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**The role of European Local Governments in Development
Cooperation: Examples from the Netherlands and Germany**

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Abstract

This paper explores the role of European *local* governments in international development cooperation. World wide, local governments have become prominent players in the international development cooperation arena. Through various city-to-city cooperation (C2C) structures, cities partner up and seek to contribute to improve local governance and enhance local development in young democracies and areas struck by poverty. In the light of ongoing decentralisation processes, institutional capacity building is a pressing challenge for many local governments in the South. Through North-South city partnerships, Southern partners draw on the knowledge and expertise of their Northern partner municipalities to address needs in urban management and service delivery. There is a lack of knowledge on the position of local governments as development agents and how capacity building among *local authorities* can best be applied to improve the institutional performance of municipal organisations. This paper presents the findings of a comparative empirical research of four North-South city partnerships of Dutch and German municipalities with partner cities in Latin America and Africa. It examines the conditions under which local governments operate in international development cooperation with regard to existing policies, capacities and political will, and discusses the implications of these factors for the practice of city-to-city cooperation.

Introduction

The analysis and review in the academic discourse on European development cooperation has been largely geared towards bilateral and multinational donor assistance on the one hand and the role of NGOs and CBOs on the other hand. The former category is largely concerned with development cooperation at the macro level by national governments and international donor institutions, often focusing on public sector reform and good governance in relation to SWAPs and budgetary support. The latter type of cooperation is usually directed to local level development and poverty reduction dealing with civic society, with NGOs in the North working in direct partnership with locally based organisations in the South. In the dichotomy of bilateral macro donor assistance versus local, NGO-based cooperation with civic society, there has been limited room for academic attention to development cooperation initiated by and aimed at government at the local level. Indeed, a focus on development cooperation geared towards municipalities and performed by partner municipalities has thus far been lacking to a large extent and a need for further research has been indicated to understand the content, objectives and implications of such interventions (Tjandradewi et al., 2006; Hewitt, 1998). This paper seeks to contribute to filling this knowledge gap, by exploring the way European *local* governments participate in international development cooperation.

World wide, local governments have stepped into the international development cooperation arena. Through city-to-city cooperation (C2C), such as city twinning and organized city networks in transnational North-South settings, cities cooperate to improve local governance and enhance local development in young democracies and areas struck by poverty. In the South, ongoing decentralisation processes explain much of the current needs for institutional capacity building for local governments. City partnerships can be used as an instrument to address such needs, channelling knowledge and expertise from the North to partner municipalities in the South.

While such decentralised international cooperation and the position of local governments as development agents differ drastically from bi-lateral cooperation pursued by national governments, also parallels can be drawn, such as the focus on promoting good (local) governance. In the discourse on development cooperation through North-South partnerships, there is a lack of knowledge on the conditions for capacity development among *local authorities* and how these partnerships can best be utilized to

improve the institutional performance of municipal organisations. In this light, there is a need for understanding the conditions which affect the role of local governments in the North as development agents, e.g. regarding policies, capacities and political will. This paper aims to explain the factors that shape the position and potential impact of local governments in the North as partners in international development cooperation through C2C partnerships.

After a brief review of city-to-city cooperation and its linkages with strengthening local governance and institutional performance of local authorities in the South, five critical conditions will be discussed. Findings are presented of comparative empirical research of four North-South city partnerships of Dutch and German municipalities with partner cities in Latin America and Africa.

City-to-city cooperation and development

It has been estimated that currently 70% of the world's cities participate in so-called city-to-city cooperation partnerships, projects and programmes (UCLG, 2006). From an historical perspective, city twinning has been practiced to serve a range of goals and interests. These have included building peace and mutual understanding 'from below' in post-war Europe (Gaspari, 2002, Zelinsky, 1991, Vion, 2002), expressing solidarity with suppressed population groups (e.g. the Soviet regime, Apartheid in South Africa) and with ideological movements (Sandinistas in Nicaragua) (Bontenbal, 2006). Some twinings obtained a more economic character, fostering entrepreneurship and trade. Yet another type refers to C2C that has evolved in pursuit of development and poverty alleviation in the South. The idea of 'cooperation twinings' was launched in the 1960s after the independence of several African countries, and was practiced essentially between French and West African municipalities, in particular Senegal. This type of decentralised North-South cooperation developed further in the 1970s and 1980s, becoming more project-based and technically oriented (Hafteck, 2003). City-to-city cooperation has been considered a promising mechanism for building and developing capacity in local administrations and contribute to improving the living conditions in urban communities (Tjandradewi et al., 2006; UN-Habitat, 2003; Hewitt, 1999; UNDP, 2000), which has become a pressing need in many developing countries after decentralisation reforms.

