City Diplomacy

The Roles and Challenges of the peace building equivalent of decentralized cooperation

Special thanks to
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City Diplomacy: Roles and challenges of the peacebuilding equivalent of decentralized cooperation

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Cover Photo: Shattered town of Vukovar (East-Slavonia)  
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Development Studies – City Diplomacy - Reconstruction – Peacebuilding – Governance
Executive summary

Decentralization itself is generally considered as a response to the failure of the state and the need to reform to counter economic inefficiencies, macroeconomic instability, and ineffective governance. These characteristics can also be seen in contemporary conflicts. Therefore, it’s not quite unreasonable to think that there can be a task for DC in the field of peace building as well. The academic research on this peace building equivalent of decentralized cooperation, now more known as City Diplomacy, is still in its infancy. People interpret City Diplomacy differently. Therefore, and because of other reasons, the VNG put their working definition of City Diplomacy as follows: ‘City Diplomacy is a tool of local governments and their associations in promoting social cohesion, conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction with the aim to create a stable environment in which the citizens can live together in peace, democracy and prosperity’ (VNG, 2007). This research sees City Diplomacy as the peace building equivalent of decentralized cooperation. It therefore has a clear accent on both the cities and their citizens on both sides of the cooperation.

City Diplomacy seems to have the potential to be an efficient actor in the comprehensive undertakings in post-conflict areas. It still happens too often in conflict environments that foreign aid agencies and international NGOs overwhelm indigenous coping mechanisms and displace local human, financial and material capacities. At the same time, donors frequently underestimate the value of local, in-kind resources, including staff, premises, facilities and communication (Patrick, 2000). To avoid fostering dependency, City Diplomacy uses explicit conditionality and policy dialogue to leverage the available and potential assets of societies. International settlements, imposed from the outside, may solve the immediate problems but they are doomed to failure if internal actors are not involved in the process. The strengthening of capacities at both the regional and local level also needs to be one of the main concerns as well as social participation. Furthermore, multilateral and bilateral organizations are in general more outcome oriented in opposition to the more process oriented approaches of City Diplomacies. Thus, City Diplomacy has a growing role to play.

When municipalities think of City Diplomacy they often relate it to projects. Its true that within the City Diplomacy movement projects are indeed ubiquitous. City Diplomacy is a product of an evolving process. This process often consist of mutual projects, not necessarily on a municipal level. By means of three Dutch case studies a distinction is made between five responsibilities that local governments can take in their peace building efforts. These are
roles City Diplomacy can play both in a project (as a project-partner) and outside the executed projects. The five responsibilities are: local governments as; bridge builders, mediators, persuaders, facilitators and trainers.

All the dilemmas and problems known in the field of decentralized cooperation are also relevant within City Diplomacy. However, there are also specific predicaments. A first problem is that one has to deal with ‘stacked’ problems. One does not only have to deal with transitional countries, but also with a society that has a strong conflict aggravation. There is also a lack of continuity, the presences of concentric circles, and top-down implementations of other (inter)national agencies. Also outside support and assistance is crucial to the success of City Diplomacy. This form of cooperation can’t be seen as a single aid modality. It doesn’t operate independently, but in coherence with other actors. Furthermore, people involved with City Diplomacy will often, quite emphatically, be confronted with reluctant municipal officials, who don’t have the desires or needs to serve the common interests of the community. “Decentralization efforts are in some cases a guise for national political elites to expand their control through developing new local institutions or restructuring existing ones” (Smoke, 2003; in Bontebal, 2006). Therefore, its really essential to have the right people involved in the process of City Diplomacy, which unfortunately is not always the case. These individuals ought to be determined, self-confident and flexible in order to counteract those tenacious elites.
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City Diplomacy: Roles and challenges of the peacebuilding equivalent of decentralized cooperation
I. Introduction
The political crisis in which nation states found themselves in after the Second World War allowed space for municipalities and their municipality cooperation to appear on the scene. After World War II there were municipal initiatives between France and Germany in order to get more acquainted with the different cultures and to overcome the feelings of deep distrusts. It wasn’t until the late 1980s, early 1990s that numerous national and international institutions involved in development aid started to mention City-to-City cooperation (C2C) and Decentralized Cooperation (DC). “Originally intended to build friendships and facilitate cultural exchanges, during these last two decades a shift has occurred in its objectives. Now it is increasingly seen as an innovative development modality in which the Northern partner assists the Southern partner in its process of urban development” (Bontebal, 2006). This DC concept now has passed its own maturity phase. Various organizations concerned with development cooperation are now not only familiar with the methods of DC but they also make use of it. Even the UN has its own Decentralized Cooperation Program (DCP). Decentralization has now become a central issue in the development debate. According to Bontebal (2006) “governments and international aid donors agree that devolving powers to the local level and strengthening the capacity of local authorities will foster local development. In respect to these processes, decentralized cooperation is believed to be an effective mechanism for good governance capacity building.” (Bontebal, 2006).

Decentralization itself is generally considered as a response to the failure of the state and the need to reform to counter economic inefficiencies, macroeconomic instability, and ineffective governance. These characteristics can also be seen in contemporary conflicts. Therefore, its not quite unreasonable to think that there can be a task for DC in the field of peace building as well. However, the academic research on this peace building equivalent of decentralized cooperation, now more known as City Diplomacy, is still in its infancy. Decentralized Cooperation forms a perfect foundation to examine the possibilities of City Diplomacy. As a result, this research will first deal with the aspects of Decentralized Cooperation before going more into the details of its peace building counterpart. Its not that those two concepts are that different of each other, not at all, but the thing that matters most, is the context in which they expand their activities. This will be done in the following two chapters in which will be argued that City Diplomacy can be an element of decentralized cooperation.
A profusion of different actors already made peace building efforts messy and disorganized. Different organizations which all use various methods can really start to counteract each other. Also a lack of coordination and transparency is not unfamiliar to organizations working in post-conflict areas. City Diplomacy would be the umpteenth form of cooperation in the field of peace building. A field that seems to be in danger to suffer from a plethora of actors and a paucity of coordination. Hence, the first research question: Why should there be a peace building equivalent of decentralized cooperation? Is there a demand for such a cooperation? With the purpose of answering this question as fully as possible it is imperative to analyze the roles and intentions of the actors already involved in the field. Furthermore, the concept of peace building will be examined as well. After exploring City Diplomacy’s field of activity the potential roles and challenges will be looked at. On the basis of three small case studies of some form of City Diplomacy used by Dutch municipalities an attempt will be made to answer the following questions: What are the potential roles City Diplomacy can play? and What are the challenges for this form of decentralized cooperation in the field of peace building?

