

Institutional Collaboration for Developing Local Democracy: A Literature Review

Philippa Barnes & Helena Iacobaeus



Preface



**By Johan Lilja, Secretary General,
Swedish International Centre for Local Democracy**

The mandate of the Swedish International Centre for Local Democracy (ICLD) is to contribute to poverty reduction by promoting local democracy in low- and middle-income countries. In order to fulfil this mandate, we promote and encourage decentralised cooperation through our municipal partnership programme; capacity-building through our international training programmes; and research through our knowledge Centre. ICLD documents and publishes key lessons learned from our ongoing activities, initiates and funds relevant research, engages in scholarly networks, connects relevant researchers with practitioners, and organises conferences and workshops.

This report, 'Institutional Collaboration for Developing Local Democracy: A Literature Review', is one of the results of the on-going learning evaluation of the partnership between Region Östergötland, Sweden, and Uasin Gishu, Kenya, as part of ICLD's Network for Equitable Health. What makes this report especially interesting is the useful recommendations not only to the work within ICLD but to all organisations that work with institutional collaboration and exchange.

I was encouraged to find that many of the identified key ingredients for successful institutional collaborations are

integral to ICLD's municipal partnerships. Important factors such as political support, public participation, learning and knowledge exchange are essential for the partnerships and something that ICLD will continue to invest in. At the same time, the report highlights the challenges of mutuality, or two-way learning, which can be difficult in so-called North-South partnerships. One of the answers to this challenge is to remain committed to strengthen demand-driven collaboration that accounts for the context that the local governments are in.

In our efforts to continuously improve the outcomes of our programmes, research such as this play an important role gathering and analysing the knowledge from the fields where we operate. In the end, we hope that this study can help local governments that are part of municipal partnerships improve their work as well as inspire new partnerships to take shape.

Visby, Sweden

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Johan Lilja'.

Johan Lilja, November 2022

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Executive Summary

This literature review presents findings from earlier research on institutional collaboration for developing local democracy. Local authorities engage in a range of different collaborative relationships with partners abroad to exchange knowledge and practices to the assumed benefit of all parties. Common examples of this are municipal partnerships, twinning projects and sister cities. This is an interesting area to study since it provides knowledge that can be of use to local politicians and public servants who are, or aim to be, involved in institutional collaboration.

The review seeks to identify the critical aspects of collaborative partnerships for local democracy development in existing research and the implications of these for practitioners. It examines relevant peer-reviewed articles accumulated through systematic searches on two search engines, Scopus and UniSearch, in 2021. This involved different types of institutional collaboration in order to present an overview of common challenges, opportunities and success factors for collaborative programmes set within the wider field of local democracy development. Key aspects for collaboration are examined regarding North-South dynamics and issues of mutuality in learning, participation, accountability, and transparency. The most common forms of collaboration studied in the articles were at the municipal or city level, often involving wider community groups. Despite being promoted as holding great potential due to institutional similarities that traditional development actors lack, there is a range of challenges associated with these partnerships. The literature centres around the dynamics of partnerships and which factors lead to achieving desired outcomes.

There are three main types of collaboration differing in levels of formal institutional structure. The first is network, which is loose, horizontal structures lacking articulated goals and commitments. The second is cooperation, which has mutual gains as the main characteristic. The final is partnership, which is the most structured and features agreements, plans of action and independent partners (Baud 2002).

Important themes in the literature were mutual learning and the links between trust building, accountability,

transparency and participation. While many of the researchers identified different success factors for collaboration projects, recurring factors were political support, public participation, communication through information and knowledge exchange, structured leadership and management and relationships, and trust between partner members.

This literature review is made in connection to a municipal partnership project between Region Östergötland, Sweden and Uasin Gishu, Kenya. The municipal partnership is called “Developing cancer health care through institutional collaboration” and is financed by the Swedish International Centre for Local Democracy.

Key findings

One of the key issues in collaborative partnerships is the process of learning. Institutional collaboration is based on the premise of resource and knowledge exchange. Differences in knowledge is a motivating factor in the establishment of partnerships, but it also an imparity to be considered (see e.g. Johnson & Wilson 2006). The literature examining the role of mutuality and learning in institutional collaborations for local democracy presents two main points.

- How knowledge and learning expectations are formulated in the outcomes for the collaboration, especially when there is a North-South partnership and thus potentially greater inequalities.
- Whether learning is formal or informal, as the latter is often overlooked in the process and therefore a missed contribution to mutuality, and how these different forms are being lifted from individual to organisational level.

Furthermore, *public participation* is a democratic key-stone in the policy-making process, since it can both strengthen democratic values such as legitimacy, justice, and effectiveness in governance and improve the quality of service provision (Fung, 2015). *Who* participates and *how* were important questions were important questions in the literature (see e.g. Tjandradewi et al. 2006). Participation outcomes are mixed for both local democracy in general and when targeted by institutional collaborations. Several factors may contribute to improved outcomes. To use existing frameworks and maintain informed personnel was important for participatory governance improvement. A mix of participation from municipal and community actors was also proposed support municipal partnership outcomes (Cremer et al. 2001). However, it should be noted that

while the design of participation opportunities can have a levelling effect, it can also result in preserved social inequities (Mayer and Nguyen Long 2021).

In the literature, links were made between public participation, democratic accountability, transparency in public affairs and public trust. Opportunities for participation also implies possibilities for transparency and for accountability of elected representatives and government officials towards local citizens (Devas 2003). Means of accountability are necessary for developing trust, which continues the pattern of conceptual linkage as trust interlinks with transparency. Democratic accountability can occur through two means: the formal, institutional structures and the networks and relation between official political actors and agencies and actors within civil society. It is proposed that local authorities, if they have the capacity, can mediate between the different levels in order to improve outcomes (Madon, Krishna, & Michael 2010). Furthermore, transparency can bolster public trust in local decision-making processes (Arkorful, Lugu, Hammond & Basiru 2021). As a concept, transparency has been promoted in the good governance agenda for decades. It, too, can be approached from either vertical direction in terms of transparency to whom – upwards to donors/institutions or downwards to citizens.

Free flows of information are important for both good governance and for local collaboration projects (Tjandradewi & Marcotullio 2009). With the help of digital technologies, partners can share information that increases transparency and understanding of the different local contexts, which in turn creates higher levels of mutual trust in their municipal collaboration.



Recommendations

A critical aspect across all studies was the role of local context. The majority of reviewed articles were based on single case studies which means that their findings were strongly reflective of the specific case dynamics. Also, the common elements (mutuality, participation etc.) included the role of local context as a necessary consideration.

This is taken into account in De Villiers' (2009) model for creating alliance capability during a partnership process. He suggests reaching alliance capability in stages with emphasis on the start and the ongoing evaluation of the partnership by:

- Strategizing
- Identifying potential partners
- Evaluating partners
- Negotiating (partner selection, project planning and agreement signing)
- Implementing and measuring progress

This allows the individual context-dependent case studies to speak to common framework for practitioners, who may then adapt for the context of their collaboration and local democracy conditions.

In evaluating the potential of partnerships, there are two key problems to take note of: whether partnerships simply are re-creations of old dynamics but in new clothes, and unequal structural differences in the partnerships. These must be addressed by focusing on local context (culture, knowledge and values), balancing the relationship and letting the collaboration be demand-driven (Bontenbal 2009).

One of the things that emerges from the literature is that many municipal partnerships fail to live up to their goals. This makes it important to study earlier projects to identify potential success factors shared by the sustainable and goal-fulfilling partnerships. The most frequently mentioned success factors for institutional collaboration programmes across the relevant literature were:

- political support
- public participation
- communication through information and knowledge exchange (formal and informal)
- structured leadership and management
- relationships and trust between partner members

The following success factors were less frequently mentioned but also common in the material:

- flexibility and ongoing adaptation via evaluation
- partner complementarity
- resources (staffing and financial)
- multi-sectoral engagement
- a common vision with strategic plan

The degree to which this range of success factors will be important for each collaboration will require reflection on and adaptation to the context of each project. Furthermore, the factors should be taken into account at different stages of partnership formation and implementation.

We recommend practitioners to reflect on what parts, if any, the above-mentioned success factors play in their own projects and whether some of them could be added, or strengthened, in order to develop the partnership further.

Questions for practitioners:

How do you transfer different types of knowledge in your project:

- Between collaborative institutions?
- From practitioner to organisational level?

How do you use your existing frameworks to ensure participation in the collaboration?

Which actors could contribute to the collaboration in order to extend participation?

How and when is the project monitored?

How are inequalities for different groups addressed regarding:

The flow of information communication at the local level?

The outcomes of service delivery to the public?

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Introduction

International local governance partnerships have become a widespread practice that hold much potential. Local authorities engage in a range of different collaborative relationships to exchange knowledge and practices to the assumed benefit of all parties. This review is linked to such a collaborative municipal partnership project between Region Östergötland, Sweden and Uasin Gishu, Kenya financed by the Swedish International Centre for Local Democracy. Accordingly, the review seeks to identify the critical aspects of collaborative partnerships for local democracy development in existing research and the implications of these for practitioners.

A move towards localised democracy through decentralisation reforms has been a global trend. In order to foster and support the shift to local governance, institutional collaborations have risen in popularity as a new means of capacity building and development approach. The most common forms of collaboration have been at the municipal or city level, often involving wider community groups. Development donors have provided financing of such programmes focused on capacity building. These have often involved North-South partnerships on the premise of information and knowledge exchange resulting in reciprocity. Despite being promoted as holding great potential due to institutional similarities that traditional development actors lack, there are a range of challenges associated with these partnerships. A successful partnership and programme is needed regardless of the aim being for improved education, waste management or policy consultation processes. The literature centres around the dynamics of partnerships and which factors lead to achieving outcomes within collaborative programmes.

This review examines relevant studies involving different types of institutional collaboration in order to present an overview of common challenges, opportunities and success factors for collaborative programmes set within the wider field of local democracy development. Key aspects for collaboration are examined regarding North-South dynamics and issues of mutuality in learning, participation, accountability, and transparency. Each section concludes with key questions for con-

templation in local democracy collaborations reflective of reviewed studies. There are a large range of success factors for institutional collaboration promoted within the breadth of the literature which are presented individually before being compiled. These provide the foundation for a potential model process of collaboration. The findings of the literature review are assessed in regards to the contextual nature of many of the studies and how the literature may be utilised for developing understandings and approaches for practitioners in the field.

Disposition

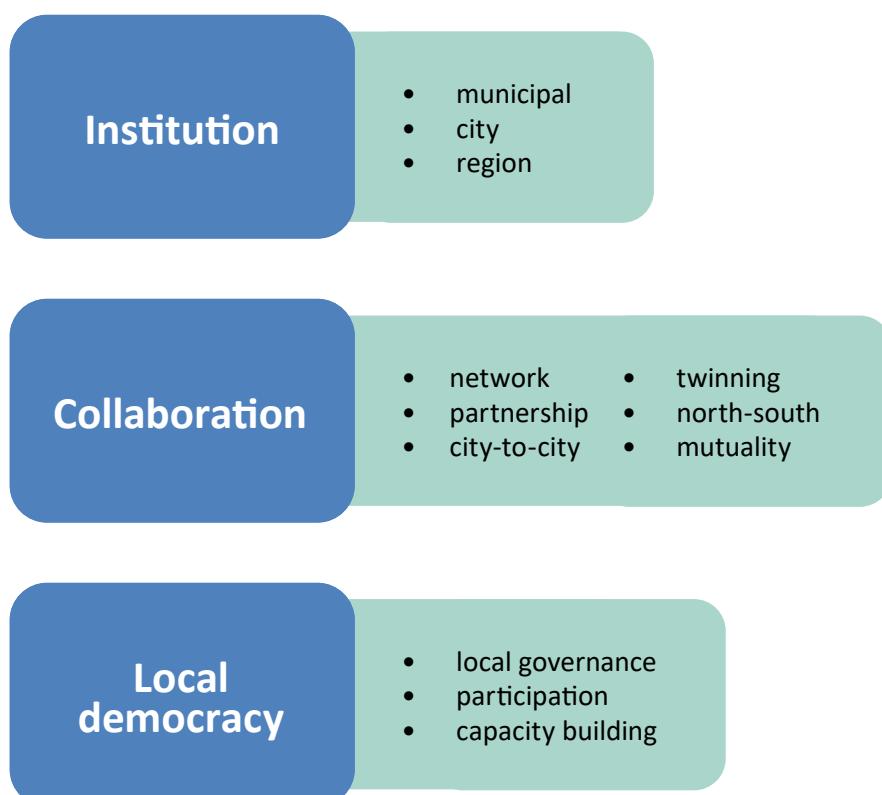
The following chapter describes the approach and implementation of the method for identifying relevant literature. Chapter three provides an overview of the local democracy field that has shaped the nature of collaborations before means and categories of collaborations are presented in chapter four. Chapter five then examines important thematical aspects that emerged from the literature whereby a key concern revolves around the frequent North-South nature of collaborations for local democracy. Chapter six collates ‘success factors’ from the surveyed literature, producing a table ranked by frequency. These wide-ranging factors are subsequently filtered into a model for collaboration. The final chapter presents conclusions and reflections for how the results of this literature review may be utilised.