Hence, from an intervention perspective, C2C can be considered a decentralised form of development cooperation, in which local authorities have become development agents and partners. The objectives are generally two-fold. Firstly, C2C is relevant from the viewpoint of fostering decentralised 'good governance' as precondition to local development. Due to the changing nature of local administration steered by decentralisation processes, local governments in the South have increasingly been given new mandates and responsibilities, dealing with basic service delivery, urban infrastructure and financial resource bases to manage. Moreover, many are now expected to take up a role to actively foster local development and tackle urban poverty. Changes in the legal and administrative environment however pose difficulties to organisational capacity and basic service delivery. For the majority of local governments in developing countries, institutional strengthening is one of the most pressing challenges ahead. Democratic and decentralised governance is increasingly considered a requisite component of development initiatives (Work, 2002). Today, there is an emerging consensus that good governance is imperative for sustainable development and poverty reduction (UN-Habitat, 2002). In this light, C2C is considered an instrument to enhance the capacities of local institutions for improved local governance.

A second C2C objective regards the contribution to community development and (basic) urban services. C2C is not confined to the participation of local administrations alone. Indeed, in Hafteck's view (2003), while the concept of a relationship between local authorities is at the core of the partnership, the participation of civil society is a feature of equal importance. A characteristic of C2C is that it is usually founded on two pillars; both the local state apparatus and its constituency, the citizens themselves (Bontenbal & Van Lindert, 2006). While the former is attributed to the above mentioned objective of institutional strengthening, the second pillar consists of the participation and

contributions of civil society, the non-profit and the private sector. Activities include a wide range of small-scale community development initiatives such as fundraising for education and health care projects, and stimulating business entrepreneurship through micro credit support. While the development effects in the partner city are often modest, such activities are crucial to sustain public support for the partnership. Raising awareness on global issues (poverty, inequality) and development cooperation is an important goal. Mamadouh (2002) points out that these activities in the civic society sphere have a substantial symbolic meaning, reinforcing the link between the cities and further stimulating public support.

In the public sector, capacity building is mainly directed towards the institutional strengthening of public institutions and administrations, aiming at 'getting good government' (Grindle *et al.*, 1997) through increased institutional performance. Grindle *et al.* (1997) distinguish three areas of capacity building for institutional strengthening. Firstly, capacity building may be aimed at *human resource development*, e.g. through training of staff, and improving recruitment procedures and work conditions. Secondly, *organisational strengthening* focuses on improving management systems on the micro level, through changing management structures or the organisational culture of the institution. Thirdly, *institutional reform* targets institutions and systems at the macro level. This includes policy and legal change and constitutional reform. Through C2C, local governments in the North can take up a role in local capacity building in their partner cities in the South. City-to-City Cooperation is aimed at supporting municipalities in institutional capacity building and the improvement of local governance issues such as service delivery, creating an enabling legal and institutional environment, and fostering partnerships with key local public, private and community actors. Cities set up and support projects, and provide knowledge and expertise through the delivery of technical assistance to their partner cities, often organised in a peer-to-peer setting for local government officials and technicians. The 'colleague-to-colleague' approach is considered a vehicle for knowledge and skills transfer that is unique to C2C partnerships and scarcely found among other modalities of development cooperation (Bontenbal & Van Lindert, 2006).

For local governments to act as development agents, they need to comply with some necessary preconditions for successful North-South cooperation. Development cooperation is not a core task of municipalities and lack of expertise may undermine good intentions. Partnerships fail when Northern partners wrongly assume to have all the necessary professional expertise and knowledge needed to engage in development cooperation: "Many [Northern municipal partners] see themselves walking into the aid business with none of the knowledge which has built up in NGO circles over the years, so there is a danger if guidance is not sought, of their taking part in very amateurish aid efforts" (Knight, quoted in UNDP, 2000, p. 28). Examples of the lack of development expertise among municipal staff in the North include little knowledge of local contextual conditions, not taking into account adequate evaluation and monitoring criteria, or lacking the required advisory skills (Schep *et al.*, 1995). The dilemma of well-intended aid ambitions versus the lack of professional expertise has been well expressed in the title of a recent Dutch Government evaluation of national C2C support programmes: "On Solidarity and Professionalisation" (IOB, 2004).

Local government participation in development cooperation: five critical conditions

Drawing on empirical evidence from four North-South city partnership case studies, and taking the perspective from the North – i.e. local governments as development agents, this section will discuss five critical conditions that have been found to impact on the role of local governments in development cooperation through the practice of C2C. Between 2005 and 2007, research has been conducted on four partnerships involving cities in the Netherlands and Germany and their partner cities in South Africa, Nicaragua and Peru. In all cities (four in the North and four in the South), a structured research strategy was followed, allowing for cross-case comparison. The methodologies included interviews with key local stakeholders from municipal councils, local administrations and

civic society; document analysis, of e.g. municipal international cooperation policies, municipal budgetary reports and project evaluations; and observations of e.g. partnership missions and visits to project sites. The partnerships reviewed are briefly summarised in Box 1. The factors discussed are:

1. The extent to which C2C partnerships are politically embedded in municipal international cooperation policies
2. The availability and quality of human resources in the local administration for C2C
3. The availability of financial resources and the capacity to tap from external funding
4. The level of political, administrative and public support for C2C
5. The extent to which local governments cooperate with development partners to support their C2C efforts