As a result of the absence of academic research regarding City Diplomacy it remains crucial to speak with actors involved with City Diplomacy and to look at contemporary examples. In order to come to a wide-ranging research three Dutch case studies will be looked at in detail. And also interviews with key individuals from those three municipalities, the Dutch CSO IKV and the Association of Netherlands Municipalities VNG are very essential to the outcome of this research. This research has not the intention to be an all encompassing analysis, rather it has to be seen as one of the first attempts to grasp the scope and complexity of City Diplomacy. It will hopefully serve as a motivation for more extensive research on the roles and challenges of decentralized cooperation in the field of peace building.
II. Decentralized Cooperation

The introduction already mentioned the first City-to-City cooperation in Europe. Whereas in Europe town twinning originated from bottom-up initiatives, the American twinning program was established from above. “The US movement materialized with President Eisenhower’s “People-to-People” program in 1956 that was intended to involve individuals and organized groups in citizen diplomacy, encouraging exchanges fostered through sister cities reducing the chance of future conflicts.” (Bontebal, 2006). Here, one can see a first divide in the use of the term decentralized development cooperation. A divide between, on the one hand, an approach based on the local authorities and their competences (peer-to-peer), and on the other an approach, which focuses more on the participants and contributions of the civil society itself (people-to-people). Thus, decentralized cooperation is interpreted differently by various organizations involved in development cooperation. Pierre Hafteck examines the different interpretations in detail in ‘An introduction to decentralized cooperation: definitions, origins and conceptual mapping’. The following paragraph is based on his research, which was published in 2003.

The definition of DC that the European Union uses can be found in the 1995 version of the Lomé Convention. The European Union (EU) adopts the broad view that all possible project-implementing entities other than central administrative structures can carry out DC activities, as long as they engage in non-profit activities. Although the real nature of DC activities is not defined, the concept of the partnership is mentioned: encouragement of partnerships between agents. Next to the EU’s vision there is one of the International Union of Local Authorities (IULA), which is now known as the United Cities Local Governments (UCLG). The IULA adopted a similarly broad viewpoint to that of the EU when it comes to the purpose, contents and actors of DC interventions. It also refers to the notion of partnership. According to the IULA the DC concept relates to development-focused activities that involve direct participation and funding of non-state organizations and/or international partnerships between locally based bodies. Furthermore, the UNDP gives DC a geographical meaning, restricting it to international cooperative links between actors belonging to two particular (sub-national) geographical areas. These refer to areas of jurisdiction of specific local authorities, where the actors of DC are not necessarily the local authorities themselves. In comparison with the European Union’s definition, where they place emphasis on who is involved the UNDP focuses on where activities take place. In addition, and as an important actor in development programs, the World Bank takes a more complete notion of DC in its
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agenda. It defined DC in 1994 as: a formal partnership between local authorities in different countries, who engage in a program of exchange and collaboration aimed at improving the social and economic circumstances of their respective communities and enhancing the skills and competence of the partners involved. What is done and how its done is what matters according to the World Bank. An important purpose of DC is skills enhancement among DC partners (European Commission, 1996; IULA, 1997; Schep, 1995; in Hafteck, 2003).

Taking these different interpretations of DC into account Pierre Hafteck comes with a compact and workable definition of DC: “Decentralized Cooperation consists in 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”. This classification is not to be seen as an all encompassing definition, but as Hafteck argues “it seeks to spell out what most entities involved in DC mean by DC (Hafteck, 2003). A notion that can be added to Hafteck’s definition is that DC is not a one way delivery of aid. The strength of DC also lays in its reciprocity of efforts and benefit between the partners. This is what also separates decentralized cooperation from other types of development cooperation. Bontebal (2006) argues that “in practice Southern partners are assisted by means of financial aid, projects and capacity building activities whilst Northern partners benefit form decentralized cooperation through an increased awareness and knowledge of global issues and the opportunity for the public at large to participate in development efforts. The exchange of knowledge and expertise through peer-to-peer programs for local administrators implies two-capacity building efforts”, at least in theory (Bontebal, 2006). However it has a great potential and is therefore something that deserves more attention in the Northern countries in general and the academic world in particular.

DC does not refer to just any type of cooperation between decentralized bodies. Collaboration between two or more neighboring municipalities for the delivery of specific services is known as ‘inter-municipal cooperation’, not DC. Nor does municipal twinning between two industrialized countries fall under DC (Hafteck, 2003). Thus, city-to-city cooperation with one municipality situated in an industrialized country in the North and one developing country in the South can be found on one side of the locus of DC. Next to this city-to-city approach, there is also the people-to-people approach within this locus of DC, which purpose is to develop and encourage civil society initiatives. In order the be a
sustainable cooperation, this people-to-people approach can indeed use the network and expertise of decentralized cooperation as a platform and as a forum. In other words those two foundations of DC can be self-enforcing. Bontebal (2006) further elaborates on those two pillars of DC. “The first pillar is that of the local administration itself, involved in formal political or technical encounters by mayors, municipal councils and technical personnel. Providing monetary or in-kind contributions, including training sessions and advisory services, such decentralized programs are designed to encourage regular, direct and ongoing contact between municipal administrators and technicians, allowing the transfer of technical information and exchange of expertise and best practice”. Thus, the exchange of know-how and experience is the central aim, servicing the overall objective of sustainable urban development (Bontebal, 2006). The second pillar is the participation and contributions of civil society, the non-profit and the private sector. “Civil society may cooperate with the local authority in its decentralized cooperation efforts, or it may execute its own program. Raising awareness on global issues and development cooperation is an important goal, as well as creating public support for the international efforts on both the national and, most certainly, local level. These activities in the civil society sphere can have a substantial symbolic meaning, by reinforcing the link between the cities and further generating public support.” (Bontebal, 2006).

Next to partition in two fundamental pillars, there is another distinction that can be made within DC. Figure 1 places the DC concept, with Hafteck’s used definition, into a more precise framework, as DC clearly relates at the same time to development aid modalities on the one hand, and to the international relations of local governments on the other (Hafteck, 2003). The theme of DC lies at the intersections of these two parents fields: Development Cooperation and Local Governments’ International Relations. This figure can also provide a framework to DC partners and other practitioners of development aid and municipal international relations (for further elaboration on this discussion see Hafteck, 2003).
A large deal of the literature assumes that the decentralization of government has generic benefits, mainly the increased political participation of ordinary citizens whose voices are better heard. Smoke (2003; in Bontebal 2006) notes that “the majority of these advantages can be broadly captured as improved efficiency, governance and/or equity”. Furthermore, there is the belief that decentralization will result in better use of resources. This argument is based on the assumption that local citizens have influence on the decisions made by local governments. “The local has been considered a key site for democracy building and citizen participation. Citizenship was thought to derive largely from community identification and locally concentrated political participation.” (Lowndes, 1995 in Bontebal, 2006). “Governance consequently is not government. It recognizes that power exists inside and outside the formal authority and institutions of government. There is no longer any clear distinction between the public and private spheres.” (Helmsing, 2000). As Helmsing (2000) note, “it is not necessarily that local governments can do the job better, rather the context has changed and other actors have to be considered”. Furthermore, Bontebal stated that “local governments can contribute to local development by providing an enabling legal and institutional environment and by creating partnerships with key local public, private and community actors.” (Bontebal, 2006).

