1) the connection between international policies and issues related to ethnic and cultural diversity; and (2) existing transnational ties between municipalities through the diasporas. Some of the municipal partnerships are based on ‘locally specific transnational ties’, which Nell (2007: 202) defined as ‘active formal and informal ties between individual, collective and governmental actors between emigrants and non-migrants originating from the same region’. The existence of transnational and translocal ties implies that there also is a potential to engage other institutions in twinning relations, like migrant organizations or national government departments that deal with social cohesion.

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. The research also aims to contribute new insight into transnational local connections, which have been understudied.
The central research question was formulated as follows:

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?

In order to answer the central research question four separate research questions were formulated, focusing on (1) the influence of national and local policies and transnational linkages on the actors involved and the themes addressed in municipal partnerships; (2) methods and types of knowledge exchanged and the types of learning taking place; (3) the extent of strengthening local governments, civil society actors, local government–civil society interfaces and broader governance networks; and (4) the extent of mutual learning in Dutch-Moroccan and Dutch-Turkish municipal partnerships.

9.2. National policies, local policies and transnational relations

Municipal partnerships are influenced by numerous external and internal factors. Based on the literature and the initial inventory review (Van Ewijk 2007), three key factors were identified which are important in relation to the types of actors involved in the Dutch-Moroccan and Dutch-Turkish municipal partnerships: (1) national policies, especially the use of national support programmes; (2) international cooperation policies of Dutch local governments, especially for the involvement of non-governmental actors; and (3) the existence of direct translocal linkages. The research question focusing on policies at different scale levels was formulated as follows:

How do national and local policies and translocal linkages influence the governmental and non-governmental actors involved as well as the themes and activities in the Dutch-Moroccan and Dutch-Turkish municipal partnerships?

In order to answer the research question knowledge of the particular context in the three countries is required. Morocco, Turkey and the Netherlands have a different constitutional set-up and their governance systems have evolved along different paths, which has an important impact on decentralization processes and the roles of local governments. Both Morocco and Turkey are currently undergoing a decentralization process, but the principal functions of government are still quite centralized, and the competencies of local governments are rather limited (Wunsch 2001; Jari 2010; Sozen and Shaw 2002; Ertugal 2010). Morocco's decentralization reform can be defined as 'deconcentration' (Jari 2010). Moroccan local governments exercise a number of legislative and administrative tasks, but the central government has the power to allocate the necessary budgetary resources available to the local level. In practice local governments have limited room to manoeuvre and are heavily dependent on the central government—especially the King. Turkey, on the other hand, is closer to a 'devolution'
process, whereby responsibilities, financial resources and decision-making power are being transferred to local governments (UCLG 2008). However, local governments are still strongly tied to upper government levels by municipal legislation (Göymen 2007). Compared to Morocco and Turkey, Dutch local governments have a large mandate and a relatively large budget. Recent budget cuts at the national level have also resulted in budget cuts at local level.

The challenge of working on linkages between the local government and non-governmental actors is important in all three countries for different reasons. In Morocco and Turkey local governments are increasingly cooperating more with non-governmental actors. Due to endogenous and external forces, civil society has become more active, lively and dynamic and the number of NGOs has increased. Morocco and Turkey are different in many respects, but they share a centrally focused governance approach, with the national government still in a dominant role. In the Netherlands there are more linkages, but local governments still face important challenges, including establishing better connections with migrant communities. Dealing with the ethnic and cultural diversity is considered to be among the main challenges for policymakers, at both national and local level (Haus and Heinelt 2005: 13-14; Penninx 2005).

While in all three counties local governments have the freedom to establish international relations, they are all limited by different constraints. Moroccan and Turkish municipalities are limited as they have virtually no discretionary budget lines for international exchanges. Dutch local governments can dedicate a small budget to international cooperation; however, they must justify these expenditures (and the perceived benefit) in a landscape of very fragile public and political support for C2C cooperation. Participating in international exchanges is a careful balancing act.

Support programmes have had an important influence for the establishment of municipal partnerships, due to the limited budgets of local government. The Netherlands is among the few Western European countries that support municipal linkages through nationally funded programmes, providing both knowledge and financial resources (Baud et al. 2010; Nitzsche et al. 2009; Devers-Kanoglu 2009). These support programmes were directed at strengthening local governance processes in Morocco and Turkey. For cooperation with Morocco, municipalities could draw on support programmes that focused on youth participation and waste management (MATRA). In the case of Turkey several of the cooperation themes from the LOGO East programme were central: fire safety, waste management, preservation of cultural landmarks and care for persons with disabilities.