Box 1: The four C2C partnership case studies

- The municipalities of **Amstelveen**, the Netherlands and **Villa El Salvador (VES)**, Peru became official partners in 1997. Recent cooperation projects (2004-2007) have aimed at strengthening the local administration of VES with a focus on municipal finance, and environment and waste management, e.g. setting up an Environmental Department and introducing separate waste management in VES.
- Since its inception in 1983, the partnership between **Utrecht**, the Netherlands and **León**, Nicaragua has known both municipal and civic society participation. Since 1998, Utrecht Municipality has supported León in its urban expansion ambitions in the long-term, multi-dimensional León South East project to build 15.000 dwellings by 2020.
- The partnership (1998) between the Berlin District **Treptow-Köpenick** and the Municipality of **Cajamarca**, Peru, is an example of C2C as North-South component in the framework of Local Agenda 21. Mainly driven by civic society, the municipal role is more limited. The partnership aims at fostering exchanges (e.g. schools), awareness raising and fundraising.
- **Alphen aan den Rijn** ('Alphen' in short) signed a twinning agreement with **Oudtshoorn**, South Africa, in 2002, focusing on strengthening institutional performance and community development in Oudtshoorn. Oudtshoorn municipality has been assisted with policymaking on HIV/Aids, gender and social housing, and the implementation of a Performance Management System.

1. Municipal International Cooperation policy frameworks

Perhaps the greatest difference between local administrations and mainstream, traditional decentralised development organisations such as NGOs and charity organisations is that international cooperation (IC) is not a core task of local administrations. In both the Netherlands and Germany, municipal IC (MIC) is not required by law. While it is heavily promoted by Local Government Associations and (inter)national support institutions (see below), local governments are not formally mandated to invest in IC or establish IC policies. Hence, MIC efforts are voluntary. In this light, and due to the fact that municipalities are political institutions, a first critical factor is the political orientation of the municipal council and of the leading local political parties as an important determinant of city partnership organisation. In the absence of a guiding legal framework, political programmes and supporting IC policies shape and outline the IC vision and strategy of municipalities. Formalised policies can be considered a political determinant for the emergence and fostering of IC, guaranteeing a stable flow of financial resources as IC becomes an item on the municipal budget. The political programmes of the three Dutch cities under study all contain an item on international cooperation.

C2C partnerships are often embedded in an IC policy framework which serves a range of objectives. They show great variety regarding geographical orientation (e.g. European vs. North-South), instruments (long term partnerships, international city networks, projects) and activities (knowledge exchange, granting subsidies). North-South

city partnerships may be just one aspect of a municipality's international cooperation strategy (e.g. Utrecht), or it may be the singular IC activity performed (Alphen). Diversity in policy objectives is evident: they may be economical and trade oriented, which is the case for Amstelveen and Utrecht. EU affairs, such as subsidies and legislation have been specifically noticed in Utrecht and Treptow-Köpenick. Fostering international exchange and city networking were mentioned by Treptow-Köpenick, Utrecht and Amstelveen. All four North-South partnerships of this study contribute to a fourth objective, i.e. international solidarity and taking up a role in development cooperation. The Dutch cases show a dual strategy in this respect: on the one hand contributing to strengthening local governance and local democracy in the South, on the other hand awareness raising and education of citizens on development issues. This duality is also expressed in the organisation of finance and in the relations between the local administration and civic society as city partnership actors, as will be discussed below.

The case of Amstelveen will be used here to illustrate how C2C partnerships are embedded in a more general IC policy framework. The partnership agreement with Villa El Salvador fits into the wider 'international orientation' programme which forms the political mandate that gives guidance to all international activities. It is based on three main motives to engage in international cooperation: a) the exchange of knowledge, innovation and 'best practice' of municipal affairs b) economic motives in attracting foreign investments and c) ideological motives, i.e. raise global awareness, and 'contribute to local democracy and governance elsewhere through the provision of in-house municipal expertise' (Amstelveen Municipality, 2006). The latter provides the framework for cooperation with VES. In contrast to the three European city partnerships which are predominantly directed at cultural and people-to-people exchanges (the so-called *jumelages*), the (knowledge) exchanges and projects with VES have a clear development objective, with the aim to strengthen local governance in the partner city. VES is considered the most relevant of all international partner cities; an estimated 70% of the budget for international cooperation is allocated to VES¹. Also, political, administrative and community involvement is predominantly aimed at VES rather than at other international activities².