To conclude, the overall objective of DC is contributing to development at the local level (Hafteck, 2003). Nevertheless, there is no blueprint for the set of activities, actors involved, geographical scope or contact frequency in decentralized cooperation. Various authors
review these elements in their work. However, some general characteristics can be extracted, which distinguish DC as an unique form of development cooperation effort. DC is characterized by a formal agreement of a long-term, one-on-one partnership between the participating local authorities and/or their respective civil society groups (Bontebal, 2006). “In general, the relationship does not limit itself to carrying out a single project but opens a way for a variety of shared activities, usually for an indefinite period.” (Zelinsky, 1991; in Bontebal, 2006). Numerous cities involved in city cooperation are now functioning similarly as other aid delivery agencies in the international cooperation efforts. Funding is provided by national governments, local government associations or through international donor-funded programs. Cities set up and support projects and provide knowledge and expertise through the delivery of technical assistance in their partner cities, often organized in a peer-to-peer setting for local government administrators and technicians (Bontebal, 2006).
III. City Diplomacy

It is said that the ‘evolution’ of decentralized cooperation started with C2C programs between cities that suffered from WWII, with the initiatives between German and French cities. Thus, the concept of cities helping other war-torn cities is not new at all. However, since the end of the nineties and the beginning of the 21st century there is a growing awareness of this phenomenon. Increasing numbers of local governments now intend to support cities affected by civil conflict and war. Cities have an important role to play in consolidating democracy, ensuring peace and stability, and enhancing citizens’ participation in democratic processes, projecting it to national and, eventually, international level. The city movement against Apartheid in the Netherlands and the establishment of hundreds of city links with townships organizations in South Africa contributed to the process of democratic change in post-conflict South Africa (VNG, 2007). Such a form of decentralization of international relations, choosing cities as the key actors is more recently known as City Diplomacy. According to Van Der Pluijm (2007) City Diplomacy could be defined as “the institutions and processes by which cities engage in relations with actors on an international political stage with the aim of representing themselves and their interests to one another.” This is a very vague definition of City Diplomacy. The concept has a relation with local governments, and with international relations. The Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG) asked itself appropriate questions about this concept: “Is diplomacy solely concerned with issues of war and peace? Or does diplomacy address many more issues, such as promoting trade relations, cultural exchange, and a candidacy for the Olympic games?” (VNG, 2007). Thus, with this definition of City Diplomacy one doesn’t grasp the essence of peace building, but more one with a pure political meaning. What can be argued as well is that it is a too vague definition of the phenomenon decentralized cooperation refers to. Whereas citybonds in (this paper agreed definition of) decentralized cooperation is one aspect of this cooperation, it can also form a platform or a forum, for future collaborations of citizens between the cities.

Van Der Pluijm’s definition of city diplomacy excludes the involvement of citizens and citizen movements, this is then seen as an other form of diplomacy, namely citizen diplomacy. However, when citizen movements are established within the city’s cooperation it can actually strengthen the interaction, involvement and awareness of the other city’s dilemmas and conflicts. This is one of the advantages and unique aspects of DC. However, just as witnessed with DC, also the term City Diplomacy doesn’t have an agreed definition.
People interpret City Diplomacy differently. Therefore, and because of other reasons, the VNG put their working definition of City Diplomacy as follows: ‘City Diplomacy is a tool of local governments and their associations in promoting social cohesion, conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction with the aim to create a stable environment in which the citizens can live together in peace, democracy and prosperity’ (VNG, 2007). This is already a much better definition. It immediately shows the clear task of City Diplomacy, namely contributing to peace and is not attached to cities alone, but also to its ‘associations’, a word that can be interpreted in any possible way. Also the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) and the Glocal Forum choose to narrow their definitions of City Diplomacy to the field of peace building alone. Although these last three organizations came up with workable definitions of City Diplomacy, diplomacy is still a word that doesn’t really fit to the intentions of decentralized cooperation. Diplomacy adds a highly political flavor to it. It includes the assumption that this ‘cooperation’ is something that is inserted on war-torn cities. Diplomacy is furthermore a term that isn’t quickly associated with trust. And it is trust you need with such a cooperation. Take for example four different professions. A baker, a postman, a teacher and a diplomat. Which of the four would one trust the least? Its indeed a rhetoric question, which shows the inappropriateness of this word in the field of peace building. However, this research is not intended to come up with a new and improved term. It would only create further confusion with regard to the concept of City Diplomacy. Therefore, because of the absence of a better definition and because City Diplomacy is still a conceptual work in progress, this research will use the working definition of City Diplomacy as used by the VNG. Nevertheless, City Diplomacy, in this research, will still have a clear accent on both the cities and their citizens on both sides of the cooperation just as witnessed with decentralized cooperation. It must always be kept in mind that cities and towns do not merely consist of local government structures and collections of buildings but are communities of human being who must participate fully in defining their living conditions and way of life (UNHABITAT, 2002).

Furthermore, in order to be efficient partners of cities living in conflict and deprivation a forging of wide-range horizontal linkages between the two municipalities is required. They should do so in addressing the critical areas of institution-building, local economic development, education, health, environmental protection, tourism, cultural heritage, information and communication technology, areas that go beyond the reach of just the municipal officials. Tools needed to overcome the psychological ailments and scars brought
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by war have to be employed as well. This is something that can’t be forgotten. Amongst them are the programs aimed at youth, sports and culture. Municipal officials of both parties are indeed the leading focal points, but involving civil society and the private sector in setting up initiatives is crucial for the success of City Diplomacy. Thus, its not only the city’s officials who ‘make’ City Diplomacy. International organizations, civil society organizations and global enterprises could, furthermore, support those programs that are relevant to their area of expertise (Nigro, 2003). A clear example of the synergy between citizens, organizations and the municipality can be found with the C2C cooperation between the Dutch municipality of Eindhoven and the Sudanese municipality Gedaref. This cooperation was first initiated between the Technical University of Eindhoven and people within the city of Gedaref and not between the cities themselves. Further on, when the relationship with the Sudanese city strengthened, the municipality of Eindhoven was able to create a platform for this relationship, which now grew into a full-fledge project-based relationship between the two cities.