Looking at the local level, Dutch local governments have formulated different international cooperation policies. These policies usually change through time and are not always very clear-cut. Some municipalities actively involved NGOs; others mainly focused on the exchanges between local government bodies; while a third group only focused on supporting civil society initiatives.148 This research focuses on five case

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148 As the focus of this research was on knowledge exchange between local governments and other actors within their constituencies, no case studies were included from the last group.
studies in the period 2007–2011, three Dutch-Moroccan municipal partnerships (Rotterdam-Casablanca, Zeist-Berkane and Meppel–Al Hoceima) and two Dutch-Turkish municipal partnerships (Amsterdam-Kocaeli and Haarlem-Emirdag). Non-governmental actors (private companies, schools as well as women’s, youth and migrant organizations) were involved in the partnerships Haarlem-Emirdag, Zeist-Berkane and Meppel–Al Hoceima. In the partnerships between Amsterdam-Kocaeli and Rotterdam-Casablanca fostering exchange between local government bodies was a central policy focus. The specific policies altered during the research period according to municipal and national priorities. In the Amsterdam-Kocaeli and Rotterdam-Casablanca partnerships non-governmental actors were involved in the past. In the last years (2012 and 2013) economic development has gradually gained a more prominent position, especially in the Rotterdam-Casablanca partnership. There were no important differences between the Dutch-Moroccan and Dutch-Turkish partnerships regarding the types of actors involved. The differences were more linked to the themes dictated by the support programmes (e.g. social issues or service delivery).

The existence of translocal linkages proved to be important in relation to the types of actors involved. First, in the partnership based on a direct translocal link (Haarlem-Emirdag), civil society actors already established linkages before local governments were engaged. Second, for other partnerships these linkages were present but not as strong (Zeist-Berkane, Meppel–Al Hoceima), and new civil society organizations were involved once the local governments established linkages. Third, larger municipalities did not build their partnership around translocal links (Rotterdam-Casablanca, Amsterdam-Kocaeli). In these partnerships hardly any CSOs were involved. In the case of Rotterdam-Casablanca, the fact that both municipalities are large, economic centres and harbour cities were the main drivers behind the cooperation. The Amsterdam-Kocaeli partnership was established after a devastating earthquake which struck the Marmara region in 1999. At the initial phase CSOs were involved, but later on the focus shifted towards cooperation between local government bodies. It should be noted that the 2004 earthquake that struck near Al Hoceima (Morocco) also had an important impact on city-to-city networks between the Netherlands and Morocco. Several Dutch municipalities and CSOs provided relief assistance to the area, and the partnership between Meppel and Al Hoceima was established at that time. In partnerships based on translocal linkages migrant organization were more actively engaged than in partnerships not supported by such linkages. Individual citizens of Turkish and Moroccan descent (both first and second generation) were involved in all the partnerships as policy officers, consultants or volunteers.

The research confirms earlier research findings on the impact of support programmes on exchanges in municipal partnerships. By distinguishing between local governments that had policies of actively engaging non-governmental organizations, local governments that only focused on exchanges between municipal departments, and municipalities that only supported civil society initiatives, the research provides more insight on the impact of policies in determining the type of actors involved in the
partnerships. In addition, the existence of translocal linkages was identified as an important factor for partnerships between migrant source and destination countries. The research also showed the variety of municipal partnerships, including models centred on cooperation between local governments, ‘multi-actor models’ that include civil society organizations, and ‘multi-level models’, whereby the involvement of higher government levels also played an important role.

9.3. **Methods of exchanging different types of knowledge and kinds of learning**

Knowledge exchange and learning between local governments and non-governmental actors is central in most municipal partnerships. The second research question focused on the methods and types of knowledge exchanges as well as on learning:

> How do local governments and other actors involved in Dutch-Moroccan and Dutch-Turkish municipal partnerships exchange knowledge (i.e. which methods or strategies are used)? Which different types of knowledge are exchanged, and which kinds of learning take place within these partnerships?

Knowledge in municipal partnerships can be exchanged through various methods: (1) peer-to-peer exchanges between colleagues working on the same topic; (2) meetings and workshops organized by the local governments involved; (3) field visits to places and organizations of thematic interest; (4) conferences and other events organized by third parties (e.g. local government associations); (5) tailor-made training courses for local governments, organized in the framework of support programmes; and (6) translations of written documents, which provide for exchange of generalized knowledge (adapted from Bontenbal 2010: 466-467). In addition to these organized forms of exchanges, Devers-Kanoglu (2009) argued that informal learning is also an important form, although its value is usually not recognized.

The literature on knowledge exchange in partnerships has identified different knowledge dissemination models, ranging from the classic linear model of transferring knowledge and technologies from North to South, to models that emphasize the importance of the context in which the knowledge is produced, and the context-based limits for its application (Rip 2001; De la Rive Box 2001; Baud 2002). Different types of knowledge that are exchanged in partnerships have been identified, ranging from tacit knowledge, context-embedded/implicit knowledge to codified and generalized knowledge (see Van Ewijk and Baud 2009; Rip 2001; Verkoren 2008). Knowledge and practices can be transferred, copied or transplanted from one location to another; they can be slightly adapted; or they can be used as inspiration for the drafting of new ideas (Argyris 1999; Dolowitz and Marsh 1996). The research follows Smid and Beckett’s (2004: 406) definition of learning as ‘knowledge acquisition or acquisition of new behavior’, which does not necessarily imply that knowledge has to be put into practice directly in order for learning to take place. Numerous factors like restrictions in the mandate of governments can limit the possibilities of applying the lessons learned, while
they can be put in practice at a later stage. The process of learning itself takes place through a process of action and reflection (Wilson and Johnson 2007; Marsick and Watkins 1980; Schön 1987; Kolb 1984). Johnson and Wilson (2009b: 212) introduced 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’. This concept helps identify ‘those moments or dynamics through which learning has the potential to occur’.