Method

This overview aims to provide a broad picture of previous research on institutional collaborations for local democracy. Literature studies are central to research and can be done in many different ways depending on the purpose of the study (Wang 2019; Grant & Booth 2009). This is a mapping literature study with a central focus and some form of delimitation for the area (Wang 2019). The question is: “What research has been published in the field of institutional collaboration for developing local democracy and related areas?” This question is very broad as the terms used are not unambiguous but often have many synonyms. The purpose of the study is not only to answer this research question, but also to create an overview of the important related concepts. Through this, it is possible to see where the gaps emerge in the field. Our literature study contains both qualitative and quantitative research as they contribute relevant and important knowledge about collaborations for local democracy; one creates

understanding (Myers 2013) and the other examines causal relationships with statistical methods (Bryman 2016). The overwhelming majority of the literature was qualitatively oriented.

Literature was accumulated through systematic searches on two search engines: Scopus and UniSearch in 2021. These databases are central in social science research and can provide a broad picture of the research area. The study is based on peer-reviewed articles found through searches. The searches used key terms and their synonyms, taking cues from key articles and the terminology and concepts used in these. The searches were formatted to include all variants of keywords in each area in combination with all variants of keywords in the other areas. The search indicated further key terms that were used in the literature as a means to refine the search - presented under each area below. These areas were:



The searches were ranked in order of relevance and each abstract assessed for applicability to the review focus. A number of delimitations were made in order to be able to go through a reasonable number of articles. The increase of additional search words was able to narrow the results down from thousands. As articles were listed in order of relevance, it became clear when the search results were too far removed from the subject area. Abstracts were selected and those that did not seem relevant were subsequently eliminated. Furthermore, articles that appeared relevant in the abstract, but which turned out not to be of good quality when read in full have thus been removed. Further literature identification was done through snowballing from key articles: databases provide secondary articles citing these works which were assessed for relevance; and articles' reference lists were assessed for further relevant material in the field. All articles that appeared to align with the review focus were listed in a document and arranged thematically. The themes were then divided amongst the researchers who reviewed the articles before compiling the findings and determining further emergent themes amongst the literature to structure the review. The report is primarily focused on current research from recent years, but older studies that have been important for the research field have been included to use original sources. Additional articles are included in the review where background material is needed for context or sheds further light upon key areas within the local democracy field in which the institutional collaborations seek to operate.

The following chapters report the results of our searches. In the research that was identified, we have limited the material to focusing on peer-reviewed social science studies that deal with local democracy collaborations. To show key features, recurring foci and results within each section, we have selected relevant studies based on reading a large number of abstracts. See Appendix A for articles with specific findings on local democracy collaborations. We also provide examples, which should be seen as illustrations of research in this theme. However, many of the areas examined within this review are interrelated. Key aspects were allowed to emerge organically from the literature as repeated

areas of focus were identified. The wider project seeks to target areas of participation, accountability, transparency and equity and therefore, these were incorporated where possible.

The Process of Local Democracy: Decentralisation

One of the biggest discussions within local democracy is regarding the role of decentralisation. This is the backdrop to the changing nature of institutional collaborations and therefore is briefly reviewed to provide the context of related collaborative trends. Institutional collaborations have both evolved from and mirrored the changing local democracy landscape; they work to address challenges within the decentralisation process whilst also being afflicted by them.

In order to develop local governance systems, decentralisation must first occur in which elements of centralised (state) power are transferred down to the local level. Decentralisation has long been coupled with democracy (Andrews & de Vries, 2007). Decentralisation must be differentiated from associated concepts/processes and has gone through different phases in both approach and implementation, as aptly put by Mawhood (1983) who stated, "decentralization is a word that has been used by different people to mean a good many different things." There are associated processes that can either be viewed as forms of or separate from decentralisation. Regardless of how they are classified, these processes can co-exist and overlap in the development of local democracy (Kessy & McCourt, 2010).

Deconcentration is when only administrative decentralisation occurs. Deconcentration is viewed as lacking key participatory and accountability measures and therefore is limited in contributions towards local democracy building (Hope, 2000).

Delegation lacks two-way accountability and the central government may revoke this (Hope, 2000).

Devolution involves an increased separateness and permanence in dividing the central and local gov-

ernments and thus increased local-level autonomy (Hope, 2000; Chowdhury, 2017; Kessy, 2013). Blair (2000) states devolution must include democratic reforms in order to be meaningful and not only occur at the administrative level (as with deconcentration).

Decentralisation has been categorised into two ‘waves’. The first spanned the 1960s and 1970s and had a distinct lack of participatory focus and did not result in meaningful structural change (Cheema & Rondinelli, 2007). The second wave occurred in the 1990s and was centred in the related process of devolution to address the aforementioned lack of structural power reforms away from central governments according to the principle of subsidiarity (Hafteck, 2003; Chowdhury, 2017; Cheema & Rondinelli, 2007). In line with the general political trend of the time, the role of the market and private actors received increasing attention in decentralisation approaches (Cheema & Rondinelli, 2007; Frey, 2008). It is this second wave that gave rise to the ‘types’ of decentralisation. Decentralisation is commonly divided into three main types: administrative, fiscal and political (Robinson, 2007). In examining possible definitions, Kessy (2013, p. 216) finds a commonality in that all “construe the process of decentralization as an initiative engineered to empower people by giving them an opportunity to decide on matters of significance to their lives”. Decentralisation re-centres or transfers power towards affected populaces and generates greater participation.

The rationale follows development through democracy through participation through decentralisation (local governance) (Odigbo, 2013). This was entrenched in development approaches in Africa, where many of the collaborative partnerships are located, through the 1990 African Charter for Popular Participation in Development and Transformation (Enaifoghe & Toyin, 2019, p. 94). The widespread assumption of decentralisation enhancing participation is both used as a motivation and critique of the dominant trend. Indeed, the World Bank has used decentralisation (and coupled participation) as a measure for local governance despite its own reports lacking support for this relationship (see Andrews & de Vries, 2007).

Bossert (1998, pp. 1513-1514) outlines the need for a decentralisation framework that is able to:

- Define and measure the degrees of decentralisation across cases
- Define the mechanisms that affect local decisions
- Differentiate the processes and outcomes of decentralised vs centralised systems to determine the different options for each
- Develop performance measures to assess the outcomes of the aforementioned

One of the main discussions within the newer wave of decentralisation is how to shift these trends into practical application. This has resulted in Second Generation Theory (SGT) which builds upon the second wave (Kessy, 2013). SGT features an increased inclusion of liberal economic principles in addressing issues of efficiency (and service delivery) through decentralisation. SGT can be summarised as underpinned in political economic assumptions: examining the roles of stakeholders and incentives; unequal access to information; emphasis on the empirical, not normative; and applied to the full spectrum of countries (Saito, 2011 as cited in Kessy, 2013). This refocuses decentralisation towards means of improving the efficacy of local governance through public and private market relations. It is argued that it is fiscal autonomy that is critical in decentralisation and thus, effective local service delivery.

The economic motivations for decentralisation are complemented by the political; decentralisation is linked with local democracy promotion and good governance. Once again, this is based upon the notion of participation and in particular that which is grounded in empowerment (see Nsibambi, 1998; Francis & James, 2003). The World Bank has stipulated decentralisation as a condition of good governance (Andrews & de Vries, 2007). The rationale lies in decentralisation increasing citizen participation and thus it has been used as a counter measure against post-independence centralisation and any associated authoritarianism. Many of the collaborative partnerships take place in countries seeking to redress these through local democracy development. Improved service delivery is tied to that of the political and economic realms of decentralisation.

tion, whereby local governments are assumed to provide better adapted responses to local context (Kessy, 2013). This assumed cycle of improvement then becomes intertwined with increased equity and development (Agrawal & Ribot, 1999). The literature links the process of decentralisation both directly and indirectly with participation, local democracy and local development.

The above trends have had a direct impact on how local capacity building for decentralisation reforms have been approached, resulting in a shift away from hierarchical relations and towards those of partnerships. The range of collaborative actors has changed in scope and nature. Cooperation now involves other local governments and communities, civil society, and the private sector instead of, or in addition to, top-down donors. Partnerships, as a form of institutional collaboration, have increased in focus as development cooperation has evolved beyond the donor-recipient model in order to address hierarchical imbalances. The wave of decentralisation reforms created the need for local institutional development and this gave rise to City-to-City (C2C) and municipal collaborations. Decentralisation has created the localisation of governance and democracy as well as the localisation of development. Increasingly local governments have been “recognised as relevant actors in international development cooperation through city-to-city cooperation structures, which have been praised as an effective mechanism for local government capacity building” (Bontenbal, 2013). C2C cooperation is seen as a form of decentralised development using local authorities (Bontenbal & Van Lindert, 2008). Partnerships have become strongly associated with capacity development, evolving alongside the decentralisation trends to focus on building “the conditions to set out sustainable development strategies based on the needs expressed by local actors” (Bontenbal, 2009, p. 101).

Institutional Collaborations

Means of Collaboration: Networks, Cooperation, Partnerships

Though writing on institutional collaboration for development research, Baud (2002) classifies general collaboration types that are useful in practice. There are three main types of collaboration differing in levels of formal institutional structure. The first is networks which are loose, horizontal structures lacking articulated goals and commitments. The second is cooperation which has mutual gains as the main characteristic leading to a degree of organisation. The final is partnerships which are the most structured and feature agreements, plans of action and independent partners (Baud, 2002, pp. 154-155). There has been a focus on expanding conceptualisations of partnerships: “what works are partnerships and not just government-community partnerships, but broader partnerships involving non-governmental and multigovernmental agencies, private enterprise and people who can provide science-based information in a way that communities can use effectively for their own purposes.” (Taylor et al., 1995 as quoted in Hewitt, 2002, p.229)

In practice, these categories are blurred and often mixed. Local context is often flagged as a critical feature to be accounted for in service delivery and the building of local democracy. However, it is equally an issue for the dissemination of knowledge and models that underly the aforementioned practices. A spectrum exists ranging from the universally promoted by the research community to that driven by on-the-ground practice which incorporates all types of knowledges. Baud (2002, p. 155) proposes that there is an important middle-range of knowledge occurring at regional levels. It is institutional collaboration that can facilitate the movement between locally embedded knowledge and generalised knowledge. There is an ongoing two-way exchange between these in order to continually develop both. The questions raised by Baud (for collaborative development research) can be directly transferred to that focus of this review when re-orienting to institutional collaboration for local democracy.

- *“What actors are involved and whose ... agendas are prioritised?”*
- *“How does interaction in North-South ... partnerships take place and contribute to knowledge production and capacity enhancement?”*
- *“How are the outcomes of research used by policy-makers and other stakeholders?”*

(Baud, 2002, p. 155)

Categories of Cooperation

There are several ways of defining institutional collaboration on the global-local level that span the means of collaboration. Many of the definitions are partly overlapping and some are used as synonyms.