Figure 2 shows an expansion of figure 1. This figure shows City Diplomacy’s field of activity. Where decentralized cooperation is partly combined by the parental fields of both development cooperation and the local governments’ international relations, City Diplomacy is a merge of three core fields. The figure perfectly illustrates the collision of three different core businesses. When peace building activities meet both development cooperation and local governments’ international relations, City Diplomacy comes into play. Or put differently, whenever peace building activities are involved with actions of decentralized cooperation it can be seen as City Diplomacy. At least this is the concept of City Diplomacy used in this research. Some others argue that the objections of DC differ from those of City Diplomacy. It is said by the UCLG that the objectives of the working field of decentralized cooperation are “to contribute to development, to reinforce the efficiency of municipal management and to provide local public services to help improve the living conditions of populations and to intensify exchanges and dialogue between nations.” (UCLG, 2007). Its true that not all objectives of DC apply to City Diplomacy as well, however in this research its closely argued that some of these objectives (as stated by the UCLG) are also true for City Diplomacy. Hence the partial overlap of the peace building field with decentralized cooperation, which shape City Diplomacy in figure 2.
So far cities were only mentioned as abstract actors. As if cities, can actually do something, this reification of ‘the city’ or ‘the municipality’ almost made it an organism. Of course, its not the city that initiates sustainable relationships within other countries, it are its representatives. On the first place representatives of the city are the mayors, given that they have the most responsibility for the city’s international relations. But also aldermen, councilors, municipal servants and municipal advisers, formed in a commission, can represent the city at large (Van Der Pluijm, 2007). Other than these people who work for the municipality, also professors of universities can get involved as actors of City Diplomacy. It is not to say that they represent the municipality, but they can very much represent a part of the city’s cooperation just as much as municipal servants can. Obviously, they will have their own field of expertise. Another distinction that has to be made is the fact that representatives of one city don’t actually have to get involved with the representatives of the other. They can also get involved with other parties within the city. In addition, and as another reason against the term City Diplomacy, the municipal officials are often not the prime actors who initiate such a collaboration.
Too much credit goes out to the cities. Civil society organizations (CSOs) often pave the road for a successful cooperation between the cities. This is something that is often forgotten and thus deserves a lot more attention. Actors as civil society organizations (e.g. the Dutch IKV Pax Christi) or coordinated municipality associations (e.g. the Dutch VNG or the Canadian FMC) are often the ones who initiate contacts between two municipalities. IKV Pax Christi, in its capacity of initiator, is never in search for municipalities to cooperate, but they rather look for enthusiastic and skilled people within the municipality. It goes a bit too far to say that they look for people with character, but this sort of cooperation definitely asks for people with perseverence and the ability to take a leading role. Its regularly not the municipalities that actually take the initiative within City Diplomacy. The work CSOs do in post-conflict areas form the basis of City Diplomacy. A society just coming out of conflict is often too instable to start a comprehensive collaboration with. Hence, it doesn’t start with city-to-city cooperation. It starts by means of projects with a clear beginning and obvious end. However, City Diplomacy can be a product of some form of CSOs’ concerted actions. It can be a result of earlier initiatives that grew into a more inclusive cooperation, its an evolving phenomenon in which City Diplomacy comes to the fore long after the cooperation has past its adolescence. City Diplomacy is a product of an evolving process. Its quite logic, actually, that CSOs are at the basis of City Diplomacies. When there isn’t such a basis to start with it will be very hard to get municipal officials convinced of the importance, feasibility and added value of city-to-city diplomacy. Collaboration between CSOs and municipalities is therefore essential to City Diplomacy. Furthermore, municipalities often don't have the available time and efforts to be constantly aware of what happens in their partner municipality. Its too complex and situations can change so rapidly in conflict prone areas, so that municipalities will almost never be able to sustain or even initiate these citybonds themselves. City Diplomacy is therefore also a very unfortunate chosen term for this comprehensive and multi-actor collaboration. However, once there’s a certain quality of communication between the municipalities, and CSOs involved in the area, it can indeed become a more independent and sustainable cooperation. Note that large, powerful and progressive cities can form an exception to the rule. They often have a whole City Diplomacy committee to its disposal. Since City Diplomacy is a new and a still growing concept these progressive European cities can be counted on the fingers of one hand.

In the field of City Diplomacy there are two main scenarios. First, there are the progressive municipalities in conflict prone areas who ask for help themselves. A good example of this is
the Bosnian city of Tuzla. Tuzla has always stood symbol for a particular group of people. It has always been a city of the opposition. The Dutch CSO, IKV choose to support this city in its efforts as a sort of bridgehead. In that way, collaborations started out of solidarity with the city (by means of the ABC-program). That alone already proved a strong basis, a favorable municipality and a willing civil society. The second scenario, when in search of city-to-city cooperation, entails cities that aren’t necessarily known for there good governance, but who are definitely in need of contact and assistance. The isolation of cities in post-conflict areas can be immense. When one establishes a cooperation with such a transitional city (transitional in ideology and practice), a whole other range of measures will be required, though not less effective or less important. The chances that one meets municipal officials who are not so inclined to cooperate and who are less convinced of democratic values are definitely bigger here than in the first scenario. Nevertheless, one can try to start some form of collaboration with those officials. It will then be focused on persuasive measures. This can be seen as the apprehensive scenario. This is indeed a bigger challenge, which also needs more assistance from different parties. However, after years of building a trustworthy relationship, one will be able to conduct to widespread changes in good governance and democratic values. The very first task of City Diplomacy here is, primarily, the facilitation of dialogue.

Furthermore, within the field of decentralized development cooperation there can also be a distinction between two ‘schools’. A distinction that is also relevant to City Diplomacy. The first involves the school of friendships. In order to make great contributions one must first be able to keep up trustworthy and sustainable contacts. Only when one is perceived as equal, as a friend, collaboration can make a sustainable impact to society. At least that’s the their premise. During this orienting phase, the contacts and relationships become deepened and sustainable, but remain in a sense ‘soft’. One will, nevertheless, stay depended on the willingness to cooperate and the whimsical behaviour of municipal officials in delicate matters. However, in places where there is almost no legal framework for municipalities, this can be a welcome opportunity. The other school is less aimed towards friendship. It can be seen as a political school: At the start of the cooperation one should clearly state ones intentions and convictions. This does not mean that one gives a clear blueprint of the cooperation at the early start, rather one should emphatically state that the cooperation is intended to help everyone within the municipality, also the subordinated, and not only the ones in power. This school can very much be seen as one with pure working contacts. And in
comparison with the other school, this cooperation can be perceived as ‘hard’. There can be high demands on either side of the cooperation without affecting the sustainability of the relationship.

These mentioned schools and scenarios are pure theoretical frameworks. In practice, no single cooperation can be entirely pigeon-holed in one framework, or will stay in one the whole time. Its just a tool to make some distinctions and to give a clear overview. These different characteristics however, can be a clarification on the different positions City Diplomacy can take and the effectiveness of it. In table 1 the scenarios and schools are combined and form a sort of theoretical script for City Diplomacy.

Table 1: City Diplomacy script

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenarios</th>
<th>1: Solidarity</th>
<th>2: Apprehensive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Schools</strong></td>
<td><strong>A: Friendship</strong>&lt;br&gt;Gets often stuck in good intentions, yields little results.</td>
<td>Highly symbolic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B: Work</strong></td>
<td><strong>relationship</strong>&lt;br&gt;City Diplomacy can be a catalyst for good governance.</td>
<td>A long road ahead, but big contributions to change (of governance) can be made.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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City Diplomacy: Roles and challenges of the peacebuilding equivalent of decentralized cooperation
IV. What is peace building?