In the Dutch-Moroccan and Dutch-Turkish municipal partnerships, knowledge exchange mainly occurred through peer-to-peer, on-the-job learning; during meetings and workshops; and during field visits. In the partnerships focusing on strengthening local governments in Morocco and Turkey (within the scope of support programmes) the exchanges occurred in a rather structured way, through joint workshops, conferences and training courses. In a few cases generalized knowledge was exchanged through translated written documents. Knowledge was also exchanged during informal moments, like travelling, lunches and other opportunities. There were no significant differences between the Dutch-Moroccan and Dutch-Turkish partnerships in the ways that knowledge was transferred. The only exception was exchanging knowledge via email communication, which occurred much more frequently between the Netherlands and Turkey. This was mainly due to the limited access to computers and internet facilities in Morocco and also to differences in working practices. The knowledge that was exchanged mainly included tacit and embedded knowledge, which generally was first adapted before being put into practice. In a few cases, lessons were also more or less directly copied; in these exchange generalized and codified knowledge was central.

In the exchange focusing on the Netherlands limited use was made of peer-to-peer sharing, which made the exchange more fragmented and less profound compared to the exchange focusing of learning in Morocco and Turkey. The professionals on the Dutch side involved did learn through the exchange of embedded knowledge, including both technical and cultural knowledge.

In most local governments, one or two persons played a key role in the exchanges, while other officials were only occasionally involved. The institutionalization was therefore limited. Migrants and migrant groups fulfilled important role in the process of knowledge exchange and learning as (1) initiators of several municipal partnerships and projects; (2) translators and interpreters (the majority of native Dutch professionals did not speak Arabic, Berber, French or Turkish); and (3) facilitators, sharing their knowledge and networks. Their expertise was particularly important in overcoming cultural differences. Most migrants possessed limited knowledge on technical issues regarding governance arrangements. Overall, limited use was made of their knowledge and networks. A disadvantage of the active role of migrants was that in some cases the native Dutch professionals felt excluded as the migrants unintentionally took over the communication with the local counterpart.

The research findings indicate that several forms of learning occurred in the Dutch-Moroccan and Dutch-Turkish municipal partnerships. In Morocco and Turkey
learning practice-based embedded knowledge on service delivery, and learning regarding processes—especially working in partnerships with non-governmental actors—was important. This was particularly relevant as both Morocco and Turkey are currently undergoing a significant shift, changing from centralized towards more decentralized governance, whereby working in partnerships with non-governmental actors at the local level is becoming more important. It can be argued that the cooperation with the Dutch local governments ‘came at the right time’. Exposure to a different context was important for learning: the participants obtained new ideas, awareness was created, and they were able to understand the context the knowledge was derived from. Important limitations to learning included lack of knowledge regarding the context, inadequate preparation prior to the visits, and poor facilitation of the knowledge exchange.

In the Netherlands learning ranged from learning on cultural issues and ethnic and cultural diversity to learning by reflecting on one’s own work processes. Learning regarding policies on diversity in Dutch society mainly occurred during exchange visits by partners from Morocco and Turkey to the Netherlands and vice versa, whereby knowledge was exchanged on a peer-to-peer basis (between peers or ‘colleagues’ from the municipalities and between local governments and NGOs).

In all three countries, there was a potential for deeper forms of learning and for formulating novel ideas; however, in most cases these were not put into practice, mainly due to the limited mandates of local governments and their dependence on upper levels of government. Several attempts of non-governmental actors to learn from international exchanges stalled mainly because they were not backed up by the local government actors. The extent and most important forms of learning in the Dutch-Moroccan and Dutch-Turkish municipal partnerships are captured in table 9.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forms of learning</th>
<th>Morocco and Turkey</th>
<th>the Netherlands</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Local governments</td>
<td>Civil society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice-based embedded knowledge (e.g. service delivery)</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization and processes</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dispositional and other forms of learning (unintended)</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning on cultural issues and diversity</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning on issues with a transnational dimension</td>
<td>Limited</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection on one’s own work processes</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
While the body of literature on knowledge exchange in the field of economic clusters is extensive and well developed (cf. Evers 2008), knowledge production in the setting of urban local governments and in the exchanges between local governments is still understudied (Baud et al. 2011). The research makes a contribution to the body of knowledge on learning in municipal partnerships by focusing on a particular type of municipal partnerships: the linkages between migrant source and destination countries. The research focused on studying equally both sides of the partnerships, whereas the bulk of research on North-South partnerships, including city-to-city partnerships, has focused on learning by organizations in the South. The research indicated that the main methods of exchanging knowledge included models based on peer-to-peer exchanges, combined with more formal settings like workshops. Factors like support programmes had an important impact on methods of exchanging knowledge; in exchanges focusing on learning by Moroccan and Turkish municipalities more formal forms were central, while exchange focusing on learning by Dutch municipalities included more ad hoc forms of exchange.