Twinning is “a form of collaboration between similar institutions that have similar responsibilities and tasks to execute ... based on principles of parity and similarity ... between central government bodies, universities, hospitals and other public services (Bontenbal, 2013, p. 85). At the most simple level twinning can be taken as “a long-term partnership between communities in different cities or towns” (De Villiers, et al., p. 1). Twinning can be conceptualised through three inter-related approaches:

- *“Associative phase (twinning based on friendship, cultural exchange);*
- *“Reciprocal phase (twinning based on educational exchange, people exchange);*
- *“Commercial exchange phase (twinning based on economic development).”*

(De Villiers, et al., p. 2)

There is overlap between the phases as twinning is not static in process nor over the longue durée.

Sister cities occur through city or community twinning that incorporates other sectors such as civil society, private sector or education etc. Relations are built beyond the local government level (De Villiers, et al., 2007). Sister cities/twinning were created post WWII as part of the rebuilding process in Europe (Cremer et al. 2001).

Municipal international cooperation (MIC) is characterised with an aim “normally focused on technical cooperation which constitutes capacity-building initiatives between Northern and Southern municipalities or municipalities working together on a certain theme or initiative” (De Villiers, et al., 2007, p. 2). Devers-Kanoglu (2009) states that municipal partnerships hold such potential for both sustainable development and education that there needs to be greater understanding of the involved processes of learning. Different actors in the cooperation have different expectations of learning and associated outcomes. “Municipal partnerships of this kind can be perceived as unique frameworks for cooperative action amongst different individuals and groups on a local level as well as with their respective partners abroad” (Devers-Kanoglu, 2009, p. 203). The multitude of sites and means of cooperation and learning have contributed to the contextuality of studies. Municipal cooperative relationships can be refined into two categories:

- *“Intra-municipal’ cooperation which takes place through interaction and partnerships amongst individuals and groups on a local level*
- *‘Inter-municipal’ cooperation which materializes through interaction and partnerships between the respective municipalities, groups, and individuals involved. This can result in a complex inter-municipal network”*

(Devers-Kanoglu, 2009, p. 203)

MICs can include **City-to-City cooperation** (C2C), which may also be included within sister cities.

“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”

(Bontenbal, 2009, p. 101)

C2Cs are long-term, North-South municipal cooperation with the inclusion of targeted citizen involvement using peer-to-peer programmes (Bontenbal & Van Lindert, 2009). This type of collaboration emerged due to the weaknesses that resulted from widespread decentralisation such as limited financial resourcing that has hampered effective service delivery at the local level. The term was created by UN-Habitat in the 2000s. A key reason for C2C cooperation is due to the pre-existing municipal-level competences of the local authorities which is something that traditional development actors may lack (Hafteck, 2003). The C2C partnerships have also developed to reflect the dominance of good governance. Here the focus lies in institutional strengthening for local governance and it is assessed through performance (Bontenbal, 2009). One of the main points of difference in this approach to development is the emphasis on mutuality. Instead of benefits occurring in a one-way flow, C2C should provide benefits to both the North and the South, be it of awareness, understanding or capacity building. The mutuality then reinforces the collaboration and provides ownership and legitimacy to the partnership (Bontenbal, 2013, p. 86). Keiner and Kim (2007) focus on city-based networks for sustainable development. They propose that C2C cooperation interacts with the following network types:

- “autonomy of member cities and voluntary membership;
- polycentric, horizontal and non-hierarchical organization;

- *decentralized cooperation among member cities”*
(Kern, 2001 as cited in Keiner & Kim, 2007)

There are additional categories that can include a local democracy focus. Transnational municipal networks exist along with a multitude of forms of collaborative governance (private-public stakeholders). Often these target policy areas beyond local governance scope, such as climate governance, but use local actors to address them (see Fünfgeld, 2015; Ansell & Gash, 2008; Kern & Bulkeley, 2009)

Decentralised Cooperation (DC) involves twinning at different levels for development purposes. Hafteck (2003, p. 336) clarifies that there are more specific features to DC that do not apply to all forms of cooperation between decentralised actors. The main features of this category are:

- Local government as primary actors
- Aim of (sustainable) local development
- Means are exchanged (people, knowledge, financial resources)
- Involvement of additional ‘locally-based actors’ (civil society, private and not-for-profit sectors)

DC incorporates nearly all forms of local government collaboration within the development arena. The many facets of DC are presented in Hafteck’s (2003, s. 341) figure below.

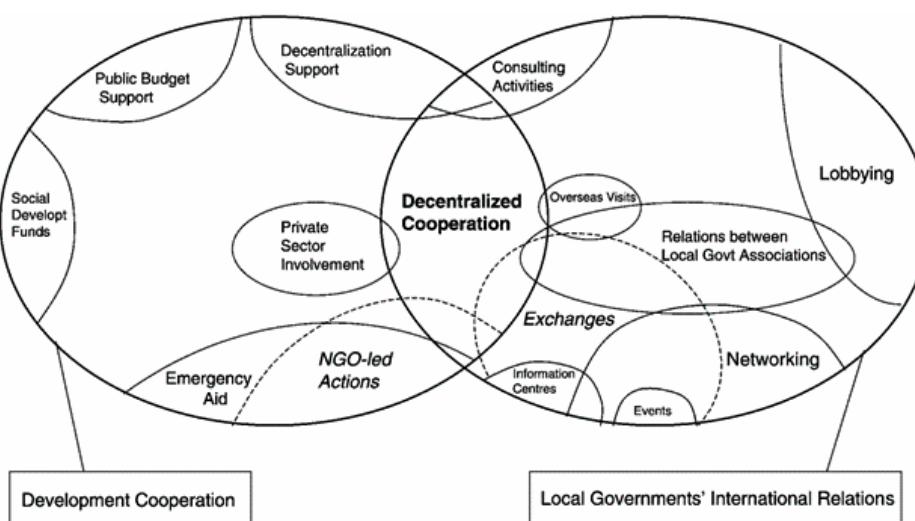


Figure 1
Decentralised cooperation: conceptual mapping from Hafteck (2003, p.341). Image reproduced with permission of the rights holder, John Wiley and Sons.

Decentralised cooperation, and the other forms presented above, can be summarised as “substantial collaborative relationships between sub-national governments from different countries, aiming at sustainable local development, implying some form of exchange or support carried out by these institutions or other locally based actors” (Hafteck, 2003, p. 336). These types (MIC, sister cities and DC) can go back and forth in nature as actors and funding change over time. For the most part, the literature reviewed fits within this scope.

Important Aspects of Institutional Collaboration

In evaluating the potential of partnerships there are two key problems to be acknowledged: whether partnerships are simply a re-creation of old dynamics but in new clothes; and unequal structural differences in the partnerships. These must be addressed by focusing on local context (culture, knowledge and values), balancing the relationship and letting the collaboration be demand-driven (Bontenbal, 2009, p. 101). The following sections examine how these problems are appraised in the literature.

North-South Dynamics – Mutuality and Learning

One of the key issues that emerges is in regards to the process of learning within collaborative partnerships. Institutional collaboration is based upon the premise of resource and knowledge exchange and therefore potential inequalities require investigation as a precursor to capacity building outcomes (local democratic development) being considered. Differences in knowledge is a motivating factor in the establishment of partnerships, but it also an imparity to be considered. North-South institutional collaboration has the ability to address knowledge divides – both in terms of research and practice for capacity development (Baud, 2002). That is not to say that this is a one-way flow from North to the South, but that different knowledge systems can be exchanged. Mutuality can be viewed in terms of “knowledge parity” whereby there is a general shared approach to and understanding of the field

at hand and a feeling of common professional status (Johnson & Wilson, 2006 as cited in Bontenbal, 2013). Johnson and Wilson (2006; 2007; 2009) have written widely on the role of mutuality, or rather the gap in such, in North-South municipal partnerships. They propose that mutuality must be addressed for partnership learning to be achieved (Johnson & Wilson, 2006, p. 71). Resource inequalities can be compensated by shared tacit and embedded knowledge between practitioners at the individual level. Information transfer amongst peers is highly reliant upon shared understandings of the problem. (Johnson & Wilson, 2006, p. 76). Inter-personal trust was also identified as an important factor that required active building in order to aid learning and contribute to increasing the depth of projects.

In one study of a United Kingdom-Uganda municipal partnership, mutual learning occurred through the challenge of local context (Johnson & Wilson, 2006). The southern practitioners learnt of the northern models in different projects, whilst the northern practitioners were challenged by the need to adapt models to the southern context. Municipal models could not be transferred verbatim and instead the models were further developed for the southern context (Johnson & Wilson, 2006, p. 78). In the UK-Uganda case, the different points of exchange resulted in improvements for the UK municipal processes, as well in terms of public participation and consultation. Johnson and Wilson (2006, p. 79) argue that when a mutuality gap is viewed as a learning opportunity for municipal partners this allows for greater outcomes for each and thus partnership efficacy. However, this has a clause of requiring the space for translating individual learning to the organisational level. Johnson and Wilson (2006, p. 79) conclude that “it is probable that learning partnerships can only work effectively in terms of enhancing and developing practice if the participating organisations themselves have a learning culture into which they feed”. The key takeaway from the findings becomes the need for partners to assess their own organisational learning practices in order for such consolidations to be made. Johnson and Wilson (2009) advocate the use of ‘institutional spreading’ within municipal partnership projects. This is promoted in terms of wider

public engagement through increased involvement of a range of actors beyond the municipal level. These can be community, civil society, private, or education-based to name a few. The inclusion of such actors contributes other knowledges and expertise to projects and help to expand and sustain them beyond the original scope (Johnson & Wilson, 2009, pp. 215-216).

C2C is peer, and thus horizontally, based. This allows knowledge sharing to occur between northern and southern practitioners through direct interaction (Bontenbal, 2013, p. 87). There needs to be a mixture of commonalities and differences amongst practitioners to facilitate shared learning. The differences are that which allows for a learning exchange to occur whereby different contexts, practices and values have given rise to different approaches and outcomes and can challenge the status quo (Bontenbal, 2013, p. 87). In reality, mutuality is often difficult to achieve due to structural differences such as financial resources. This does not negate the undertaking of municipal partnerships nor their success. A study by Bontenbal (2013) of six municipalities in the Netherlands, Peru, South Africa and Nicaragua found that northern partners do not have mutual learning as a main driver of cooperation. As a result, Bontenbal argues that mutuality can be extended beyond that of mutual learning in municipal partnerships. A recommendation is that “both political and strategic organisational benefits as well as learning and capacity building opportunities should be explicitly formulated and recognised as twinning goals, for example, in formal twinning agreements between the cities” as this would allow better identification of benefits and deeper engagement in C2C (Bontenbal, 2013, p. 99).

Inter-municipal cooperation can foster both intentional and unintentional learning (formal and informal). Devers-Kanoglu (2009) provides a systematic review of relevant research and identifies the focus, actor types, directionality of exchange and types of learning (individual, organisation, (non-)formal, (un)intentional) for the selected cooperation cases. In compiling the results, Devers-Kanoglu finds that mutual learning receives much greater attention by southern partners than northern. This is highlighted as something to be

addressed as it reinforces stereotypes of unidirectional flows in north-south partnerships. The imbalance may occur due to the often large focus on systematised capacity building for the South which leads to unintended learning by the North being overlooked (Devers-Kanoglu, 2009, p. 208). As previous studies have highlighted, forms of mutuality improve partnership relations and outcomes and therefore underline the importance of addressing perceived unidirectionality.