City Diplomacy expands its activities in the field of peace building. However, just as witnessed with the concepts of both Decentralized Cooperation and City Diplomacy, the concept of peace building can be highly ambiguous and vague. Accordingly, it has been defined in many different ways. And is often misused for different concepts. It is therefore wise to give this concept a little more attention. What stands out is that it has come to be seen as an increasingly comprehensive concept. According to Paris (2004) peace building is “action undertaken at the end of a civil conflict to consolidate peace and prevent a recurrence of fighting. A peace building mission involves the deployment of military and civilian personnel from several international agencies, with a mandate to conduct peace building in a country that is just emerging from a civil war.” Lewer (1999) uses the term peace building to refer, in a broader sense, to: “Non violent processes which attempt to prevent, mitigate and transform violent conflict and contribute to building societies in which people have fair access to resources, which are based on social justice, and which respect fundamental human rights recognized under international law. The rebuilding of benign functional relationships is a vital part of this activity. Such processes should be rooted within the communities affected by the conflict and be sustainable locally. Peace building usually requires a long-term commitment from local people and outside helpers, and can involve both cross-cutting (integrated into development and relief programs) and stand alone approaches, and work at community or national levels, or both.” (Lewer, 1999). Peace building becomes easily entangled with conflict and peace definitions. In order to solve some dissimilarities in the use of the technical jargon of peace building there are two features worth highlighting. First, the military component of peace building operations represent only one small element of a larger effort to establish lasting peace. Second, peace building begins when the fighting has stopped. It is by definition a post-conflict endeavor (Paris, 2004).

A full decade after it became a high-profile international commitment, post-conflict peace building remains a fragile undertaking with mixed results. While there is little doubt that peace building will continue to require international attention, the lessons of the last ten years do not add up to a successful record. In the 1990s the concept of peace building became more expansive, combining conflict prevention, conflict management, conflict resolution and conflict transformation. Today, peace building is no longer an exact term. Despite over ten years of practice, there is no commonly agreed peace building policy or doctrine. However, there is also no standard conflict, with commonly agreed solutions. In the course of its
implementation, post-conflict peace building ran into multiple political, institutional and operational challenges. Many of these were a function of the difficulties of rebuilding war-torn societies. Others derived from the built-in limitations, contradictions, shortcomings and failures of international policies and institutions (Tschirgi, 2004). What makes protracted conflicts difficult to manage is that it warps the societies economies and regions in which they are situated, creating complex emergencies fueled on the one hand by local struggles and on the other by global factors such as the arms trade and support for regimes or rebels by outside states (Miall, 2004). “Most approaches dealing with violent collective conflict concentrate on the causes and development of the conflict or on the creation and sustenance of a peace building capacity, and fail to sufficiently integrate an understanding of how the preventions and causes of conflict interact.” (Miall, 2004). Yet the results of over ten years of peace building policy and practice have been ad hoc, tentative and uneven. Tschirgi (2004) also elaborates on the issue: “One of the persistent obstacles to more effective peace building outcomes is the chronic inability of international actors to adapt their assistance to the political dynamics of the war-torn societies they seek to support. The internal-external disconnect manifests itself at the conceptual, policy, operational and institutional levels. Unless significant modifications are made to the existing models of collaboration between internal and external actors by addressing the politics of peace building, international efforts will continue to fall short of their declared goals of enabling war-torn societies to get on the path to sustainable peace and development.” (Tschirgi, 2004). Maybe City Diplomacy can play a fair role in new models of collaboration between internal and external actors, as a sort of intermediary.

Interventions in failed states or civil wars will also call for the commitment of countries to risk the lives of the men and women serving in their armed forces. In all western democracies there is a tendency not to intervene in wars anymore. They don’t want to see any compatriots killed in a combat that isn’t ‘theirs’ to fight. Peace building depends too much on the money, interest and media exposure of the Western countries (Daudelin, 2004). The only countries that seem to initiate interventions are the ones with a national interest like, the United States in Iraq. Besides China and its interest in their oil resource, who else is in Darfur right now, or Chad, or Mali? One dilemma, which not only peace builders have to deal with, but also NGOs and aid agencies, is the Western lack of awareness of the catastrophes and conflicts in Southern countries. There are the new idealist who are working hard at convincing skeptical elites and electorates that national interests is a thing of the past,
that global governance is a public good and that a fair interventionist regime is in everybody’s interest (Daudelin, 2004). This neo-idealistic thought appears to drive what one could call the ‘blue-think’ that dominates UN discourse. The International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) focuses on changing the common discourse as it intends to goad states into acting by defining an abstract obligation to intervene whenever massive human rights violations are committed. Without clear and concrete interests and in the absence of political will, this responsibility to protect would lead to the mobilization of humanitarian armies and to their deployment (Daudelin, 2004). Although it sounds very desirable, like many UN reports and mandates it has neither a stick nor a carrot to persuade the governments of Western countries to get involved with those operations. Thus, there are a lot of voices who say the UN’s attempt to change the current discourse is almost certain doomed to fail. The interacting which is characteristic for decentralized cooperation can be a welcome opportunity for peace builders all over the world to create at least more awareness in the Northern states about the catastrophes and conflicts in the Southern countries. This is not to say that City Diplomacy is a remedy for this negative tendency in the field of peace building. However, in theory at least, it can contribute its mite to the public good of global governance which new idealist speak of.
V. Why should there be Decentralized Cooperation in peace building

The contemporary conflicts are also known as protracted social conflicts. A term first used by Edward Azar (1991). This term emphasizes that the sources of such conflicts lay predominantly within (and across) rather than between states (Ramsbotham, 2005). Contemporary conflicts are characterized by a new pattern of violence. This pattern in the new type of warfare is confirmed by the statistics of the ‘new wars’. The tendency to avoid battle and to direct most violence against civilians is founded by the dramatic increase in the ratio of civilian to military casualties. At the beginning of the twentieth century, 85 to 90 per cent of casualties in war were military. In World War II, approximately half of all war deaths were civilian. Nowadays it is exactly reversed, approximately 80 per cent of all casualties in wars are civilians (Kaldor, 1999). In contrast to the vertically hierarchical units that were typical of conflict that Kaldor calls the ‘old wars’, the units that fight the ‘new wars’ include a disparate range of different types of groups such as paramilitary units, local warlords, criminal gangs, police forces, mercenary groups and also regular armies. In organizational terms, they are highly decentralized and they operate through a mixture of confrontation and cooperation even when on opposing sides (Kaldor, 1999).