In contrast to the three Dutch examples, the Berlin District of Treptow-Köpenick has no official political IC vision or policy. One of the reasons is related to the administrative status of Treptow-Köpenick as one of the 12 Districts of the City of Berlin. While the Senate of Greater Berlin has its own IC policies and city partnerships, the majority of the Districts maintain their own international relations in addition. For the latter, however, IC is not an official administrative mandate. Accordingly Districts, being non-autonomous, do not get any financial or technical means for IC from Senate. Treptow-Köpenick thus has very limited resources for international cooperation and this has been a major limitation for the international relations of the district³. Despite the absence of a formal IC policy, the local administration is engaged in international affairs. The focus is mainly on the European Union e.g. attracting EU funds and projects, and engaging citizens in European affairs and exchanges. In addition, the administration is concerned with an impressive number of 11 city partnerships, Cajamarca being the only partner in the South. A large number of these partnerships are however inactive.

Some observations can be made from comparing the cases. Firstly, lack of a political mandate as in the German case makes the involvement of the administration voluntary which may undermine the stability and continuity of municipal engagement in the partnership. The role of political will and in particular personal engagement of the Mayor becomes crucial in this respect. However, secondly, it must be noted that the Treptow-Köpenick - Cajamarca partnership is largely civic society driven, in which the local administration only has a modest role in providing political support, and some funding. There are for example no direct exchanges between municipality staff. The consequences of the absence of a municipal IC policy should in this respect not be

¹ Interview official 1 Amstelveen Municipality, January 18, 2007

² Interview official 2 Amstelveen Municipality, July 5, 2007

³ Interview official 1 Treptow-Köpenick Municipality, January 10, 2007

exaggerated. Thirdly, other instruments than IC policy can provide guidelines to shape the international cooperation strategy and activities. In the German case this is the partnership agreement signed by the two cities and the Local Agenda 21 process in Treptow-Köpenick.

The cases show that North-South city partnerships are not activities on their own; rather they fit into a wider municipal IC policy framework. For local administrations, city partnerships are instruments to serve a range of objectives, including contributing to global awareness raising, facilitating civic society international cooperation initiatives and strengthening partner municipalities and local governance conditions in the South.

2. Local government human resources for C2C

A second factor impacting on the performance of municipalities in development cooperation refers to the availability of human resources for IC activities. The existence of organisation-wide consultation structures and the definition of key roles within the local administration determine whether a pool of experienced and skilled staff members is available for partnership projects. Individual capacities (both technical and partnership capacities to interact with the partner, such as language, cultural understanding and knowledge of the partner country) as well as the mechanisms to select staff for partnership projects are underlying determinants. The availability of human resources is particularly relevant as local governments are not core development experts and questions have been raised about the suitability and knowledgeability of local governments to act as partners in the international development arena.

A first point of attention is the positioning of IC in the organisation, the subsequent staff time available for IC, and how participation of staff and decision-making are organised. In Amstelveen municipality, the administrative responsibility for IC lies with the Policy Department, with twenty hours available per week. The number of individuals involved can be regarded as limited and fixed. There is no formalised consultation structure such as a working group or task force that brings together partnership participants. In Treptow-Köpenick, IC is administratively embedded in the Mayor's Office. The full-time position is officially for EU affairs only, and due to the absence of a clear C2C mandate, partnership activities are not formally administered. No additional municipal staff is involved in the partnership as there is no institutional capacity building relationship with Cajamarca. The lack of C2C policy instruments leaves decision making largely to the Mayor, making the partnership vulnerable to political will and commitment. In the Alphen administration, the four to six hours dedicated per week for IC can be regarded as very limited. Similar to Amstelveen, while a relatively limited but permanent group of officials is involved in the partnership, there is no formalised consultation structure within the local administration. Part of this is due to the unfortunate position of IC in the organisation. IC is embedded in the Department of Welfare and Education, which covers more than 30 policy topics and where IC is an odd one out⁴. The administration is considering shifting IC to the Municipal Manager's office. Such a position would not only permit more integral project planning and corresponding participation from the various Departments, it would also enhance the possibilities to make IC more visible and exert influence directly to the various Departments.

In Utrecht, the administrative responsibility of the partnership lies with the Department of Governmental and International Affairs, concerned with a wide range of international issues. In addition, within the administration, a decentralised consultation structure is set up to manage the León South East (LSE) project, which has been the key focus of the municipal partnership between Utrecht and León since 1998. The structure brings together various line Departments, staff and external advisors and an external consultant, the project coordinator. Such a multi-disciplinary team, which includes urban planners, architects, and social policy advisors, contributes to the integral approach the LSE project seeks to have. It also facilitates and coordinates the division of labour in accordance to the needs expressed by León municipality. The project group meets every six weeks. Four to six work visits are paid to León by one or two members. The

⁴ Interview official 1 Alphen Municipality, October 23, 2007

decentralised structure allows for broad consultation within the Utrecht administration. Not only do the involved officials deliver technical expertise, each line department also contributes financially to the LSE project. Such an integral project structure is a positive factor with regard to generating wide administrative support and additional funding for the partnership and facilitates matching existing expertise with the partner city's needs.