In a study on mutuality in C2C cooperation between 22 Dutch municipalities with a range in the ‘South’, van Ewijk and Baud (2009) divide projects thematically. One of the selected categories is projects for strengthening local governance, which includes those addressing service delivery, public administration and participation (Van Ewijk & Baud, 2009, p. 221). The study examines mutuality through knowledge exchange and considers four types: tacit; contextual – technical; contextual – cultural; generalised – written/analytical. Each of these knowledges are assessed and summarised for the category of local governance. They find that tacit knowledge had a strong level of exchange based on technical aspects through experience and that this was acknowledged by each partner. The same was found for contextual technical knowledge. Contextual cultural and generalised knowledge had medium exchanges with the former being based upon implicit knowledge and norms, however this was not acknowledged by either partner. The authors promote a focus on identifying outcomes for knowledge exchanges as it is most likely to be successful if tacit. Projects for strengthening local governance had the highest levels of knowledge exchange across the different types of all projects in the study (Van Ewijk & Baud, 2009). Also examining knowledge types in C2C learning, Campbell (2009) studies earlier project results and categorises the acquired knowledge in the projects into two main forms: hard data, stored in documents for example; and more informal soft data, stored in professional and social networks. He argues that C2C learning can be facilitated both by policy and by a proactive approach where cities take initiative to find relevant knowledge.

Shefer takes a different approach to learning in C2C

cooperations by examining policy transfer between three cities in Germany and Israel in regards to climate governance. Policy transfer refers to “the process by which knowledge about policies, administrative arrangements, institutions and ideas in one political system … is used in the development of policies, administrative arrangements, institutions and ideas in another political system” (Dolowitz & Marsh as quoted in Shefer, 2019, p. 62) and has not commonly been applied to C2C analysis. Shefer (2019, p. 62) presents six key questions:

- Who are the actors involved in the knowledge transfer?
- Why does a transfer take place; i.e. what are actors' motivations in learning from others?
- What is being transferred (ideas, concrete policies, technologies) and what is the degree of learning (copying solutions, emulation, a combination of the two or inspiration)?
- What are the modes (sequential/parallel) and sources (endogenous/exogenous) of learning?
- What is the depth of learning (single or triple-loop learning)?
- What is eventually implemented (outcomes), how and for what reasons?
- What are the weaknesses and constraints of learning in this constellation, and why?

We see that these align very closely those taken up by other studies on knowledge exchange and learning processes for collaborative partnerships in this field. Answering the questions above, there were limited numbers of and engagement from actors, learning was emulative, unstructured and largely exogenous (Shefer, 2019, p. 72). Shefer draws conclusions about C2C learning outcomes which are presented as modest with no integral changes to either governance or governance learning. However, for each ‘unsuccessful’ case lessons can be learnt and implemented in future collaborations. Shefer (2019, p. 72) recommends: “(1) institutional changes that enable more flexibility and autonomy for (mainly follower) municipalities to incorporate what they learn … (2) enhancing or securing the ability of top officials and their sub-ordinates to incorporate what they learn into the policy stream, and se-

curing resources for systematic C2C cooperation, and (3) a more collaborative, orderly and structured participation process, not only between the local authority and NGOs, but also involving the private sector and, especially, civil society.” These recommendations are designed based off of the context of the study and for urban climate governance but do align with those from different collaboration contexts.

Sonesson & Nordén (2020) reflect upon a municipal partnership programme between Sweden and Namibia targeted on education for sustainable development. In line with the established North-South partnership literature on the potential benefits and issues, the authors evaluate the project to build a nuanced understanding of these with their specific case. Three main findings emerge through three ‘learning dimensions’. The first is “establishing critical knowledge capabilities enhancing democratic action” (Sonesson & Nordén, 2020). The project was able to build knowledge regarding critical democratic elements for both partners and thus educational development. Learning was a process occurring at both local and global levels through targeted activities. The second dimension is “transforming knowledge coherently” (Sonesson & Nordén, 2020). This dimension addresses the need for knowledge to be able to be implemented in local settings responsive to conditions. Informal learning and exchange is important for this dimension and achieved through communication, shared experiences and activities. The final dimension is “developing knowledge formation and capacity” (Sonesson & Nordén, 2020). Here, social learning is an important factor to build resilience and durability in establishing a learning system. The authors state that linking activities to knowledge is critical for facilitating outcomes for improved municipal governance. That is to say, learning should hold two roles within municipal partnerships: as a process and as an outcome (Sonesson & Nordén, 2020).

The literature examining the role of mutuality and learning in institutional collaborations for local democracy presents two main points. A difference in knowledges underpins the ability to engage in an exchange. However, several aspects must be considered. The first is how knowledge and learning expectations

are formulated in the outcomes for the collaboration, especially when there is a North-South partnership and thus potentially greater inequalities. This is where the types of knowledge (tacit, contextual, general etc.) play a role with the inclusion of different forms able to strengthen levels of exchange. Additional important considerations are whether learning is formal or informal, as the latter is often overlooked in the process and therefore a missed contribution to mutuality, and how these different forms are being lifted from the individual to the organisational level.

Key questions for reflection:

How do you transfer different types of knowledge in your project:

- Between collaborative institutions?
- From practitioner to organisational level?

Participation for Local Democracy and Collaborations

Participation in Decentralisation and the Local Context

We begin this section with an overview of participation in terms of decentralisation. This is foundational for how participation is subsequently addressed within collaborations for local democracy as it relates to both participation in local governance and participation in collaborations. Much like decentralisation's possible division into 'types', participation is also presented as being political or administrative. The former is the involvement of citizens in electoral practices and the latter being related to their involvement in decision-making (see Tran & La, 2021). Administrative participation can be further divided into 'pseudo' and 'genuine'. Pseudo participation occurs to the extent that citizens are informed about decisions, whereas genuine participation sees citizens obtain an ability to affect decisions (Sanoff as cited in Tran & La, 2021). Findings on the linkages between decentralisation and participation are not clear when marginalised groups are examined. Decentralisation risks exclusion of groups who are not favoured in majority democratic process and can lead to the need for recentralisation (Johnson, 2001). This

stands in contradiction with Arnstein's (1969, p. 216) seminal work on participation specifically redressing exclusion:

"The redistribution of power that enables the have-not citizens, presently excluded from the political and economic processes, to be deliberately included in the future. It is the strategy by which the have-nots join in determining how information is shared, goals and policies are set, tax resources are allocated, programs are operated, and benefits like contracts and patronage are parcelled out."

Arnstein's ladder of participation is still frequently cited in studies in order to provide a framework for assessing depth of participation leading to empowerment and not just token measures. It is still proving to be a challenge whereby the 'have-nots' continue to face exclusion. In a study on Ghana, Mohammed (2016) found that:

"Women, the poor and disabled as well as people from rural peripheries are excluded from the process. Their exclusion is attributable to gender-insensitive decentralization policy, lack of socio-economic resources, low educational attainment, cultural practices, and patronage politics. The paper concludes that decentralization cannot compel the predicted level of participation unless these structural conditions inhibiting engagement and empowerment of especially marginalized groups are addressed."

This finding is not uncommon. The critical role of the local context in participation implementation and outcome has been addressed in review articles and led to an inability to generalise about participation beyond the case level. The issue of local context is critically addressed in the literature on local governance as it presents potential points of both development and of weakness in the studies. Advantages are proposed to lie in allowing a matching of decisions with both local knowledge and preferences. Pycroft (as cited in Madzivhandila & Maloka, 2014, p. 654) asserts that empowering local authorities can therefore contribute to building democracy through this process of local alignment, which also contributes to increased participation.

Kessy (2013) highlights that theorising about the process of decentralisation must account for contextual differences in how and the degree to which decentralisation is implemented, alongside deviations in local governance systems. The aforementioned presumption of increased efficiency related to decentralisation and the development of local democracy is questioned in the degree to which local government responsiveness relies upon (potentially lacking) knowledge of the local context, including by those given increased participation. Furthermore, service delivery can experience increased costs in decentralised systems due to an increase in required coordination and actors (Kessy, 2013).

Kessy (2013) is critical of past studies in which participation has not been probed in regards to by whom and in which stages it is enacted. This is directly tied to local contexts in which the role of local elites may play disproportionate roles and thus reduce the realisation of local empowerment through participation. Decentralisation that lacks critical democratic elements can instead enhance the power of local elites – related to Agrwal & Ribot's (1999) alternative framework of actors, powers and accountability. Over-reliance on assumptions of local context producing more efficient and responsive systems also risks overlooking threats to equity due to ethnic and identity disharmony that can be associated with local elites (Kessy, 2013). Issues such as these are argued to be avoided in systems of participatory governance (see Speer's 2014 review). Instead, it can be proposed that participation via decentralisation is a “means towards achieving local governance” and not a causal relationship in its entirety (Kessy, 2013, p. 225). These findings link back into the literature on mutuality and learning processes whereby local context is also presented as a potential key point of learning development for northern partners and practitioners.

Participation as a Part of and Means for Collaboration

These issues are important to consider in the functioning of collaborations in terms of who participates and how, and equally in regards to the outcomes of collab-

orations. Participation requires vertical and horizontal examination. North-South dynamics return as an issue to be considered for participation. The concept of participation spreads into the shaping of institutional collaborations to develop ownership for southern actors (Bontenbal, 2009, p. 101). However, in North-South partnerships there is still the risk of unequal relations dominating and inhibiting collaboration efforts (Bontenbal, 2009, p. 100). Bontenbal argues for the need for further research into the municipal level to establish “good partnering” conditions and has worked to develop this area across multiple studies and publications (see Bontenbal, 2009; 2013; Bontenbal & Van Lindert, 2008; 2009).

Bontenbal and van Lindert (2008) explore how C2C can strengthen participation in local governance for institutional capacity building. C2C is not only actors at the municipal level, but also includes the constituency of each. Focusing on the municipal actor, C2C is assumed by the literature to facilitate institutional strengthening through capacity development which is a prerequisite for effective local governance and service delivery. By including citizens and other civil society and private sectors, C2C may address participation and empowerment (Bontenbal & Van Lindert, 2008, p. 468). The study found that C2C could provide institutional strengthening which allowed for improved service delivery in the municipal contexts examined. However, the case studies also confirmed the ongoing risk of North-South partnerships whereby a one-way flow of knowledge and resources occurred. Results for improved participation and thus participatory governance were more mixed, but the potential for this was highlighted. It is the combining of sectors (constituents, local government and private) in programmes to target participation that provides the possibility for influencing decision making processes (Bontenbal & Van Lindert, 2008, p. 478). This is reflective of the natural blurring of boundaries between municipalities and civil society in C2C programmes, with the authors arguing that this intersection holds much potential for C2C cooperation in strengthening local governance.

Hewitt (2004) also examines the role of international collaboration in improving local participatory gov-

ernance in a study of C2C cooperation between Chile and Canada. Much of Latin America underwent a large process of decentralisation as a means of democratic reform. Resourcing and competence remained issues for local governance following long periods of a highly centralised regime. This has also had lingering effects on citizen participation which regions have sought to redress including through institutional collaboration at all levels. Many of such collaborations are interlinked in terms of programme funding with larger multilateral institutions providing means for capacity building initiatives e.g., the World Bank and the EU. Bilateral programmes through northern development agencies often provide funding for municipal collaborations such as C2C cooperation for local democracy development (Hewitt, 2004). There are often flow-on effects of the different forms of institutional collaboration across all levels even if studies seek to assess the effectiveness of the lower-level collaborations, which are often most accessible for identifying positive factors. In the case at hand, it is the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) who established the financing of municipal partnership programmes to support local democratic restructuring in Latin America. The initiative is cited as one of the most successful (Shuman, 1994 as cited in Hewitt, 2004, p. 620) and hence presents key learning potential.