Most authors agree on the fact that contemporary conflicts are in fact multi-causal. However different theorist underline different causes of conflicts. Contemporary conflicts would be caused by inter-group differences and ancient hatreds. Some say that ethnic passions, long bottled up by repressive communist regimes, simply uncorked by the end of the Cold war, resulting in massive expressions of grievances. Nevertheless, this opinion is heavy debatable. This conception is too simplified to explain such a dynamic phenomenon as the contemporary conflicts. A common denominator of conflict analysts, also used by Azar, is the weak state. It could be argued that in general states have lost their monopoly over social, economic and political activity in their territory anyhow. This is because of the rise of various transnational or suprastate regimes, there is no longer a clear distinction between the national and international political sphere (Van Der Pluijm, 2007). In addition and in the context of conflicts Mary Kaldor argues: “Globalization and the neo-liberal policies weakened the society bonds and the state monopoly on the use of force” (Kaldor, 1999). According to Kaldor (1999) this is the cause of the weak states. New opportunities have been created for territorial non-state actors to become involved as the economic, cultural and political dimensions of globalization have worn down the state’s responsibilities and functions. It gives rise to privatized warfare, identity politics, and a globalized war economy,
but also to new peace building actors. The new wars are local, but connected globally via communication systems, internal crime syndicates, ethnic diasporas, as well as several international organizations and NGOs (Kaldor, 1999). The new warfare also tends to avoid battle and to control territory through political control of the population, but “whereas guerrilla warfare aimed to capture ‘hearts and minds’, the new warfare borrows from counterinsurgency techniques of destabilization aimed at sowing ‘fear and hatred’.” (Kaldor, 1999).

“Because of this weakness of the state, consequentially, fundamental requirements for a fearless existence and sustainable, poverty reducing development, such as a state capable of furnishing public goods, of impartially protecting property rights and personal safety and of providing a predictable, equitable legal framework for investment, are often beyond the capacity of post-conflict governments.” (Nicole Ball, 2001). Thus, the state can no longer fulfill its tasks sufficiently and effectively. This leaves room for cities to come in and take its place. The past decades, foreign governments focused on rebuilding central government structure in post-conflict societies, thereby often neglecting the local government structures (Van Der Pluijm, 2007). What is appropriate in each peace building initiative in order to restore these governments depends on the perceptions of the actors, the power relations among groups, the preparedness of state elites to respond to the legitimate demands of groups and other societal interests. Scholars and policymakers have too often generalized about what is best, without taking local preferences and political circumstances into account (Rothchild, 1995). This all created the momentum for City Diplomacy.

The structural, political, economic, and cultural problems that predispose some places to violence change slowly. International events will therefore have to be long-term undertakings. It also means that international efforts to address the root causes of internal conflict will have to be multifaceted in character. Efforts will have to be undertaken in several areas (Brown & de Jonge Oudraat, 2001). As said, an area that is often forgotten is the local/regional level. The grassroots level is where civil society enlarges and interacts, but its not the grassroots level nor the state level, which creates the necessary framework and security for a good civil society to grow and develop. The local level interrelates more with its citizens than the gigantic state organ, which often isn’t as effective as wanted. In theory, City Diplomacy seems to have the potential to be an efficient actor in those comprehensive undertakings in post-conflict areas.
In regard to war-torn society, the donor community is often torn by its impulse to deliver assistance as quickly as possible and its desire to rely on local capacities to supervise and implement reconstruction efforts. Nowadays, also donors in the field of peace building concede that donor-driven aid must yield to partnership and local ownership. According to Patrick (2000), “donors preoccupied with speed frequently surrender to the temptation to design recovery programs with little recipient input, and to deliver aid through their own implementing agencies and service providers, rather than through local actors who alone can ensure the sustainability of the effort..” (Patrick, 2000) Especially in countries that just came out of conflict, donors should consult with governments and local stakeholders throughout the recovery effort. The recipient may lack the capacity to design a workable recovery plan at first, so that the leading donor, the foreign municipality for instance, may need to draft the first blueprint for reconstruction in consultation with local officials (Patrick, 2000). However, as early as possible and workable, the local governing body should strive after primary responsibility for coordinating assistance. As mentioned earlier, this is exactly what decentralized cooperation and its peace building equivalent, City Diplomacy, pursue.

Most post-conflict countries urgently need technical know-how on multiple matters, from fiscal policy to demobilization, rehabilitation, de-mining, and public health. Too much technical assistance finances the contracts of foreign consultants as often witnessed in development programs (e.g. contracts that the United States made with Egypt in the 1980s, see Mitchell, 1995). Too much technical assistance is also an impediment to the training of local individuals, who should deliver essential services themselves. To deal with this dilemma City Diplomacy seems the right means, which should be able to effectively assist recovering local administrations.

Too often in conflict environments, foreign aid agencies and international NGOs overwhelm indigenous coping mechanisms and displace local human, financial and material capacities. At the same time, donors frequently underestimate the value of local, in-kind resources, including staff, premises, facilities and communication (Patrick, 2000). To avoid fostering dependency, City Diplomacy uses explicit conditionality and policy dialogue to leverage the available and potential assets of societies. Thus, City Diplomacy is not there to give the authorities more money. According to Patrick (2000) donors also need to be more realistic about the length of their engagement. The sustainable transition from conflict requires a commitment significantly longer than the two to three years donors typically assign to
reconstruction programs. Also City Diplomacy is not to be seen as a one way donor mechanism. As said, its reciprocity of efforts and benefit between the partners is something to value, it therefore also doesn’t have, in theory, a particular timeframe. It is supposed to be or grow into a sustainable relationship. Where other donor agencies confront an essentially settled conflict, they may in fact wish to negotiate an explicit timetable. Patrick (2000) even argues that in cases “where the peace is more of an uncertain truce”, as in Kosovo, “setting firm deadlines for withdrawal may only encourage obstructionism”, this all is in favor of a decentralized cooperation within the field of peace building. To conclude this chapter: Post-conflict reconstructions offer a window of opportunity to address previous governance failures and the root causes of conflict. In an integrated approach with other actors, City Diplomacy has the potential to reverse the negative impact on governance.

**NGOs and the existing gap, open to City Diplomacy**

Post-conflict countries face a multitude of problems, ranging from urgent humanitarian needs and post conflict reconstruction to security issues. Most of the times, the root causes of conflict out-lived armed conflict. Violence and insecurity may persist and in addition to the lawlessness of the conflict years, they create an environment that is difficult to unsettle (Magro, 2006). The red line in this is that security issues play an important role and have to be taken into consideration by donors. If not dealt with properly, they may impede the reconstruction efforts. In the field of peace building the sequencing of aid and the time perspective is crucial. While humanitarian assistance implies an early engagement, multilateral development strategies generally cover a 3 to 5 years period after the cease of hostilities. Moreover, as the donors involved in peace building vary, their time perspectives vary as well. An immediate objective for UN-forces may be securing the (negative) peace. However, broader issues as governance and institutional reforms need to be taken into account as they effect on the long-term development. Although they make great contributions to the renewal of physical infrastructure, it remains a fact that objectives of multilateral donors are developed in relative small timeframe (Magro, 2006). The development of an effectively functioning state, which is accepted and accorded legitimacy represents an important goal of long-term post-conflict reconstruction. Here lays the task for both NGOs involved and for the new phenomenon of City Diplomacy. International settlements, imposed from the outside, may solve the immediate problems but they are doomed to failure if internal actors are not involved in the process. The strengthening of capacities at both the regional and local level also needs to be one of the main concerns as well as social participation. Furthermore, multilateral and bilateral organizations are in
general more outcome oriented in opposition to the more process oriented approaches of NGOs and City Diplomacies. It must be clear by now, that donor driven approaches alone have no chance to succeed. In order to be successful, both NGOs and City Diplomacy give full meaning to the concept of ownership.