A second note that can be made is that with regard to human resources is that various mechanisms are in place for the selection of project participants. In Alphen and Amstelveen, participation was mainly based on invitation, according to expertise needed. In Utrecht, the LSE project group has selected through conducting interviews and reviewing CVs. Not only technical expertise but also knowledge of the Spanish language and experience with working in developing countries are considered, as well as the ability to understand the way of working of the Southern partner. Such criteria are important to take into account if local governments seek a professional approach to development cooperation, not only to maximize project performance but also to prevent the involvement of staff that merely seek the opportunity to travel or that may be very eager to participate but lack the necessary technical or cultural skills to cooperate effectively with the partner organisation.

3. Available financial resources and the capacity to tap from external funding

A third factor is concerned with the financial resources that municipalities make available for their North-South partnership. As municipal IC is voluntary, the availability of capital may be a vulnerable issue. In all four case studies, part of the municipal budget is allocated on a structural basis to international cooperation and the partnerships in particular. Table 1 provides an overview of the main annual financial figures for the four Northern cities.

Comparing the financial contribution for the C2C partnership with the total IC budget⁵, the four cities spend an average of 31% of their IC budget (LA21 budget for Treptow-Köpenick) on the city partnership. The figure is relatively low for Amstelveen, where a large bulk of the IC budget is absorbed by economic development/trade activities. For international partnerships, 70% is dedicated to VES. The figures for Alphen are rather surprising as Oudtshoorn is considered the single instrument for International Cooperation in Alphen. Apparently a large share is also allotted to civic society initiatives. The amount of €35.000 is based on the calculation of dedicating 1 former Dutch guilder to IC for each inhabitant of Alphen. As the partnership with Cajamarca is an element of Treptow-Köpenick's LA21 process, the figures show the IC share in the municipal contribution to LA21 activities. In 2006, the municipality for the first time allocated a structural budget to LA21 of €30.000 per annum. This helps overcome the vulnerable financial position of the partnership, as the municipality does not have a structural budget for IC.

Table 1: Annual municipal budgets for C2C and IC (Euro)

	Municipal budget for C2C partnership	Municipal budget for international cooperation*	Share of C2C partnership in the IC budget (%)
Amstelveen (2007)	30.000	146.000	21%
Treptow-Köpenick (2006)	10.400	30.000	35%
Utrecht (2007)	128.700	565.876	23%
Alphen (2006)	15.000	35.000	43%

* For Treptow-Köpenick: Municipal budget for Local Agenda 21

⁵ The overall IC budget relates to all IC activities. The figures are derived from an analysis of municipal budgets and IC policy and work programmes and from personal communication.

The figures only reflect structural contributions. In addition, Municipal Councils may decide on occasional donations. Examples include a project by Amstelveen for disabled people and donations for reconstruction after a fire in 2003 in VES, and emergency relief by Alphen (e.g. for the 2005 tsunami, and for the humanitarian crisis in Darfur). The amount of these ad-hoc donations have ranged from €1.000 to €25.000.

The budgets illustrate the financial resources available from the municipality as an institution. In addition, there are various examples where on an organisational and even an individual level, financial contributions are made to the partnerships. A very clear example of the former is the decentralised financial contribution that the various line Departments of Utrecht municipality make as member of the León South East Working Group. Six line Departments contribute €13.000 each to the project annually. The aggregate amount of €78.000 is an addition to the central municipal LSE budget and accounts for over 50% of the project budget of €130.000 made available by the Municipality annually⁶.

Within the local administration, various donations are raised for the North-South partnerships. Examples include fundraising activities during Christmas or at social staff gatherings (Alphen, Utrecht), or charity events such as the collection of second hand toys for shipment to the partner city (Alphen). Also at the individual level i.e. the level of staff members, some financial contributions to partnership projects can be observed. Examples include the donations of departing Councillors (Amstelveen) and officials (Utrecht). Also the donation of Christmas bonuses has been mentioned. Although such contributions can be considered as very modest, rather than providing a substantial financial contribution for the partnership, of more importance is their added value regarding awareness raising and creating support for the partnership among local administration staff. It also reflects the often tremendous personal commitment and dedication to the partnership and its projects. This will be discussed below.

Municipalities in the North are often heavily limited in their international aspirations due to restricted financial resources. In particular medium and small-sized municipalities do not have large budgets for international cooperation. Municipalities therefore turn to external funding sources that have increasingly become available by national and supranational organisations. In the case of Amstelveen, the main external funding has been provided by the Dutch local government association VNG⁷. In addition, the municipality has also been able to get funds from the Province of Noord Holland to which the city pertains, and from a local housing association. The financial contributions from the local administration itself are very modest in comparison to external sources. The contribution is mainly on in-kind basis, i.e. the hours invested by local officials providing their knowledge and expertise in exchanges. While it was estimated that in 2004 and 2005 a total of over €500.000 was invested in the partnership from external funding (Amstelveen Municipality, 2006), the contribution of the municipality itself was approximately €60.000 in that same period⁸. The large majority of financial contributions thus derive from external sources.