The municipal partnership built three initiatives to address participation: one targeted at the grassroots level for direct participation and the other two operated at the municipal-level to target communication and consultation for planning and decision-making processes (Hewitt, 2004, p. 621). The first of these involving community group activation lacked success due to being too far removed from the partner municipality and was never integrated into the follow-up cycle. The other two projects were driven by municipal staff and built upon existing infrastructure and were more successful (Hewitt, 2004, p. 626). This aligns strongly with Bonnenbal's (2009) finding of the need to retain municipal personnel and have projects align with existing frameworks. The Canadian municipality worked to assist in developing public consultation measures in planning processes and subsequent communication strategies. A range of activities contributed to the development of

these areas including directors from the Chilean municipality investigating the partner's approach and activities and a seminar series for personnel training that was facilitated by the Canadian municipality (Hewitt, 2004, p. 628). Informed municipal personnel provides greater potential for informed citizens. Increased communication would translate back into increased participation due to informed citizens. It is then proposed that this would aid in accountability and service delivery (Hewitt, 2004, p. 628). Local context is presented as a limitation of determining long term results, with Hewitt (2004, p. 620) pointing to the region of Latin America as contextual and not just the country-level. Hewitt (Hewitt, 2004, p. 630) acknowledges that local democratic gains remain dependent on wider democratic processes (and restraints).

“...International cooperation at the local level can provide a vital service in providing developing-world municipalities with the tools and the confidence to take initial steps towards increasing public participation in governance. Certainly, however, more research, on a comparative basis, would need to be conducted in order to affirm the effectiveness and universal applicability of the mechanisms discussed here for promoting participation on a broader scale. Such studies would also need to take into account the links between local initiatives in this regard and efforts to enhance democratic participation and accountability at the regional and national levels. While changes in the local democratic culture may be seen as a significant first step, the fate of local initiatives may be directly tied to progress occurring on this front beyond municipal borders.”

(Hewitt, 2004, p. 630)

As is common amongst the literature, Hewitt acknowledges the limitations of the findings of participation within the study regardless of the success.

As Tjandradewi et al. (2006) highlight in their article on C2C collaboration, earlier research found participation central in local institutional collaboration. Community-wide participation, for example led by NGOs working with local governments, strengthens the collaboration in municipal partnerships by linking the civil societies of the participating cities, not just the local government offices. Cremer et al. (2001) ar-

gue that this mix of community and municipal level action is vital for taking full advantage of municipal partnerships. However, it ought to be mentioned that all governmental decision-makers do not necessarily see participation as a success factor in institutional collaboration. As opposed to earlier research, survey results that Tjandradewi et al. (2006) collected from local authorities in the Asia Pacific region showed that the decision-makers did not consider community participation as an important element in successful C2C collaboration. In a review of C2C North-South cooperation for sustainable development governance in Latin America, Mayer and Nguyen Long (2021) find that participation cannot be equated with inclusivity. They find that citizens and civil society did not have high enough levels of participation which risked entrenching existing inequalities and the status quo. Elite-capture is thus also an issue for local democracy collaborations. Mayer and Nguyen Long (2021) warn that C2C does not provide compelling results for governance in the Latin America case due to these lack of transformations in who participates and when.

Participation outcomes are mixed for both local democracy in general and when targeted by institutional collaborations. However, there are several factors that may be considered. The first relates to the structuring of collaborations. Both the utilisation of existing frameworks and the incorporation into the collaboration programme cycle were important for participatory governance improvement. This is aided by maintaining informed personnel. Furthermore, the involvement of actors beyond the municipal or city level were proposed holding value for participation levels.

Key questions for reflection:

- How do you use your existing frameworks to ensure participation in the collaboration?
- Which actors could contribute to the collaboration in order to extend participation?
- How and when is the project monitored?

Building Trust in Local Democracy

Accountability Capacities

Public participation is a democratic keystone in the policy-making process, since it can strengthen democratic values such as legitimacy, justice, and effectiveness in governance (Fung, 2015). Opportunities for participation also implies possibilities for transparency and for downward accountability, that is to say the accountability of elected representatives and government officials to local citizens (Devas, 2003). This kind of accountability often builds on the right to vote (or vote away) but it can be successfully complemented with effective participation opportunities if the public has good access to information on public affairs and a functioning working relationship between local communities and leadership.

A main argument for public participation is to enhance legitimacy of the democratic process (Fung, 2015). Participation can also be used to improve the quality of service provision in health and education for example, as well as to advance social justice. However, this challenging area calls for both institutional design and political will. The design of participation opportunities can have a levelling effect, but it can also result in preserved social inequities. As Clark (2018) puts it,

“...researchers have concluded that inequality and disparities in participation will go hand in hand unless public managers and community leaders are attentive to these concerns when they are designing participation opportunities.”

The role of participation flows into that of accountability as already highlighted by the previous section whereby Hewitt (2004) linked increased participation to increased accountability. We return to the discussion on decentralisation to understand the linked roles that participation and accountability

play in local democracy development. Decentralisation moves beyond a reduction of the central government with Agrwal & Ribot (1999) creating a framework that also includes actors, powers and accountability. Agrwal & Ribot (1999) see a flow-on effect of decentralisation leading to participation which in turns leads to local democratisation. It is accountability that provides that determinant factor in whether decentralisation is achieved as opposed to deconcentration. Hope (2000) also ties decentralisation to the development of local governance but reverses the relation to present accountability as a necessity for participation (using Crook and Manor (1995)). Democratic accountability can occur through two means with the first being the formal, institutional structures. The second includes the informal and broadens to networks between the formal (official political actors and agencies) and those within civil society. It is proposed that local authorities can mediate between the different levels in order to facilitate outcomes, given they have the capacity (Madon, Krishna, & Michael, 2010, s. 250). Thus, the development of this capacity is important to address in local democracy collaborations.

The process and the *de facto* influence of the citizens have to be perceived as meaningful by the participants to encourage further involvement and to avoid frustration and cynicism (Fung, 2015). When designing participation opportunities, Fung argues that the decision-makers have to take into consideration that the participating citizens can have different ways of communicating and that they represent different levels of empowerment. There are several ways to address these design challenges, e.g. through launching “minipublics”, that is to say venues for direct citizen participation within or outside the scope of administrative agencies. In relation to their findings on participation approaches in sustainable governance C2C cooperation in Latin America, Mayer and Nguyen Long (2021) flag accountability as an issue. They argue that double accountability is required as both partners must be accountable for potential negative outcomes. However, the authors propose that this may be addressed by including accountability mechanisms (systematic collection, reporting, and sharing of information, monitoring and sanctioning) into programme designs.

In an article on organizational trust and accountability reforms within the public sector in Kenya, Onyango (2019) explores the creation of trust in inter-agency relations. He claims that it is challenging to collaborate between agencies where different goals and regulations as well as highly set values might clash. Local governments are supposed to uphold justice and to be drivers of social equity and they go into collaboration with competing value systems and loyalties. “Collaborative public management structures are therefore founded on knotty sociopolitical networks embedded on ambiguous legal and organizational obligations.” (Onyango, 2019) This, according to Onyango, makes it important to focus on policy design, not only trust-building, in local democracy collaboration.

Much of the literature does not directly address local democracy collaborations for accountability, however the strong linkages to participation, and local democracy more widely, highlight the importance of developing accountability capacity. Means of accountability are necessary for developing trust, which continues the pattern of conceptual linkage as trust interlinks with transparency.

Facilitating Participation through Transparency

Within the local governance field transparency is strongly tied to the move to increased participation through decentralisation. It has been proposed that the lack of transparency, and associated trust, at local levels has been a key negating factor for building participation (Arkorful, Lugu, Hammond, & Basiru, 2021). Transparency can bolster trust in local decision-making processes and thus encourage ‘buy in’ from citizens and their participation. Increased trust in local governance has been a chicken-or-the-egg question. Many have found improving performance can improve trust in local institutions, whereas Beshi and Kaur (2020) show that improving trust (through accountability and transparency) allows for greater performance and effective delivery. Based on the case of Ghana, Arkorful et. al (2021) found that transparency within decentralisation generates further decentralisation, arguing that transparency and trust

can be thought of as “facilitators” for participation and decentralisation. Arkoful et. al (2021, s. 217) make the case for transparency to be the “super structure on which decentralization and participation subsist” and thus acting as a pre-requisite to their development. This is echoed in regards to the previously mentioned administrative form of participation. For this to occur, it is transparency that must precede involvement (Tran & La, 2021).

As a concept, transparency has been promoted in the good governance agenda for decades. It can be approached from either vertical direction in terms of transparency to whom – upwards to donors/institutions, downwards to citizens. Transparency can also be seen as controversial and risks being undermined by local government representatives to avoid exposure of weaknesses in horizontal and vertical accountability (Devas & Grant, 2003). However, it is central for active citizenship; without transparency in budgetary procedures, for example, it is difficult for citizens to come to an informed decision on government spending and participate, something Muthomi & Thurmaier (2021) title ‘participatory transparency’.

Digitalisation as Means for Partnerships and Transparency

Digitalisation can be used to strengthen local democracy in general, for example by improving public service provision, increasing efficiency in the public sector and promoting free flows of information. Digital technologies have influenced both public policy and the global economy and play a central role in the quest for sustainable development (Onyango & Ondiek, 2021). Furthermore, digitalisation can promote informed and active citizenship (Buente, 2015). New digital tools, such as social media platforms, enable citizens not only to consume information but to become active co-creators and produce and spread knowledge, opinions and culture in a cost-efficient way (Vial, 2019). These new opportunities and habits can change citizens’ views on their relationship to the state and influence their encounters with local authorities. One example of how citizens’ changed digital habits have redrawn the conditions for public service provision was when

the increased use of mobile phones in Kenya greatly facilitated access to healthcare information and online healthcare advice (Kilonzo et al., 2017). In many ways, digitalisation is a major change-factor for local authorities. As Onyango and Ondiek (2021) phrase it, “digitalization is key in the pursuit of democratic administration and can enhance the effective integration of policy-programs if institutionalized and internalized by the personnel in public administration”.

By using digital technologies, local authorities can promote transparency and work against corruption (Bertot et al., 2010). This can be done through providing information on government decisions, actions, expenditures and performance, as well as through disclosing assets and investments of elected officials and civil servants. Additionally, digital channels can be used to spread awareness of citizen rights and to enable citizen engagement and participation through citizen-centered e-government.

On a more critical note, digital technologies are not equally accessible for all citizens. On a global scale, the issue of digital exclusion can be described as a digital divide between countries (van Dijk, 2006). Keiner and Kim (2007) present digitalisation as giving rise to the expansion and possibilities of city networks but also as a potential challenge due to ‘digital divides’. Different technological capacities can challenge cooperation efforts due to imbalances, which lead to unequal access to information as well as ‘gatekeepers’ (Keiner & Kim, 2007, pp. 1383-1384). A digital divide can also exist between different socio-economic groups within a country and even between groups that are active in the online community but use the Internet in different ways. Although increased access to the Internet and frequent use of digital tools have proven to increase the possibilities for informed citizenship, there is a segmentation in digital society that aligns with existing inequalities in society as a whole (Buente, 2015). Groups with stronger socio-economic status and previous involvement in politics tend to gain knowledge while other groups to a larger extent tend to choose entertainment over information. Being digitally excluded is problematic in itself, but it can also reinforce exclusion in other areas (van Dijk,

2006). Digital exclusion can make it more difficult to make informed decisions on health issues for example, something that can have long-lasting effects on an individual's employment and general quality of life.

What can digitalisation mean for municipal partnerships? Digitalisation can promote institutional collaboration in several ways. Digital tools can be used to facilitate communication, lessen the importance of physical distance between partner countries, and provide data, indicators and sharing opportunities suitable for comparisons and learning. In their study of success factors in C2C networks, Tjandradewi and Marcotullio (2009) highlight the importance of free flows of information, both for good governance and for local collaboration projects. With the help of digital technologies, the partners can share information that increases transparency and understanding of the different local contexts, which in turn creates higher levels of mutual trust in their municipal collaboration. In order to make the most of the opportunities in digitalisation when it comes to public services, it is important to understand the local contexts that have ability to transform or direct the adoption, adaptation and integration of digital technologies (Onyango & Ondiek, 2021). The success of digitalisation initiatives in the public sector is dependent on structural conditions, managerial leadership and political support within the local government (Bertot et al., 2010). However, political support and positive images of digitalisation in strategy documents do not necessarily mean that the implementation of digital technologies in public services matches the strategic goals (Onyango & Ondiek, 2021). An intended digitalisation process can suffer setbacks in government institutions, for example due to a lack of digital skills among public administrators.