In addition with the above paragraph Lederach (1997) note that the elite leaders of the various parties to a conflict receive the most attention. While the top level remains vital it is not in itself a sufficient arena for sustainable peace building. There is also a need to work at the middle level and grassroots level, places where local leadership becomes important. Peace in a conflict environment results form a process in which new and deep relationships are built. These relationships ultimately become self-generating and sustaining of the community (Lederach, 1997). This process can only come into play when there is institution building at all levels, but especially at the middle and grassroots level, who make up for the popular support of those institutions. There is also a need to develop a long term vision of what is being attempted, therefore, NGOs and City Diplomacy, can play their best role in peace building when they are perceived as a complementary tool together with, for example, UN-forces, where the former starts to build peace with a grassroots and middle level approach and the latter with a more top-down approach, at a state level (Note, that there are several UN agencies who already work together with NGOs at the grassroots level). “But such a profusion of actors make peace building efforts messy and sometimes chaotic, a characteristic that compounds the ethical and practical challenges NGOs and City Diplomacy face in peace building by testing their ability to engage or collaborate with the other third parties.” (Aall, 2001). The differentiation and variability among NGOs needs to be incorporate in tailor-made approaches to institutional strengthening and partnering in order to be a full-fledge partner of the top-down approach and to be of surplus value to the big peace building agencies. Notwithstanding, NGOs and City Diplomacy have some unique and useful characteristics there are also some difference between the two. However, before assessing the potential pitfalls and weaknesses of NGOs in comparison with City Diplomacy, one has to keep in mind that NGOs are, just as much as City Diplomacy, not only a means to a goal, but most definitely also a way of self organization.

In the past decades NGOs have already gained experience of working in conflict. NGOs became important components of the peace building process, capable of promoting sustained reconciliation at the grassroots level in societies. Aall notes that “their presence in
conflict situations and increasingly active role have affected the whole spectrum of international responses to conflict, bringing more actors into peace building and creating the conditions for private people and institutions to intervene as third parties” (Aall, 2001). The number and variety of international NGOs has increased rapidly in recent decades, making it difficult to generalize about the activities or ideological orientations of their sector as a whole. They use a variety of approaches, including facilitation, problem-solving workshops and mediation. Just as in the case of City Diplomacy, the current trend in NGO interventions, as argued by Ramsbotham et al. (2006), is away from entry into conflict situations by outsiders, towards training people inside the society in conflict in the skills of conflict resolution and combining this with indigenous traditions (Ramsbotham, 2006). There is evidence that NGOs can make essential contributions to peace building. However, some say that their activities, unintentionally or otherwise, may exacerbate conflict in war zones. (Smock, 1996; Anderson, 1999; in Aall, 2001). The question of the effectiveness of NGO interventions in contemporary conflict emerges as one of the central concerns of scholars, donors, and practitioners. There are many doubts about the effectiveness of NGO efforts (Van Der Haar, 2006). Some authors feel that NGOs are rarely able to make a difference in the overall dynamics of conflict and should be much more modest about their claims (Hulme & Edwards, 1997; in Aall, 2001). A problem with this issue is that it is not at all easy to grasp or demonstrate the effectiveness of conflict work. The complex dynamics of conflicts and the multiplicity of players involved make it extremely difficult for any one organization to establish what the results of their efforts have been (this is also applicable to City Diplomacy).

According to Frerks (2005) NGOs have some perceived advantages over the top-down approach in the field of peace building. “One should think of the benefits of being close to people at the grassroots, having knowledge about local histories, possibilities and constraints, formulating upward pressure for change, representing local constituencies and bringing in actors and perspectives that would otherwise remain outside the conventional elitist domains of power and tradition.” (Frerks, 2005). But also creating awareness, initiating the dialogue between conflicting parties and a flexible and swift approach are characteristics that speak for the bottom-up approach of NGOs. NGOs can make use of the ‘witness-function’ at the grassroots level. They are the first to receive signs of conflict escalation.
Frerks came up with a number of challenges, which NGOs have to cope with, especially in the field of peace building. Pamela Aall (2001) noted similar disputes, but in different contexts. Those challenges are potential pitfalls for NGOs. Just as much as the strong points of NGOs can’t be generalized, the weak points of the bottom-up approach of NGOs are latent weak points. Hence, they are challenges NGOs have to deal with properly. A first big challenge for NGOs is the problem of staying impartial during and after conflict. Frerks argues that “even if many NGOs did not have any intention to become protagonists, pressure exerted on them during the war may have made it difficult, if not impossible, to remain impartial.” (Frerks, 2005). In addition, there is the challenge of sustainability. Many NGOs have lost or are lacking the capacity, resources, networks, and facilitating environment to guarantee durable results (Frerks, 2005). Many of these civil society institutions are committed to long-term programs but have to scramble for resources to fund that work (Aall, 2001). Hafteck (2003) argues that “various NGOs that had proven efficient at emergency relief measures could not cope well when in fact awarded substantial grants for these long-term programs”. The field of peace building is not only young but, in the eyes of many potential funders, unproven. Without the needed resources some NGOs can be easily intimidated or shut down by antipathetic governments (Aall, 2001). Especially when one takes into account that several NGOs used to live off donor grants in contrast to alternative sources of income such as private donations (Hafteck, 2003). Because NGOs work on that micro level they don’t have the power to pressure society as a whole in a current of change, on a macro level. A scaling-up of the individual organization’s activities to include larger groups of the population would demand considerable growth for most, this in itself could be difficult to manage. Furthermore, as a result of such a strategy, NGOs could become further professionalized and bureaucratized to a point where they would lose several of their comparative advantages they have had. However NGOs do have some abilities to influence national policies.

When looking for alternatives, which are less likely to present the above pitfalls, donors could turn to local governments. At least in the case of managing local development and reconstruction projects. Most municipalities in donor countries possess in-house technical expertise, are routinely practicing medium and long-term project planning and budgeting, and they involve their communities in decision-making over time through a range of mechanisms (Hafteck, 2003). Moreover, as established institutions, they can engage in development cooperation by choice rather than necessity, without becoming dependent on
it. This is not to say that local governments, which successfully engaged in City Diplomacy are not at some point seeking additional funding from donors to broaden the impact of their actions or add new cooperation themes to their activities (Hafteck, 2003). According to Hafteck (2003) all these features give local governments a comparative advantage over NGOs, when it comes to fostering sustainable local development and the reconstruction of society.

To conclude this wide-ranging chapter, table 2 elucidates the different roles actors can engage in within the field of peace building. The table makes perfectly clear that City Diplomacy can make up for the flaws of the other actors involved and doing so it can possibly together with the other actors complete the comprehensive approach in those intricate conflict prone areas.