VNG has also been a major source of additional funding to Utrecht and Alphen. In Utrecht, VNG funding accounts for 40-50% of the annual budget for the LSE project, which was €124.262 in 2006. In Alphen, virtually all technical exchanges and work visits are financed by VNG subsidy. In recent years the City of Utrecht has further attracted external funds from a range of NGOs and CBOs. It was estimated that in 2007, €70.000 was allocated to León from the municipal budget against €502.000 from external sources (Municipality Utrecht, 2007). Also, both Amstelveen and Utrecht have been very successful in getting donors and other partner cities of VES and León, respectively, on board in their partnership projects, which generated further financial assistance.

⁶ Interview LSE working group member, May 10, 2005

⁷ Part of the Dutch national budget for development cooperation is channelled to VNG, which in turn is responsible for providing financial and technical assistance to Dutch municipalities engaged in North-South city partnerships. Between 1997 and 2001, 23% of Dutch municipalities involved in C2C received funding through the funding programme of VNG (Bontenbal, 2006).

⁸ Interview official 2 Amstelveen Municipality

Hence, for three of the four partnerships under study, external funding is important to the Northern cities. With the exception of Treptow-Köpenick, where no additional external funding has been observed, the majority of financial aid has derived from external sources. This implies a number of consequences.

- The cities in the North have caused a multiplier effect of financial resources channelled to their partner cities in the South. Through using C2C partnerships as development cooperation strategy, various flows of Dutch national and subnational funding sources are directed towards the local level in the South, allowing Dutch financial development assistance to become decentralised.
- It should be noted that while additional funding is often crucial to the financial viability of C2C partnerships, there is also a danger for local administration in becoming too dependent on external funds. The criteria to gain access to external funding may have a strong impact on partnership agendas and may impose limitations to utilising the full potential of municipal expertise. It can also undermine the continuity of partnerships when subsidies are withdrawn.

4. Political and administrative support for C2C

A fourth condition is political and administrative support that is needed to sustain C2C efforts. Hafteck (2003) considers it an advantage that IC is not a core task for municipalities, as they are not dependent on it for their existence. It however also puts forward one of the main vulnerabilities of IC: it is highly dependent on the political will and administrative support to make it a municipal affair. Will and commitment are relevant on both the political level, to bring about a political mandate which justifies IC activities, and on the administrative level, as for the large majority of local officials, IC is not a core responsibility and participants are involved on a voluntary basis.

Local political leaders take both key political and representative roles in the partnerships. Usually, the political responsibility for IC lies with the Mayor. Political leaders have the capacity to increase and sustain political support for the partnership within the Municipal council and to assist in attracting potential partners in partnership activities. Mayors play a significant role in partnerships and are often involved in work visits and other activities. It has been found that the representation and ceremonial aspects of international cooperation are perceived to be valued, especially by municipalities in the South. This is illustrated by the signing of cooperation agreements which has been done by Mayors in all four case studies, or official Mayoral visits to the partner city.

In Treptow-Köpenick, in the absence of a formal IC policy, the role of the Mayor and the need for political commitment are imperative. In Alphen, although IC is politically mandated and the Mayor is in strong favour of strengthening local governance in the partner city Oudtshoorn, wide political support and commitment from Council is virtually absent. The political engagement in IC can be regarded as very limited⁹. Weak political support make partnerships vulnerable, which became clear in 2004 when, in the context of municipal expenditure cuts, Council proposed to remove IC from the municipal budget. The case of Amstelveen shows some similarities. While there is Council support for IC, the city partnerships are rarely an agenda item for Council meetings and cannot be considered a relevant political issue¹⁰. In the case of Alphen and Amstelveen, we can therefore speak of 'passive political support', in which Municipal Council approves and tolerates International Cooperation rather than being pro-actively involved and politically interested.

The presence or absence of political concern is also reflected in the appearance of IC as an issue in election programmes of local political parties. From a review of election programmes of the various local political parties in Alphen and Utrecht presented during the municipal elections of March 2006, mixed evidence is found regarding the importance of MIC to local political parties. While the election programmes in Alphen reveal that local political parties hardly acknowledge the potential responsibility local governments could

⁹ Interview Mayor of Alphen aan den Rijn, March 15, 2006

¹⁰ Interview official 2 Amstelveen Municipality

take in regard to International Cooperation, the political parties in Utrecht are in general much more aware of the international position of the municipality. With some exceptions, the frequent appearance of IC as an item of municipal election programmes reflects that local political visions do contain an international dimension in Utrecht.

Support among administration staff for C2C activities has also been found to be of importance. While the objectives of solidarity and development cooperation have been mentioned as important driving forces to maintain international partnerships for municipal institutions, additional advantages have been mentioned that can be related to the sphere of human resource management. The possibility to participate in partnership activities can be regarded as fringe benefits for local government officials, fostering employees' satisfaction and motivation while at the same time strengthening the capacity of the local administration. The Mayor of Amstelveen stresses that participation in the partnership enriches his staff, empowering and inspiring them in their work. A senior manager stressed the importance that the partnership has offered staff that has been around for many years a "completely new point of view"¹¹. Partnership participation was seen as a relatively radical way to put daily work into perspective. The international experience through partnership participation is thus regarded as an opportunity for human resource development. In Amstelveen therefore, it is currently discussed whether the partnership activities can become a more integral part of HR policies as a fringe benefit.