The learning in Moroccan and Turkish municipalities on service delivery was similar to other municipal partnerships. Also some of the personal learning benefits that were visible in the Netherlands, like learning on cultural issues and diversity, also occurred in municipal linkages with non-migrant countries (Rositer 2000; Proctor 2000; Johnson and Wilson 2006, 2009; Bontenbal 2009a). The added value of Dutch-Moroccan and Dutch-Turkish municipal partnerships is the direct link to cultural and ethnic diversity as well as the connection with promoting social cohesion and utilization of direct translocal linkages through the diasporas. Transnational linkages both facilitated learning through the involvement of migrant and their organizations, Dutch experts living in Morocco and Turkey and a transnational organization. The learning about transnational linkages in itself was also identified as a valuable form of learning in these partnerships.

9.4. Strengthening local governments, local government–civil society interfaces and broader governance networks

The third research question focuses on the impact on strengthening local governments and governance arrangements through knowledge exchange and learning as well as the relations between governmental and non-governmental actors:

To what extent does the process of knowledge exchange and learning in Dutch-Moroccan and Dutch-Turkish municipal partnerships lead to strengthened local governments, stronger local government–civil society interfaces and stronger broader governance networks?
Local governments are increasingly operating as only one of the many actors in a governance network, alongside national government, international organizations, civil society and the private sector (Baud et al. 2011; Pierre 2000: 4). Local governments can delegate tasks to the private sector, NGOs and CBOs. Also, they can include several organizations in decision-making processes through ‘multi-stakeholder arrangements’ (Baud and De Wit 2008; Swyngedouw 2005). According to the emerging body of literature on governance networks and partnerships, strengthening both local government bodies and civil society is an important dual approach to strengthening local governance as a whole (Cornwall and Gaventa 2000; Gaventa 2001). City-to-city partnerships offer some specific conditions for strengthening both local governments and CSOs as they usually aim to strengthen local governance processes in the Global South and often include both local governments and non-governmental actors. The research findings have demonstrated that local government bodies in the South have indeed been strengthened through municipal partnerships (Bontenbal 2009a; Van Lindert 2009; Hewitt 1998, 2000; Johnson and Wilson 2006, 2009). Although several learning possibilities are mentioned for local governments in the Global North, there is less evidence of strengthening of Northern local government bodies (Johnson and Wilson 2009). There is also less evidence that civil society is durably strengthened through city-to-city partnerships (Van Lindert 2009; Bontenbal 2009a). Moreover, there are very few empirical studies that address local politics and political representation, which is related to the sensitiveness of the subject (see Bontenbal 2009b). The partners from the North may prefer to focus on ‘safer’ technical issues than the potentially more controversial topics. Despite this gap, Bontenbal found that the way municipal projects were implemented was relevant for the development of more participative forms of local governance. She argued that C2C partnerships can lead to the reinforcement of local government–civil society relations, as an indirect effect of C2C interventions. Therefore, it is also important to assess these indirect effects (Bontenbal 2009a: 262).

The research findings clearly indicate that in nearly all Moroccan and Turkish local governments sections or departments were strengthened. In Berkane and Al Hoceima (Morocco) waste management was privatized and improved. In Emirdag (Turkey) the international exchange with Haarlem assisted in the establishment of a new waste management system. The capacity of the fire department in Kocaeli (Turkey) was strengthened through obtaining new knowledge and equipment, and a department for the preservation of cultural landmarks was set up. Cooperation between the police departments of Rotterdam and Casablanca also led to learning by police officers, but there was no conclusive evidence that the capacity of the department as a whole was strengthened (this was a new exchange programme, started in 2008). Knowledge was in a few cases transferred, copied or transplanted from one location to another, but in most cases it was slightly adapted. It was also used as inspiration for new ideas. Learning which required more fundamental changes, like the lessons based on the reflection on one’s own work processes, were not put into practice as the required changes surpassed the mandate of local governments.
In Turkey lessons could generally be implemented more rapidly than in Morocco, due to the easier communication flows between the Dutch and Turkish partners, and to less centralized governance processes than in Morocco. Also important learning occurred in Morocco, but in quite a few cases lessons were yet to be fully implemented. Overall, there was less evidence of strengthening of civil society actors, compared to the evidence for strengthened local government bodies. This was mainly related to the small budgets of the exchange programmes and in some cases also to the dependency on voluntary hours and personal financial contributions by the participants. Still several interesting forms of learning did occur, like the learning by non-governmental actors on waste management and environmental awareness creation in Emirdag as well as combating prejudices in the exchange between youth in the framework of Dutch-Moroccan partnerships. The findings also show that C2C partnerships can strengthen interfaces between local government and civil society. This was particularly the case in the municipal partnerships between the smaller municipalities, which actively involved non-governmental actors. Especially in Emirdag, where governmental and non-governmental actors cooperated for the first time, interfaces between governmental and non-governmental actors were strengthened. In Morocco there were indications that the linkages between youth groups and the municipality were slightly intensified.