The implementation of digital technologies is also a question of costs (Bertot et al., 2010), returning to the importance of financial resourcing. While wealthier local governments might find it easier to afford the investments, long-term support and staff development needed for digital initiatives, many smaller or less wealthy local governments find it more challenging. Thus, all municipal 'best practices' related to digital technologies are not necessarily transferrable between

the partners. Furthermore, successful implementation of digital tools builds on taking the internal cultural dynamics into consideration since, "administrative reforms will be readily accepted if they are in tandem with prevailing administrative culture in the public sector" (Onyango & Ondiek, 2021).

Participation and Accountability in Local Service Delivery

Taking a step back to the wider implication of participation and accountability for local democracy outcomes, service delivery comes into focus. The role of decentralisation in service delivery is linked to the issue of local context. There are structural differences between countries in governmental department responsibilities and interdependence (Kessy, 2013). In developing countries, sectors such as health have been centralised and decentralisation can occur on two different dimensions – area and function (Humes, 1991 as cited in Kessy, 2013). Motivations for decentralisation regarding service delivery have been economic to a large degree, especially in Africa (Kessy, 2013). Decentralisation was able to circumvent state-based development approaches that resulted in stagnated economies (Cheema & Rondinelli, 2007). The increased accountability that is linked with democratic decentralisation should increase the local responsiveness and service provision and thus the efficacy of local governance (Blair, 2000; Rondinelli, McCullough, & Johnson, 1989). There is proposed interlinkage between service delivery, centralisation and again participation. "Restructuring the delivery of public services by decentralising central functions and resources, and decentralising governance represents the best means of promoting participation and efficiency" (Hope, 2000, s. 522). Examining integrated development planning (IDP), Madzivhandila & Maloka (2014, s. 653) approach this in reverse, beginning with participation as the prerequisite to improved local service delivery:

"Participation serves as a tool for closing the gap between local government, civil society, private sector and the general community by developing a common understanding about local situation, priorities and programmes ... promot[ing] transparency, accountability in governance ... serv[ing] as

a crucial component of good governance and effective service delivery.”

However, in a review of studies Robinson (2007) finds a lack of any clear evidence showing decentralisation and participation led to improved service delivery outcomes for the marginalised and poor. This is largely due to all findings being highly case-specific and thus unable to synthesised above the individual study level. Robinson (2007, s. 7) instead highlights the need for service delivery to also be assessed in terms of equity in order to evaluate outcomes for all groups stating that, “material benefits for the poor arising from improved service provision should be a key determinant of the effectiveness of democratic decentralisation.” Speer’s (2012) review on participatory governance echoes these findings whereby there are individual cases of improved outcomes but not enough substantiated support for linking local governance approaches to increased efficiency and service delivery.

Andrews and de Vries (2007) used a multi-level regression analysis to find that decentralisation did not automatically increase participation in a study of multiple countries with differing levels of development. Furthermore, their findings confirmed the impact local context has upon decentralisation and any assumed enhancements of participation, efficiency and service delivery. They warn that “without adequate considerations to the features of the context at hand and the political forces behind the process, decentralization may yield far different outcomes than the ones initially expected” (Andrews & de Vries, 2007, p. 425). These outcomes are even presented as “very disappointing” in practice. This is affirmed by Robinson’s (2007) review of decentralisation in sub-Saharan Africa whereby little local development has been achieved through this process. Robinson (2007, pp. 8-9) contributes three further potential issues with decentralisation with lack of technical capacity at the local level as one, reduced regional equity as another, and bloated public sectors and budgets for national governments. Addressing failures in order to gain potential improvements in participation and accountability lies in adaption to the local context. Minimal success in service delivery and equity should not rule out this approach, but instead

greater heed must be taken to “identify the conditions under which increased participation in local governance is conducive to enhanced equity, quality and efficiency of services” (Robinson, 2007, p. 13).

Equity and Local Democracy Collaboration

Equity is an important concept for the legitimacy of local democracy, especially when it comes to central functions and service delivery such as the distribution of healthcare or social aid. How this concept is interpreted and used by the political leadership has practical significance for policy outcome. The implied meaning of the concept has changed throughout history. According to Unterhalten (2017), it has meant three different things in different times and contexts. She refers to them as equity from below, equity from above and equity from the middle:

- Equity from below: equity in the relationship between the powerful and the powerless.
- Equity from above: an institutional equity through the establishment of courts etc.
- Equity from the middle: when the word implies money or other forms of capital.

Equity is linked to equality, but the concepts differ in scope. As an example, equal health is not, and will never be, solely within the realms of healthcare politics since it has to do with more broadly defined resources for a good life. Dahlgren and Whitehead (2007) link equal health to lifestyle factors such as socioeconomic status, arguing that equal health is based on equal opportunities during childhood and education as well as influenced by working life, living conditions, social networks, income, influence and empowerment. However, equitable public service is more closely linked to the scope of local politicians and, thus, easier to work with in local democracy collaboration projects.

The division of power is often debated in relation to equity. One way of looking at equity in power division is to link it to equal and impartial rules and treatment regardless of where the citizens live, something that might call for centralized power. On the other hand, another argument is that devolving power to the local

level brings it closer to citizens, and thus, improve self-governance and equity. In an article on improving access to maternal health care, Kilonzo et al. (2017) discussed such devolution in Kisumu and Uasin Gishu, Kenya. Using participant observations and qualitative interviews with health-care providers and patients, the authors highlighted important conditions for equity, namely availability, accessibility, affordability and acceptability. Availability means having the right type of services available to citizens who need them. Public services also need to be accessible and affordable for the citizens, regardless of, for example, where they live or what they are able to pay for. Finally, acceptability means responsiveness to social and cultural expectations of citizens and communities.

Favourable conditions for equity in public services are, according to a review of earlier studies, stable financing systems, access to information, technical capacity and leadership capacity (Cepiku & Mastrodascio, 2021). Furthermore, the street-level officials who meet the citizens directly play an important role in public service delivery and can influence the spending of public resources, either in an equitable way or in the opposite direction. This central role could be an argument for including street-level officials in local democracy collaboration e.g., in the peer-to-peer settings mentioned by Bontenbal (2009) above.

Key questions for reflection:

How are inequalities for different groups addressed regarding:

- The flow of information communication at the local level?
- The outcomes of service delivery to the public?

Success Factors in Institutional Collaborations

Since many municipal partnerships fail to live up to their goals, it is important to study earlier projects to identify potential success factors shared by the sustainable and goal-fulfilling partnerships. Debate has taken place over the degree to which twinning can be a method for sustainable capacity building or if it is simply another name for North-South aid relations with high costs. The general benefits of decentralised development cooperation lie in that the “exchange of information and technology between municipalities allows for capacity building to strengthen urban governance in developing countries and to support local authorities in taking up their newly ascribed responsibilities” (Bontenbal & Van Lindert, 2009, p. 215). In a later study by Bontenbal (2013), findings focus more specifically on benefits of North-South C2C cooperation for each partner:

- For the North
 - ‘Soft’ benefits
 - Shared sense of learning
 - Raising of awareness and education in development
 - New skills and practices
 - Language development
- For the South
 - Shared sense of learning
 - Tangible: technical knowledge and financial resources

It is argued that assessments of C2C cooperation remain limited in scope due to the highly contextualised nature of studies – an issue recurrent in all sections above. Bontenbal and Van Lindert (2009, p. 217) state that there is “no common agreement on what constitutes good C2C cooperation that significantly contributes to good governance practice and sustainable local development in developing countries.” This section, therefore, reviews the individual studies that have identified positive results and contributing factors in an attempt to find commonalities.

Multiple studies at the turn of the century presented

positive results (see Olowu, 2002 for summary). From these, critical success factors were deduced as: political support; ongoing modifications to the programme; financial support from donors; authenticity and ownership in partnership relations (Olowu, 2002, pp. 275-276). Olowu assesses the outcomes of twinning between Namibia and the Netherlands. After independence, Namibia sought to focus its development strategy on “democratization, liberalization, phased indigenization and decentralization” (Olowu, 2002, p. 279). It was acknowledged that large amounts of capacity building in the public sector were required in order to be able to achieve the aforementioned. The twinning programme sought to develop and retain public officials for improved policy management. The programme was structured around: cost-effectiveness (a common critique of twinning); policy and public management training; addressing both short- and long-term capacities; and coordinating donor assistance (Olowu, 2002, pp. 281-282). The programme reported positive results in regards to training and developing public sector officials but could not say whether that would, over time, contribute to improved service delivery and governance. Olowu (2002, p. 286) states that three factors have contributed to the identified success:

- *“the attempt to combine theory with practice in a dynamic way that challenges the participants: senior officials to reflect on the nature of the problems which regularly confront them and come up with practical solutions to recurring problems based on comparative experience.*
- *an attempt to combine the study of the policy process generally with sectoral concerns in a specific developing country context.*
- *an attempt is being made to build capacity not only within the government but also within the national university to ensure that the capacity to sustain the capacity building process indigenously is created within Namibia over a substantial period of time.”*

Reviewing literature from the 1990s, Hewitt (2002, p. 231) proffers five success factors for partnership:

- *“i) a propensity to a common vision and to concrete goal setting,*
- *ii) the establishment of strong bonds of personal friendship*

- *and of interaction on an egalitarian basis,*
- *iii) a commitment to a culture of continuity,*
- *iv) an ongoing commitment to self-assessment and evaluation, and*
- *v) the encouragement of public participation in partnership activities.”*

The factors are then assessed within two comparative partnership cases involving Canada, Ecuador and Chile. The partnership which registered strong fulfilment of the above five criteria was able to be sustained and expanded; whereas the case that had mostly weak levels of the five factors failed to achieve a robust programme and remained limited in scope. The findings show that the quality of partnership is a key determinant of programme outcomes and success; a common vision must underlie the partnership. The partnership requires active maintenance and evaluation which then allows for improvements in cost-efficiency and service delivery. Hewitt (2002, p. 245) states that it is not the formation of partnership agreements for local development that should be assessed, as these have been numerous and without much hinderance. Instead, it is the conditions under which the partnerships are enacted and developed that provide the crucial insights for achieving outcomes.

According to Cremer et al. (2001), successful municipal partnerships acknowledge that both commerce and culture have roles to play in the partnership. Based on New Zealand examples of sister-cities around the world, their study recommends finding a balance between political, social, cultural and economic development on each side in the partnership. Many partnerships put emphasis on cultural issues, education and international understanding but the economic side of municipal collaboration is important as well to the citizens since it creates work, income and tax revenue. Thus, municipal partnerships can be seen as manifestations of “municipal entrepreneurship”, as well as arenas for community participation.

C2C success factors from a study of a long-term South Africa and Netherlands municipal twinning were reported by partners as:

- Open discussion on motives
- Joint analysis of the problem
- Joint agreement upon strategy
- Clear purpose and results
- Joint steps in implementation
- Regular contact
- Reporting and report back
- Joint review of progress made and reprioritizing when needed
- Joint monitoring and evaluation

(Buis, 2009, s. 192)

In a study of Asian C2C cooperation, Tjandradewi and Marcotullio (2009) also identify success factors for municipal collaboration but with a slightly different result. They lift the following aspects from earlier research on successful municipal partnerships:

- Commitment
- Community-wide participation
- Understanding
- Reciprocity
- Results through real examples

The list above is then combined with additional aspects that they identified during a case study of the collaboration between Yokohama and Penang City (Tjandradewi et al., 2006):

- Political support from higher levels of government
- Consistent leadership
- Cost sharing and cost effectiveness
- Free flows of information

After listing the aspects, they test the relevance of the aspects by sending a survey to local governments within CITYNET, a network of local authorities, mainly in the Asia Pacific region. Several of these features were considered critical to successful municipal collaboration in the survey, including cost-sharing and real examples, but the four features that were consistently chosen were:

- Free flows of information
- Reciprocity
- Understanding
- Leadership

It is not only the presence of these factors that contribute to successful C2C partnerships, but Tjandradewi and Marcotullio (2009) argue that the absence of them is equally a barrier to success. The survey showed that municipal collaboration contributes more to certain areas, especially environment, health, education and social and cultural issues.