While participants are believed to reap benefits from participating and are usually strongly committed, in most of the cases overall administrative support was found to be rather passive. The majority of staff are not involved in partnership activities. In Amstelveen, various attempts have been undertaken to broaden participation and to inform a wide range of officials on the partnership. Through the Intranet, lunch meetings and staff journal articles, various instruments are applied to widen administrative support. Nevertheless, participation is "limited and vulnerable"¹². Informative meetings on the partnership are not well attended, and reports on work visits in VES are hardly read by municipal staff. Also in Alphen it was noted that colleagues are not actively seeking to stay informed about partnership activities. In this light, the role of local champions acting as ambassadors to the partnership in their organisation and beyond appears crucial in all case study examples. Moreover, in all four cases, Mayors have proved to be vital in creating such support. Table 2 provides an overview of Mayoral actions that are illustrative to the champion role performed.

Table 2 The champion role of political leaders

Amstelveen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership for campaigning and fundraising after a 2003 fire that caused damage in the partner city • Mayor lobbied within Municipal Council to create political support before the 2006 Municipal Elections • Mayor lobbied in Dutch parliament and VNG for C2C and Peru
Treptow-Köpenick	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ceremonial openings of partnership exhibition by Mayor • Mayoral work visits to Cajamarca • Mayor allocates municipality's 'representation budget' to C2C
Utrecht	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular Mayoral visits to León • Chairing city-wide consultation meetings on C2C with León
Alphen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One technical exchange project started thanks to personal contact Mayor with counterpart in South Africa • Mayor has IC track record and has had a key advisory position in VNG activities regarding international relations • Mayor pleaded successfully to include an international paragraph in the municipal programme and budget (2002-2006) • Mayor seeks public relations opportunities with interviews in staff

¹¹ Interview official 1 Amstelveen municipality

¹² Interview Mayor of Amstelveen, July 5, 2007

5. Local government cooperation with development partners to support C2C efforts

A final condition for local governments as development agents is related to their potential to establish strategic alliances or relationships with other partners for their C2C efforts. As was explained, C2C is not confined to local administrations alone. The participation of civic society and other urban actors has been mentioned as a critical and distinguishing element of the C2C modality. Moreover, local governments in the North may seek external financial and capacity support from national government and official donors to sustain their C2C activities. The relationships of local governments discussed here are with a) international and national government partners, including local government associations, b) the decentralised public sector, c) NGOs and other external, non-governmental development agents, d) civic society, and e) the private sector.

National governments, local authority associations and international donors have set up a wide range of support programmes for C2C, e.g. United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), UNDP, UN-Habitat, the European Union, Cities Alliance and the European Council of Municipalities and Regions (CEMR). This has not only provided local authorities in the North with additional financial and technical resources to support their C2C activities, it also underlines the increased recognition of local governments as stakeholders in global governance and development and the growing importance of C2C as a means to provide development assistance to cities affected by poverty. Indeed, during the last decade, at the national and supranational level, local governments have increasingly become recognised as important actors for development. On the national level, local government associations play an active role in facilitating C2C. From the 1980s onwards, the establishment of national cooperation programmes and changes in legislation, mainly in Europe and Canada, greatly supported municipal cooperation (Haftack, 2003). The question is to what extent local governments make use of the support and assistance available from external funding and donors for their C2C activities. This not only refers to the extent to which municipalities attract external funding, as was explained above, is also entails tapping into technical capacity building to increase their performance as development partners. VNG has offered training programmes for Dutch municipal staff. Courses are provided on local governance in the South, the conditions of working in North-South partnerships and preparation for overseas missions. The three Dutch case study cities have participated in a number of these programmes. Amstelveen has also been successful in getting moral support from the Dutch embassy and financial cooperation in an environmental project in Villa El Salvador from the European Commission Delegation in Lima.

Various public institutions (government or semi-government) at the decentralised level have been found to participate in partnership activities. In Alphen and Amstelveen, local housing associations have been an actor in the partnership. In the latter, the association has provided external funding to set up a municipal technical support office in Villa El Salvador to advice on housing construction and getting access to government housing subsidies and construction licenses for VES citizens. In Alphen, the municipality has discussed the possibilities to get financial and technical assistance from the housing association for a project in Oudtshoorn on social housing. Furthermore, Amstelveen has been able to involve the Province of Noord-Holland which has provided funding to install a water and sewage system in one of the younger neighbourhoods of VES. In Utrecht, the municipal electricity company facilitated in the installation of solar energy panels in a rural development project outside León. In Treptow-Köpenick, no actors of this category are part of the partnership network.