In addition to strengthening local government–civil society interfaces some municipal partnership also modestly contributed to the strengthening of broader government networks. This was particularly the case in the exchange on fire safety in Turkey, whereby different fire brigades started to cooperate and compiled an initial inventory of the equipment of fire brigades in south-east Turkey, with the aim of strengthening the sector at large. Another example was the improvement of waste management in the north of Morocco, whereby local governments exchanged experiences on cooperation in PPPs. In both cases Dutch organizations provided financial support and acted as catalysts for learning processes that extended beyond the local level.

The evidence for strengthened local governance in the Netherlands was weaker compared to the strengthening of local governance in Morocco and Turkey. Personal learning did occur and lessons were important for the work practices of the individuals involved, but they were not embedded within the local government body. Learning by Dutch NGO professionals was quite similar to the learning that occurred at the governmental level. Governmental and non-governmental actors learned on cultural issues and diversity as well as through reflection on their own work processes. The most important advantage for Dutch actors was establishing contacts with citizens of Turkish and Moroccan descent, and increasing their understanding of the position of Dutch citizens of Moroccan descent through the involvement in partnerships with migrant source countries.

Local government–civil society interfaces were strengthened, especially when local governments actively involved civil society actors, including migrant organizations. In the Netherlands the exchange did not lead to the strengthening of broader
governance networks. Dutch municipalities did exchange knowledge on international projects in Morocco and Turkey, but the exchange on practices in the Netherlands was limited, and the exchanges were not linked to higher governmental levels. Several key contributions can be identified in the findings of this research:

First, the research identified four governance network models (see figure 9.1), demonstrating the predominance of two governance network models: the classic local government network model, whereby local government bodies were strengthened, and the multi-actor model, whereby also exchanges between local governments and CSOs and between CSOs were central. There also was some evidence of multi-level network models, whereby both local government bodies as well as broader governance networks were strengthened. This occurred mainly in Turkey. A hybrid governance network model, including 1) stronger local government bodies, 2) stronger, CSOs 3) stronger interfaces between local governments and civil society as well as 4) stronger broader governance networks, was not clearly visible (see also table 9.2).

Second, the municipal partnerships did lead to some—but very limited—strengthening of local government bodies in the Dutch municipalities. The evidence is much weaker compared to learning on governance issues in Morocco and Turkey. However, various forms of personal learning did take place. In Morocco and Turkey local governments were strengthened in terms of service delivery, a conclusion that supports previous research findings, like the work of Hewitt (2000, 2002, 2004), Johnson and Wilson (2006, 2009a, 2009b), Tjandradewi and Marcotullio (2006, 2009), Van Lindert (2009) and Bontenbal (2007, 2009a, 2009b, 2010). To some extent the exchange also led to strengthened local government bodies and changes in municipal structures.

Third, the partnerships did contribute to establishing improved relations between local governments and non-governmental actors. This was apparent in the exchanges that focused on youth groups in Morocco as well as waste management and environmental awareness raising in Morocco and Turkey (all central focus themes of the concerned cooperation programmes). Even though this study found only modest evidence for the strengthening of civil society in Morocco and Turkey through the municipal partnerships, its contribution is still relevant, especially in light of the important ongoing changes in these countries. The research particularly builds on the work of Bontenbal (2009a), which showed that local government–civil society interfaces can be strengthened via city-to-city partnerships. The multi-actor network model was most dominant, while a classic local government and a multi-level model were also present. In the Netherlands local governments did also improve their cooperation with civil society, especially in relation to Dutch citizens of Moroccan or Turkish descent, but the research indicates that there is still a large untapped potential. The multi-actor network model was mostly visible, while there was no evidence of a multi-level model.

Fourth, municipal exchanges contributed to the establishment of multi-actor partnerships. The evidence of working in multi-actor arrangements brought out an interesting issue: the exchange touched upon political representation (in particular the projects focusing on youth participation in Dutch-Moroccan partnerships), which was
facilitated through the existence of transnational linkages. This topic is understudied largely due to its sensitivity (see Bontenbal 2009b). The dominant impact models and the extent of the linkages are captured in figure 9.1.