Keiner & Kim (2007) conducted a study based on 57 sustainability-oriented city networks that are C2C, national, regional and transregional in scope. The networks are able to act informally and outside of traditional structures in order to spread or create new information (Keiner & Kim, 2007, p. 1382). “Resource complementarity” is an identified success factor of networks and it allows the building and sharing of different information. Furthermore, cross-sectoral collaboration between the public and private sectors and civil society is argued to be necessary in transnational issues as it can also increase legitimacy of projects. The authors also highlight the importance of informal outcomes such as trust between network participants (Keiner & Kim, 2007, p. 1383), which aligns with findings of other studies. Keiner and Kim (2007, p. 1393) propose that rigid local government arrangements can be one of the greatest challenges to the functioning of networks and risks creating givers and takers.

Bontenbal (2009) directly addresses how to improvement municipal partnership conditions for capacity building along the North-South axis. The main factors for developing these are dependent upon partnerships being demand-driven according to local needs and involving similar institutions. This is supported by earlier studies (see Proctor, 2000). It is argued that municipal partnerships can contribute to capacity development in ways that other forms of development assistance cannot by directly targeting public institutions. In a case study of partnership between municipalities in the Netherlands and Peru, Bontenbal (2009) found important conditions to be divided into two realms: organisational and partnership-based. Key organisational conditions are comprised differently for the North and South actors.

- Organisational conditions for the North:
 - political support within municipal programmes both in terms of international cooperation and democracy promotion
 - availability of resources (human and financial) allowing cooperation to be project-based with monitoring and evaluation
 - external funding in order to circumvent potential financial limitations that occur at the municipal level for international activities
- Organisational conditions for the South:
 - An established and specialised team for international cooperation to manage and observe partnerships, including for potential expansion
 - Alignment of cooperation with existing municipal policies and priorities
 - A wide range of supporting financial actors or involvement in international programmes
 - Donor coordination
- Partnership conditions:
 - Southern partner ownership allowing for agenda setting in line with municipal priorities which the North can then work with in facilitating
 - Programme continuity for sustainable outcomes. This is in terms of maintaining personnel and using existing knowledges, frameworks and practices
 - Municipal actors for municipal projects. C2Cs are seen as holding advantages over NGO-based partnerships for developing municipal administrative institutions

(Bontenbal, 2009)

Highlighted in the study are the risks remaining in staffing turnover or going outside of existing structures. Furthermore, the partnership was not evaluated in terms of cost effectiveness compared to other actors i.e., traditional donors.

In the most comprehensive study of success factors, De Villiers et al. (2007) undertake a quantitative study in order to move beyond the individual case study approach. This begins by identifying success factors from previous cases which are:

- *"Alliance capability – having the knowledge and skills to twin successfully.*
- *Concentrating resources by limiting the number of partners, and choosing partners carefully that can assist the community in reaching its specific goals.*
- *A contract or memorandum of understanding having been signed, thereby formalising the relationship. This agreement should have a long-term focus.*
- *Clear objectives, goals and planned activities - summarised in a strategic plan or business plan.*
- *Solid support from the municipal council and the commitment of its management.*
- *Broad-based community involvement – sub-alliances between as many institutions, groups and organisations as possible, including solid support from the business sector.*
- *Capacity to manage the relationship in the form of budget and dedicated staff. Normally a broad-based twinning committee from each partner is also required.*
- *Reliable and regular communications.*
- *Regular exchanges.*
- *Strong relationship formation that tie the two communities together. The foundation of this relationship is built on certain attitudes. These are: trust, reciprocity, commitment, understanding, cultural sensitivity, attitude towards risk, and flexibility.*
- *Regular evaluation and revision of the agreement and relationship.*
- *An enabling policy and institutional environment to facilitate successful twinning."*

(De Villiers, et al., 2007, p. 3)

However, De Villiers et al. are critical of these factors in so far as what is meant by success is lacking in definition and that these emerge from individual qualitative case studies. The authors conducted a much broader quantitative analysis based on South African municipalities with international relationships to test the existing success factors. This is one of very few quantitative studies on municipal cooperations. The derived hypothesised success factors were: twinning strategy; alliance experience; positive attitudes; community involvement; intensity of communication; resources and infrastructure; structured planning process; leadership and management; active management; and partner similarity. Each factor was operationalised through a range of measures in order

to be able to assess the factor across the cases and break down each factor more concretely. Initial survey work had pointed to discrepancies between reported success factors and practice. For example, levels of citizen participation were under 50 per cent despite this being one of the most highly ranked factors by the municipalities (De Villiers, et al., 2007, p. 4). This was the case for numerous self-reported success factors. Measures that had correlative statistical significance and therefore can be identified as having an effect were:

- “*Partner commitment;*
- *Understanding (self);*
- *Partner understanding;*
- *Cultural sensitivity (of partner);*
- *Positive partner attitude;*
- *Community awareness of the twinning;*
- *Business plan;*
- *Quality of management;*
- *Management commitment;*
- *Active marketing; and*
- *Similarities of the personalities on both sides”*

(De Villiers, et al., 2007, s. 5)

No proven links existed between factors of existing twinning strategy, alliance experience, high community involvement or donor funding. The findings are then filtered into four main recommendations for twinning projects:

- *“Proper partner selection is very important. The partners should be committed, show understanding and cultural sensitivity, and display an overall positive attitude. Similar personalities on both sides are also important;*
- *Marketing to all stakeholders is very important to make everyone aware of the twinning, and to obtain their active participation;*
- *As far as management is concerned, management quality and management commitment are very important success factors; and*
- *Twinnings need to be supported by a well-conceived business plan spelling out objectives and plans for their achievement.”*

(De Villiers, et al., 2007, p. 10)

To give an overview of the success factors identified across the studies in this review, they are collated and presented in the table below in order of most supported studies.

Table 1.
Collated success factors for institutional collaboration in order of most supporting studies

Success factor	Article
Political support	Olowu, 2002; Tjandradewi et al., 2006; Bontenbal, 2009; De Villiers, 2009; Bontenbal & van Lindert, 2009
Public participation*	Hewitt, 2002; Tjandradewi & Marcotullio, 2009; De Villiers et al, 2007; De Villiers, 2009; Bontenbal & van Lindert, 2009
Common vision with strategic plan*	Hewitt, 2002; Buis, 2009; Bontenbal & van Lindert, 2009; De Villiers et al, 2007
Structured leadership & management*	Tjandradewi et al., 2006; Tjandradewi & Marcotullio, 2009; De Villiers et al, 2007; De Villiers, 2009; Bontenbal & van Lindert, 2009
Relationships & trust between partner members*	Hewitt, 2002; Keiner & Kim, 2007; De Villiers et al, 2007; Bontenbal & van Lindert, 2009; De Villiers, 2009;
Flexibility & ongoing adaptation via evaluation	Olowu, 2002; Hewitt, 2002; Buis, 2009; Bontenbal & van Lindert, 2009
Partner complementarity*	Keiner & Kim, 2007; De Villiers et al, 2007; De Villiers, 2009; Bontenbal & van Lindert, 2009
Communication through information and knowledge exchange (formal and informal)	Tjandradewi et al., 2006; Tjandradewi & Marcotullio, 2009; De Villiers, 2009; Buis, 2009; Sonesson & Nordén, 2020

Resources – staffing & financial	Olowu, 2002; Bontenbal, 2009; Hewitt, 2004; De Villiers, 2009
Multi-sectoral engagement	Cremer et al., 2001; Keiner & Kim, 2007; De Villiers, 2009; Bontenbal & van Lindert, 2009
Project alignment with demand & existing frameworks	Bontenbal, 2009; Proctor, 2000; Hewitt, 2004
Reciprocity/mutuality	Tjandradewi & Marcotullio, 2009; De Villiers, 2009; Johnson & Wilson, 2006
Tangible practice/results	Buis, 2009; Tjandradewi et al., 2006;
Southern ownership	Olowu, 2002; Bontenbal, 2009
Practitioner reflection & practice	Olowu, 2002
Cost-sharing	Tjandradewi et al., 2006

The * denotes those that had statistically significant positive correlations with partnership success.

Even when success factors are combined across the literature, it should be reiterated that the majority of these emerge from context-dependent single case studies. Even those studies with a wider case selection still incur this limitation in generalisability. For example, De Villiers et al.'s (2007) quantitative analysis has South Africa as the common context for the collaborations even if the partners are international.

- *Inclusion of community groups to allow wider support and participation for sustainable partnerships*
- *High quality management with formal staffing structures*
- *Long-term formal agreements*
- *Ongoing communication and exchanges*
- *Centring around values of trust, mutuality, flexibility and cultural understanding*

(De Villiers, 2009, p. 150)

A Model for Success

The above list of success factors can be associated with different stages of collaborative partnerships. As mentioned, there are limitations as to how much can be deduced by individual success factors from cases. In order to be able to develop a more concrete, yet common, model for local democracy collaborations there must be adaptability. De Villiers (2009) builds upon previous research to create a partnership process framework to improve the functioning and outcomes of C2C cooperation. Previous research found that only 13 per cent of C2C partnerships were truly successful in South Africa and it is against this backdrop that De Villiers (2009, p. 150) identifies the need for better management processes. Previously identified success factors provide the basis for building the framework. De Villiers (2009) identifies broad categories from the literature to be:

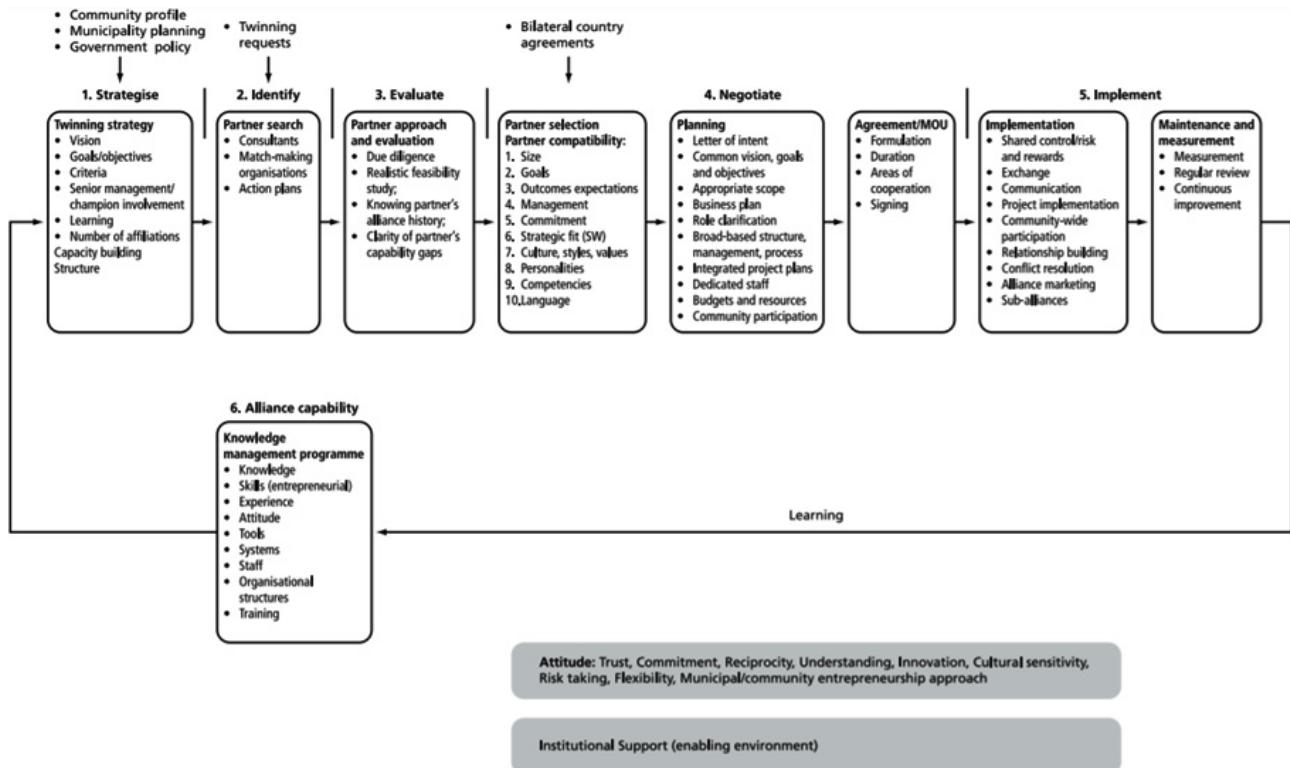
- *Political support*
- *Prudent selection of partners, including limitations on numbers to maintain resource availability as access to financial resources is a critical factor*

The model is then designed to incorporate these inter-related success factors and has six phases: strategize; identify; evaluate; negotiate; implement; and alliance capability (De Villiers, 2009, p. 151). See Figure 2.