National NGOs and other external development agents are partners that bring in external resources to local governments for their C2C activities, either financial or know-how related. These include various national subsidy schemes aimed at decentralised development cooperation and subcontracting project consultants. In Utrecht, various

Dutch NGOs (MFOs¹³) have contributed to partnership activities and have financed awareness raising projects. Moreover these organisations have contributed to existing local projects through national funding schemes that double the investments made, such as KPA¹⁴. Treptow-Köpenick has been able to invite a number of officials and students from Cajamarca on a three month professional environment-related internship in Germany, financed by the ASA programme¹⁵. Utrecht and Alphen have made use of external consultants, bringing in development expertise and know-how to C2C projects that were not available within the local administration.

The relationships of local governments with civic society have been found to be ample and diverse. In all cases except Amstelveen, a coordinating civic society entity is a central element of the local C2C partnership architecture. These entities can be defined as non-governmental organisations that have been established to carry out activities in the framework of the C2C partnership. They have a unique position in the sense that their existence is based primarily on the C2C partnership, while the partnership in most of the cases is not a core issue for other participating actors, including local government. The coordinating entities are often funded by the local administrations, to put into practice the objective of awareness raising and education. For other civic society actors involved in the C2C partnership, it has a coordinating and facilitating role in the various collaborations and projects executed in the partner city. For example in Utrecht, the Foundation Utrecht-León constitutes the coordinating entity. It channels initiatives from civic society to support León, facilitates twinning of schools and child care centres in both cities, sets up development projects in León in the field of education, employment creation and culture and aims at the organisational strengthening of Leonese NGOs and micro-finance schemes. The foundation is funded by the municipality to cover administration costs. In return, it is engaged with awareness raising and education issues which is an important objective in the municipality's IC policy. In Alphen and Treptow-Köpenick, similar coordinating civic society entities exist. They have an additional role in getting on board and facilitating various civic society groups in C2C activities, including schools and youth, citizens (volunteers, neighbourhood committees), churches, libraries, private charity funds, etc.

The practice of local governments liaising with the private sector in C2C activities can be regarded as very limited. Moreover, business participation is often channelled through local charity wings of business associations such as Rotary clubs representing the business sector rather than the involvement of local businesses themselves. In the three Dutch cities, rotary clubs have been an actor in the partnerships, donating money or running charity projects. Some individual businesses have been found to donate directly on an ad hoc basis. In Alphen, the local Fair Trade shop sells products made by a small-scale handicraft business in Oudtshoorn. Private sector contributions to C2C activities is however mostly facilitated by the coordinating civic society entities and do usually not directly relate to the activities of local governments.

Conclusions

This paper has discussed the role of local governments in development cooperation to help understand the underlying factors that shape this role and that explain its successes and failures to a large extent. The examples from the Netherlands and Germany have shown that due to the voluntary character of municipal involvement in North-South cooperation, C2C efforts need to be institutionalised in local administrations in order to be sustained. This includes having a formal international cooperation policy framework in place, with the necessary financial and human capital available. Gaining political and

¹³ 10% of the national government budget for Dutch development cooperation is disbursed annually through *medefinancieringsorganisaties* (MFOs) or co-financing organizations. These NGOs cooperate with local partner organizations in the South and include, amongst others, Oxfam/Novib and Cordaid.

¹⁴ The KPA programme for small-scale local activities increases fundraising aimed at developing countries with a maximum contribution of 50% of the total amount, provided that awareness raising activities are included.

¹⁵ The ASA programme is a network for 'learning in the field of development policy' and offers internships in Germany to young professionals and students from developing countries.

administrative support for C2C activities is equally important. As resources are often limited and development cooperation is not the *raison d'être* of municipal organisations, the case studies reveal that seeking external support for funding and know-how amplifies the opportunities for C2C. Building multi-sectoral partnerships with local community actors strengthens the necessary public support and widens participation.

It should be noted that in order to fully understand the impact of C2C on local governance strengthening and community development in the South, more questions need to be answered. The position of local governments in the South to be engaged in C2C is a first area. This includes many of the conditions discussed here, as well as the institutional framework municipalities are operating in, such as the country's decentralisation agenda and the fact that development assistance flowing directly to local levels is not always appreciated by national governments in the South. It can be argued that in order to fully reap the benefits of C2C, local governments in the South need to have a locally owned development strategy in place on which C2C interventions can build. This also allows for the coordination of projects from various C2C partnerships, as many municipalities have more than one partner city (León and Villa El Salvador are examples). A second area relates to the question how cities operate in a partnership context that connects different realities in North and South. C2C links institutions of the same kind with relatively similar characteristics, activities and roles in communities, which brings about a relatively high level of mutual understanding. At the same time, structural inequalities are persistent in North-South partnerships with the North having financial, technological and institutional advantages over the South. If development intervention is believed to be most effective when it is based on existing needs and a development strategy put forward by the partner in the South, there is a need to understand how C2C partnerships can be shaped to respond to such conditions.

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