Table 9.2 Potential strengthening governance processes for the various impact models

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Classic local government network</th>
<th>Multi actor network</th>
<th>Multi level network</th>
<th>Hybrid multi-level network</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of cases (project level)</td>
<td>Some cases</td>
<td>Many cases</td>
<td>Some cases, first signs</td>
<td>No clear case</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cases Morocco</td>
<td>Policy</td>
<td>Waste management</td>
<td>Fire department</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Youth participation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Welfare</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Women</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cases Turkey</td>
<td>Fire safety</td>
<td>Waste management</td>
<td>Waste management</td>
<td>(Working place disabled people)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Monument preservation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cases the Netherlands</td>
<td>Fire safety</td>
<td>Policy</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
9.5. The dynamics of mutual learning

The research demonstrated that important forms of learning did take place on both sides of the municipal partnerships. The fourth research question focuses in particular on mutual learning in municipal partnerships:

*To what extent does knowledge exchange in Dutch-Moroccan and Dutch-Turkish municipal partnerships lead to mutual learning at different scale levels?*

Mutual learning can be defined as learning by all involved parties. Mutual learning opportunities are considered particularly relevant for assuring the sustainability of partnerships and for promoting public and policy support for municipal partnerships (UNDP 2000; Johnson and Wilson 2009). Although the literature identifies numerous possibilities for learning by partners in the Global North—like fostering global citizenship, reflections on one's own work processes and learning from innovations in decentralized governance in the South—usually the objective of strengthening local governance in municipalities in the South is central (Johnson and Wilson 2006, 2009; Bontenbal 2009a, 2009b; Devers-Kanoglu 2009; Van Lindert 2009). This orientation is mainly explained by altruism (Bontenbal 2009a) and the influence of the themes of support programmes (Johnson and Wilson 2006). Based on the wider body of knowledge on mutual learning in partnerships, various 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). 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). Another important aspect are the resources that partners bring in (Johnson and Wilson 2009; Baud and Post 2002; Hastings 1996). Complementary resources include the knowledge that the actors bring into the learning, which is not necessarily valued equally (Johnson and Wilson 2006). The political geographical divisions, like 'Third World' or 'Global South', are also seen as obstacles to learning between organizations from the North and the South (McFarlane 2006). The same could be argued for the currently popular labels, like high-income, low-income and middle-income countries.

City-to-city cooperation has the potential to provide a more or less equal exchange based on a peer-to-peer approach and longstanding relations (Brinkerhoff 2002a, 2002b; Van Ewijk and Baud 2009). Moreover, exchanges between peers provide the conditions for exchanging tacit and implicit knowledge, thus broadening possibilities for mutual learning. On the other side, paternalism, a donor-driven approach to development as well as a lack of international cooperation experience are seen as having a negative impact on the exchange within the partnerships and on the extent of mutuality taking place (UNDP 2000; Spence and Ninnes 2007, in Bontenbal 2009a). Bontenbal (2009a) referred to a paradox and permanent tension in the North-South
structure in municipal partnerships: on the one hand, there are mechanisms for equal horizontal exchange between peer organizations, while, on the other hand, a classic linear model of aid assistance from the North to the South still dominates. Bontenbal (2009a, 2009b) and Devers-Kanoglu (2009) argued that the discourse on mutual learning in municipal partnerships has overemphasized the possible learning benefits in the North. The result is unrealistically increased expectations, while mutual exchange is merely a desirable outcome.

9.5.1. **A framework for analysing the dynamics of mutual learning**

In municipal partnerships between migrant source and destination countries mutuality is expected to play a larger role, as migrant destination countries have generally formulated their own objectives from the start of the cooperation. Based on the literature review, a framework for analysing mutuality in municipal partnerships was designed along three key elements: first, the different kinds of actors and their objectives for engaging in international exchange programmes; second, the different kind of projects at different scale levels under the umbrella of the municipal partnership; and third, the five dimensions for the dynamics of mutual learning in municipal partnerships. The five dimensions are (1) similarity between professionals, necessary for establishing dialogue and trust; (2) differences between partners to learn from 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.

The research findings indicate that mutual learning did take place, even though the main focus in the municipal partnership was on strengthening local governance in Morocco and Turkey. Dutch municipalities did engage in these partnerships with the general idea that they could learn from the partnerships; however, learning objectives were generally not clearly formulated. Several key lessons can be drawn from the findings:

First, similarity between professionals (necessary for establishing dialogue and trust) was important in exchange processes; however, the learning was not always adequately facilitated and its potential was only partly used. This is particularly applicable to the Dutch municipalities, which made only limited use of peer-to-peer learning.

Second, differences between partners (something to learn from) and the recognition and appreciation of differences appeared to be an important base for learning. Generally exposure to a different context was important for being able to think ‘outside the box’. Differences were at the same time also perceived as a limitation for learning. This particularly applied to the different context in terms of government arrangements, culture, geographical characteristics, population density and others.

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149 Several main project themes were identified: the strengthening of local governance (service delivery, public administration and citizen participation), economic development, transnational linkages and mobility, the integration of citizens of migrant origin.
Whether the differences were seen as a valuable source of learning by Dutch professionals differed substantially per individual interviewee. One of the main limitations to mutual learning was arguably the lack of openness to draw lessons from practices in Morocco and Turkey.

Third, complementary financial resources brought in by the participating Moroccan and Turkish municipalities were limited as the programmes were mainly financed by Dutch support programmes. Even though Moroccan and Turkish local governments had no or a very limited budget for international exchange programmes, they did put in complementary resources in kind. Also various non-governmental actors contributed to the international exchanges. Despite these complementary resources, several projects were still characterized by a donor-recipient perspective. The small municipal budget for international cooperation of Dutch local governments, combined with the impact of the South-focused support programmes, limited the extent of learning by Dutch actors.