Limitations are acknowledged in that the model is most useful for southern partners who potentially lack the required staffing and financial resources. This may be mitigated through avenues in the model increasing community resources and north-south partnerships. The model is also unlikely to be perfectly linear in process as constant adaptations to partnerships are made. Instead, the model can provide a framework to increase the rate of success and thus reduce resource wastage (De Villiers, 2009, p. 155). The range of elements in each stage can be seen as reflective of the ongoing issue of adaptation to local context that has emerged throughout the review. The model should not be taken as one-size-fits-all, but instead tailored to reflect the case conditions at hand. The framework includes the identified important aspects that best contribute to a successful collaboration for local democracy, but the appropriateness and nature of these will differ.

Figure 2.

A conceptual framework of city-to-city partnership formation and management from De Villiers (2009, p. 151). Image reproduced with permission of the rights holder, Elsevier.



Conclusion

What emerges from the literature on institutional collaborations for local democracy is a two-tiered approach with strong interlinkages between them. The first is in addressing aspects for successful collaborations in themselves and the second is aspects for developing local democracy. The majority of areas examined in this review speak to both of these as well as strongly emphasising the role of local context. Mutuality and learning processes focus on improved information and knowledge exchange to enhance the longevity and success of a partnership and subsequently enhance programme outcomes for local democracy targets. This was especially important for North-South collaborations where differences and inequalities may be most prevalent. A difference in knowledges underpins the ability to engage in an exchange, however several aspects must be considered. The first is how knowledge and learning expectations are formulated in the outcomes for the collaboration, especially when there is a North-South partnership and thus potentially greater inequalities. This is where the types of knowledge (tacit, contextual, general etc.) play a role with the inclusion of different forms able to strengthen levels of exchange. Additional important considerations are whether learning is formal or informal, as the latter is often overlooked in the process and therefore a missed contribution to mutuality, and how these different forms are being lifted from the individual to the organisational level.

Likewise, participation was examined in terms of within the collaboration and within local governance processes. Who participates and how were important questions for both of these realms. Participation requires vertical and horizontal examination. North-South dynamics return as an issue to be considered for participation as it affects the shaping of institutional collaborations to develop ownership for southern actors. Participation outcomes are mixed for both local democracy in general and when targeted by institutional collaborations. However, there are several factors that may be considered. The first relates to the structuring of collaborations. Both the utilisation of existing frameworks and the incorporation into the collaboration programme cycle were important for participatory governance improvement. This is aided by maintaining informed personnel. Furthermore, the involvement of actors beyond the municipal or city level

were proposed as holding value for participation levels.

Strong connections to participation, and local democracy more widely, highlighted the importance of developing accountability capacity. Means of accountability are necessary for developing trust, which continues the pattern of conceptual linkage as trust interlinks with transparency. It has been proposed that the lack of transparency, and associated trust, at local levels has been a key negating factor for building participation. Free flows of information are important for both good governance and for local collaboration projects. With the help of digital technologies, partners can share information that increases transparency and understanding of the different local contexts, which in turn creates higher levels of mutual trust in their municipal collaboration.

The most common success factors, in order of most supporting studies, for institutional collaboration programmes across the relevant literature were having the presence of: political support; public participation; a common vision with strategic plan; structured leadership and management; relationships and trust between partner members; flexibility and ongoing adaptation via evaluation; partner complementarity; communication through information and knowledge exchange (formal and informal); multi-sectoral engagement; resources (staffing and financial); project alignment with demand and existing frameworks; reciprocity/mutuality; tangible practice/results; southern partner ownership; practitioner reflection & practice and cost-sharing. The degree to which this range of success factors will be important for each collaboration will require reflection on and adaptation to the context of each programme. Furthermore, the factors should be taken into account at different stages of partnership formation and implementation. De Villiers' (2009) model presents a useful framework for incorporating crucial aspects across a partnership process of creating alliance capability through strategizing, identifying, evaluating, negotiating and implementing. The smorgasbord of elements in each stage of the process incorporate and reflect the key findings of this review. This allows the individual context-dependent case studies to speak to common framework for practitioners, who may then adapt for the context of their collaboration and local democracy conditions.

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Van Ewijk, E., & Baud, I. (2009). Partnerships between Dutch municipalities and municipalities in countries of migration to the Netherlands: knowledge exchange and mutuality. *Habitat International*, 33(2), 218-226.

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Appendix A

Reviewed Articles on Institutional Collaboration for Local Democracy

Article	Countries	Collaboration	Area of focus
Bontenbal, M. (2009). Understanding North–South municipal partnership conditions for capacity development: A Dutch–Peruvian example. <i>Habitat International</i> , 33(1), 100-105.	The Netherlands, Peru	Municipal	Financial administration; environmental management
Bontenbal, M. (2013). Differences in learning practices and values in north–south city partnerships: towards a broader understanding of mutuality. <i>Public Administration and Development</i> , 33(2), 85-100.	The Netherlands, Peru, South Africa, Nicaragua	Municipal, City	Financial administration; environmental management; municipal development planning; urban expansion; policymaking on HIV/ AIDS; gender and social housing; implementation of Performance Management System.
Bontenbal, M., & Van Lindert, P. (2008). Bridging local institutions and civil society in Latin America: Can city-to-city cooperation make a difference? <i>Environment & Urbanization</i> , 20(2), 465-481.	The Netherlands, Peru, Nicaragua	City	Improving urban governance
Campbell, T. (2009). Learning cities: Knowledge, capacity and competitiveness. <i>Habitat International</i> , 33(2), 195-201.	Spain, USA, Brazil	City	City learning
Cremer, R. D., De Bruin, A., & Dupuis, A. (2001). International Sister-Cities: Bridging the Global-Local Divide. <i>American Journal of Economics and Sociology</i> , 60(1), 377-401.	New Zealand, China	City	Municipal-community entrepreneurship

De Villiers, J. C., De Coning, T. J., & Smit, E. V. (2007). Towards an understanding of the success factors in international twinning and sister-city relationships. <i>South African Journal of Business Management</i> , 38(1), 1-10.	South Africa + assorted partner countries	Municipal	Not stated
Hewitt, W. E. (2002). Partnership as process: Municipal co-operation for international development. <i>Canadian Journal of Development Studies/Révue canadienne d'études du développement</i> , 23(2), 225-247.	Canada, Ecuador, Chile	Municipal	Governance, urban planning, water delivery and sewerage, and transit planning
Hewitt, W. E. (2004). Improving citizen participation in local government in Latin America through international cooperation: a case study. <i>Development in Practice</i> , 14(5), 619-632.	Canada, Chile	Municipal	Participation and the improvement of communications between local government, civic employees, and citizens
Johnson, H., & Wilson, G. (2006). North-South/South-North partnerships: Closing the 'mutuality gap'. <i>Public Administration and Development</i> , 26(1), 71-80.	Uganda, United Kingdom	Practitioner, municipal	Technical cooperation for engineering and environmental health
Johnson, H., & Wilson, G. (2009). Learning and mutuality in municipal partnerships and beyond: A focus on northern partners. <i>Habitat International</i> , 33(2), 210-217.	Uganda, United Kingdom	Practitioner, municipal	Environmental health, service delivery
Olowu, D. (2002). Capacity building for policy management through twinning: Lessons from a Dutch-Namibian case. <i>Public Administration and Development</i> , 22(3), 275-288.	Namibia, The Netherlands	University-institute twinning	Public policy management

Onyango, G. (2019). Organizational Trust and Accountability Reforms in Public Management: Analysis of Inter-agency Implementation Relations in Kenya. <i>International Journal of Public Administration</i> , 42(14), 1159-1174.	Kenya	Inter-agency	Public management reforms
Proctor, R. (2000). 'Twinning' and the South Africa/Canada programme on governance: some reflections on Blunt, Jones and Askvik. <i>Public Administration and Development: The International Journal of Management Research and Practice</i> , 20(4), 319-325.	South Africa, Canada	Provincial	Transitional institutional development
Shefer, I. (2019). Policy transfer in city-to-city cooperation: implications for urban climate governance learning. <i>Journal of Environmental Policy & Planning</i> , 21(1), 61-75.	Germany, Israel	City	Urban climate governance
Sonesson, K., & Nordén, B. (2020). We learnt a lot: Challenges and learning experiences in a southern african—north european municipal partnership on education for sustainable development. <i>Sustainability</i> , 12(20), 8607.	Namibia, Sweden	Municipal	Education for sustainable development
Tjandradewi, B. I., Marcotullio, P. J., & Kidokoro, T. (2006). Evaluating city-to-city cooperation: a case study of the Penang and Yokohama experience. <i>Habitat International</i> , 30(3), 357-376.	Malaysia, Japan	City	City planning and management

Van Ewijk, E., & Baud, I. (2009). Partnerships between Dutch municipalities and municipalities in countries of migration to the Netherlands; knowledge exchange and mutuality. <i>Habitat International</i> , 33(2), 218-226.	The Netherlands, Suriname, Morocco, Turkey	Municipal	Integration, local governance, service delivery
Wilson, G., & Johnson, H. (2007). Knowledge, learning and practice in North–South practitioner-to-practitioner municipal partnerships. <i>Local Government Studies</i> , 33(2), 253-269.	Uganda, United Kingdom	Practitioner, municipal	Technical cooperation in environmental/public health, traffic management, public finance and administration

Review articles without independent case study

Article	Collaboration
Buis, H. (2009). The role of local government associations in increasing the effectiveness of city-to-city cooperation. <i>Habitat International</i> , 33(2), 190-194.	City
Bontenbal, M., & Van Lindert, P. (2009). Local players in a global field. Municipal international cooperation for local development. <i>Scandinavian Journal of Development Alternatives</i> , 28(1), 204-222.	Municipal
De Villiers, J. C. (2009). Success factors and the city-to-city partnership management process—from strategy to alliance capability. <i>Habitat International</i> , 33(2), 149-156.	City
Devers-Kanoglu, U. (2009). Municipal partnerships and learning - Investigating a largely unexplored relationship. <i>Habitat International</i> , 33(2), 202-209.*	Municipal
Hafteck, P. (2003). An introduction to decentralized cooperation: definitions, origins and conceptual mapping. <i>Public Administration and Development: The International Journal of Management Research and Practice</i> , 23(4), 333-345.	Decentralised cooperation
Keiner, M., & Kim, A. (2007). Transnational city networks for sustainability. <i>European Planning Studies</i> , 15(10), 1369-1395.	City
Mayer, L., & Nguyen Long, L. A. (2021). Can city-to-city cooperation facilitate sustainable development governance in the Global South? Lessons gleaned from seven North-South partnerships in Latin America. <i>International journal of urban sustainable development</i> , 13(2), 174-186.	City



THE GLOBAL GOALS

For Sustainable Development