Four, process-based building of trust through continuous collaboration—a key characteristic of city-to-city cooperation—was important for the exchange programmes that focused on strengthening local governance in Morocco and Turkey, but this potential was not always exploited by exchanges focused on learning by Dutch municipalities.

Five, power differences between the different actors did not seem to play an important role in the exchange processes. Generally speaking, the exchanges were very open—especially between peer groups. A few respondents felt that there was a sense of domination by the Dutch municipalities, related to the fact that they had a much larger financial contribution in the partnership and they were seen to be ‘ahead’, particularly in the field of service delivery.

The research findings confirm existing research that highlighted the specific strengths and limitations of city-to-city cooperation, such as long-lasting relations (which strengthen mutual trust) and the effectiveness of peer-to-peer learning models. Some of these strengths were not fully exploited in the exchange focused on learning by the Dutch actors involved. Despite the learning that occurred on both sides, the paradox and permanent tension between the mechanisms of equal exchange and the classic model of aid assistance from North to South were to some extent also visible in the Dutch-Moroccan and Dutch-Turkish municipal partnerships. In addition to the five dimensions for the dynamics of mutual learning based on the literature, a sixth dimension—the existence of direct translocal linkages—appeared relevant for analysing mutual learning in partnerships between migrant source and destination countries. 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 by migrants; and (3) the importance felt at different scale levels for ‘getting to know the other’, combating prejudice and building bridges. It can be argued that this is a form of the nurturing of global citizenship, which is particularly relevant for the relationships at the local level the Netherlands has with Morocco and Turkey. These countries are also the ‘new
neighbours’ of Europe, and, despite the short physical distance and the long presence of large migrant communities in the Netherlands, knowledge on these countries is still limited and there are strong prejudices on both sides. Based on these findings it can be concluded that one of the first and most fundamental objectives for initiating municipal partnerships, peacebuilding and nurturing global citizenship (Hoetjes 2009; Clarke 2010), appeared to be particularly applicable for Dutch-Moroccan and Dutch-Turkish municipal partnerships.

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

To answer the central research question, first the various actors who play a role in municipal partnerships were identified, followed by an analysis of the methods of exchanging knowledge and the types of learning that took place. In addition to local governments, the partnerships included CSOs like migrant, women’s and youth organizations as well as schools and private companies. The research showed that in exchanges supported by development programmes, the cooperation was more structured, including conferences and workshops as well as visits of Dutch professionals to Morocco and Turkey and vice versa along with various modes of participation in day-to-day work processes. Exchanges not supported by such programmes occurred more ad hoc. The partnerships were important for exchanging various types of knowledge, ranging from tacit to generalized knowledge, whereby the cooperation between peers was particularly relevant for exchanging embedded knowledge. These findings contribute to the earlier research that indicated that the exchange between peers is especially relevant for the transfer of more practical, embedded knowledge (Verkoren 2008). There were more possibilities for mutual learning when various actors were involved. Transnational linkages through the involvement of migrants, Dutch experts living in Morocco and Turkey and a transnational NGO were helpful for overcoming obstacles in the knowledge exchange process, especially language barriers and cultural differences.

The research largely confirms the findings of prior examinations that have assessed the strengths and limitations of partnership processes in a C2C cooperation model, like long-lasting relations to build trust, the effectiveness of peer-to-peer learning models, and the limited institutionalization of knowledge (Johnson and Wilson 2007, 2009; Bontenbal 2009a; Van Lindert 2009; Van Ewijk and Baud 2009). However, the research also showed that the strengths can also be underutilized in case the exchanges are not facilitated (e.g., in exchanges focused on learning by municipalities in migrant destination countries), which can pose limitations to mutual learning. Knowledge exchange particularly leads to mutual learning in cases when clear objectives were set out, the knowledge was facilitated by fostering peer-to-peer exchanges and overcoming barriers (like language), and there was an open approach to drawing lessons from both
sides. In practice many of these aspects did not receive enough recognition or were overlooked, which limited actual mutual learning.

By describing various network models the research builds on the work of several authors. First, the work of authors like Hewitt (2000, 2002, 2004), Johnson and Wilson (2006, 2009a, 2009b), Tjandradewi and Marcotullio (2006, 2009), Van Lindert (2009) and Bontenbal (2007, 2009a, 2009b, 2010) was important because it demonstrated that municipal partnerships are an effective method for strengthening local government bodies, for instance, in terms of service delivery. Second, the research of Bontenbal (2009a) and Hewitt (2004) was used to illustrate that municipal partnerships can also be used to strengthen civil society actors and interfaces between local governments and civil society. Finally, the argumentation by Baud et al. (2010) that municipal partnership can have important leverage effects including the strengthening of broader governance networks was utilized to demonstrate the wider impact of C2C exchanges.

Looking at the impact of the municipal partnerships, the research showed that both the classic local government network model and the multi-actor network model were central. In the later model, both local governmental bodies and civil society organizations were strengthened. In the classic network models mostly learning regarding service delivery was relevant, while in the multi-actor network models learning about working in processes with non-governmental and civil society actors was important. Municipal partnerships can also be an effective way of strengthening the interfaces between local governments and civil society, as shown in the multi-actor network models. Moreover, learning can also go beyond the local level and extend to the strengthening of broader governance networks, as seen in the multi-level model (especially in migrant source countries).

In order to answer the central research question, the concept of mutuality was further explored by identifying different kinds of exchanges and distinguishing between mutuality on the project and the municipal partnership level. Based on the literature on mutual learning and partnership processes—whereby (1) the existence of both difference and similarities were identified as building blocks for learning (Johnson and Wilson 2009b) and (2) aspects like trust, equality, power and openness to learn are emphasized (Fowler 1998, 2000; Johnson and Wilson 2006; King and McGrath 2004; Robinson et al. 2000; Vincent and Byrne 2006; Wilson and Johnson 2007)—a framework was set out for analysing mutual learning in which five dimensions for the dynamics of mutual learning in municipal partnerships were identified. A sixth dimension—the existence of direct translocal linkages—was added for the analysis of mutual learning in partnerships between migrant source and destination countries. The research shows that similarities between professionals were important for mutual exchange; differences in the context mainly facilitated learning but also restricted the extraction of lessons. Like in other city-to-city partnerships (Johnson and Wilson 2006) donor programmes had an important impact on the exchanges, and the small municipal budget placed a restriction on the preparation of the exchanges. The research also illustrated that more opportunities for learning in the Global North are possible when
the professionals involved have an open stance towards the learning possibilities and strong transnational relations are in place.

The various actors involved in the different network models and the dimensions for mutual learning are captured in the revised conceptual framework.

Figure 9.2 Adjusted conceptual framework including governance network models and dimensions for mutual learning

9.7. Main contribution of the research

This study on the Dutch-Moroccan and Dutch-Turkish municipal partnerships has a number of key contributions to several research fields: (1) the decentralization and globalization debate, (2) transnational governance networks, (3) characteristics of C2C partnerships as well as learning and mutuality in partnerships, and (4) governance network models.

First, by focusing on transnational relations between local governments in migrant source and destination countries and placing these relations in the broader processes of decentralization and globalization, the research analyses the challenges at the local level as well as the possibilities and limitations of translocal linkages between different geographical locations in answering to these challenges. This focus is
particularly relevant as the local level is still underrepresented in the globalization and transnational literature, while important changes in terms of economic developments, geopolitical power shifts and governance systems are taking place. The strong impact of these changes on the local level has been covered by several authors (see Pierre and Peters 2000; Baud et al. 2011; Cornwall and Gaventa 2001; Sassen 2001). At the general level, the research contributes to the scarce body of knowledge on decentralized international cooperation, called ‘fourth pillar initiatives’ by Develterre (2009), by setting out the specific characteristics of these partnerships, like peer-to-peer exchanges and transnational linkages. This is particularly relevant as an increasing number of actors are involved in international cooperation, and these actors increasingly work in multi-actor partnership arrangements (AIV 2013).

Second, the research shows that when assessing governance networks, the aspect of learning could be placed in a more central position, in order to obtain a better understanding of these networks. 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. In the literature that focuses on municipal partnerships, the process of knowledge exchange and learning has been studied (Johnson and Wilson 2006, 2009b; Bontenbal 2009a, 2009b; Devers-Kanoglu 2009), but both sides of the partnerships have not been equally covered.

Third, by focusing on a particular kind of municipal partnerships—the linkages between migrant source and destination countries, which are seen as having a large potential for mutual learning—the research contributes to the general body of knowledge on municipal partnerships. The research shows that an open approach to mutual learning, without predefined conceptions about the direction of the knowledge exchange, can broaden the scope of the learning. Exchange processes are more dynamic, and include intended and unintended as well as formal and informal learning. The research also illustrated the usefulness of maintaining a broad definition of learning (similar to Smid and Beckett [2004]), as personal learning cannot always materialize into the implementation of lessons learned due to institutional constraints. By building on research on partnership processes in which aspects like trust, equality and power were identified as important factors influencing cooperation and exchange (see Fowler 1998, 2000; Johnson and Wilson 2006; King and McGrath 2004; Robinson et al. 2000; Vincent and Byrne 2006; Wilson and Johnson 2007) and analysing the various factors and conditions that play a role in fostering and limiting mutual learning, the research has demonstrated that this approach increases the understanding of what is required for mutual learning to take place.

Fourth, the research identified various governance network models based on earlier research on municipal partnerships (see in particular Bontenbal 2009a; Baud et al. 2010), and showed that municipal partnerships as a form of governance network are very diverse and include multi-actor and multi-scalar arrangements (which provides the opportunity to also strengthen local government–civil society interfaces). These models
in combination with a revised conceptual model can be instrumental in assessing municipal partnerships and more general governance networks. An analysis of mutual learning in municipal partnerships can also be important for demonstrating the wide array of mutual benefits in North-South partnerships, beyond economic exchanges.