Table 2: Strong and weak points of actors involved in peace building.

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Multilateral actors (e.g. UN)</th>
<th>Bilateral actors (e.g. US)</th>
<th>NGOs</th>
<th>City Diplomacy</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Military assistance</td>
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<td>Coercive measures</td>
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<td>Non-coercive measures</td>
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<td>(facilitation, negotiation)</td>
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<td>Long term</td>
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<td>Independent of external funds</td>
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<td>Top-down</td>
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<td>grassroots level</td>
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<td>Local/regional level</td>
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<td>Partnership and local ownership</td>
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<td>Flexible and swift approach</td>
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++ excellent
+ passable
+/- ambiguous
- inadequate
- - non-existent
VI. ‘Hand-on’ experiences: Three contemporary case studies

The following case studies entail City Diplomacy efforts executed in former Yugoslavia. Two of them, Wageningen and Woensdrecht were partly carried out under the coordination of the IKV. When these cooperation would be placed in the framework of table 1, they would belong to type 1B: City Diplomacy that can be a catalyst for good governance. The third, a coordination between the city of Tilburg and Tuzla is a unique form of cooperation, which in practice is not City Diplomacy per se. Besides spending community money, the municipality of Tilburg is not really involved with this ‘cooperation’. This causes interesting constraints, which will also uncover the real strength of well executed City Diplomacy. Therefore the efforts between Tilburg and Tuzla on the municipal level would be qualified as 1A: Gets often stuck in good intentions and yields little results. It is not to say, that this cooperation is not successful and valuable. It certainly is, but when one speaks about the efforts and benefits from one municipality to another, this collaboration seems half-hearted.

There are not that many Dutch municipalities involved with any form of City Diplomacy. Approximately twenty cities have gained some experiences with it over the years. Although more than half of them were only involved on the basis of a single project, which, in theory, can be the beginning of full-fledge City Diplomacy. It depends on the individuals within the municipal apparatus how they realize it and what they want to do with it in the future. The following case studies all have there own attractive focal points with different success rates, but remember that City Diplomacy is not outcome, but process oriented. Concrete results are therefore neither gratifying, nor illustrious by itself. Once again: City Diplomacy is not only a means to a goal, but also a way of self-organization.

**Case study 1: Wageningen - Loslovo/Ernestinovo and Sodolovci**

Wageningen forms the heart of Dutch agricultural and life sciences and is the center of the Dutch Food Valley. The city has more than 120 private companies focused on innovative development and a large number of well known research institutes actively involved in the areas of food, nutrition, life sciences and health. The municipality of Wageningen doesn’t only want to be profiled as the city of life sciences, but is also known as the city of freedom. Freedom forms a big chapter in the city’s history. It was here, where the German occupying forces capitulated on the 6th of may 1945. For the Netherlands this meant the end of WWII.

Prior to the war in Yugoslavia, the central government controlled the regional and local authorities. The policy and financial means were decided for them on the national level.
Companies were also owned by the government. Post-war Croatia is a whole different story. Local authorities suddenly received their own power and state properties were partly transferred to private properties. Several impediments and burdens appeared as a result of the worsening economic conditions after the war. Especially East-Croatia, where primarily agricultural activities took place, occupied a rather poor economic position. Almost no investments were done to recuperate the agricultural sector to the pre-war level. The newly appointed mayors and councilors neither had experience in nor knowledge about administrative matters whatsoever. Next to it, they also had to deal with (new) conflict related issues like the physical and administrative reconstruction of the municipality, structural unemployment, ethnic tensions, and the return of refugees to their reoccupied houses.

In 1992 an initiative to do something for the exiled inhabitants of Laslovo, a small village in East Croatia, came into existence. Back then Laslovo consisted of a Croatian and Hungarian population and was completely destroyed during the war. This instigated project involved the reconstruction of a school with the help of collected funds and the organization of summer camps for Croatian youth. The collected funds were eventually not enough for the entire reconstruction of the school. Money from the central government was needed to complete the reconstruction. In response, the municipality of Wageningen stated that the physical reconstruction of the school wasn’t their highest priority, the collaboration between the different ethnicities is what mattered the most. It was essential that both Serbians and Croatians could work together again. Thus, their aim was to establish mutual understanding of the different groups within the village and promoting collaborations between them in order to get them closer together. From then on Wageningen established a cooperation with communities within the village of Laslovo. A collaboration with the municipality and its officials was not under discussion until 1998 (with the involvement of the IKV). It’s not exaggerated to say that Serbians and Croatians were not on speaking terms. They didn’t even want to look each other in the eyes. In 1998 Wageningen invited a delegation of both Serbians and Croatians to come to their city to talk about their difficulties with each other. After a couple of days on neutral territory it became easier to them to start a real conversation and genuine progressions were made regarding their mutual perspectives. Wageningen never forced them to talk, but persuaded them in a distant place, away from their troubles and painful history, to get them to sit together.
In 1998 the municipality of Wageningen decided to join ‘the democratization project of East-Croatia’. A project coordinated by the Dutch CSO IKV and financed by the Dutch ministry of Foreign Affairs. Nine Dutch municipalities participated in this project, which lasted until 2003. The contacts between Wageningen and their partner municipalities went on until 2007. Next to the village of Laslovo, which Wageningen already had contacts with, it was also linked with the municipality of Sodolovci, a Croatian town with a Serbian population. Wageningen is a perfect example of City Diplomacy as a product of an evolving process. Preceding this form of cooperation there were often project-based initiatives involved, as with the reconstruction of the school and the invited delegation. The most important aim of this democratization project was in line with the aim Wageningen already had in Laslovo: to make a contribution towards the democratic reconstruction of the municipalities in this war-torn area and promoting contacts and collaborations between the Croatian and Serbian population. The mayors and councilors of Sodolovci and Ernestinovo/Laslovo were very pleased with whichever help they could get from their Dutch partner. The various working visits that took place contributed to the exchange of experiences and know-how. Wageningen shows that cooperation with other cities in post-conflict areas is more than being on good terms with other municipal officials. It can really result in a collision of ideas. Ideas, not only coming from the council, but from all levels within society. Actors involved with this cooperation include a women’s group, youth organizations and schools, churches, an active team from a quarter within the municipality named de Nude, a university, an agricultural platform, and several other companies.

The city of Wageningen had a special role in this democratization project. Not only because it already was actively involved in the region and was aware of its local history and strained relations, not only because it was linked with two instead of one municipality, but also because Wageningen determinedly profiled itself as a city that sees the promotion of interethnic cooperation as their main priority. This was linked with several activities with the different parties who were involved on both sides. At the start of the democratization project their already was a solid basis of mutual trust, in view of the fact that the city of Wageningen has been an active actor in the region for over 5 years. Because of this basis of mutual trust and respect Wageningen was possibly able to achieve more than other international municipalities who ‘only’ came to the region for a 3 year project. Wageningen truly had real working contacts (as mentioned in figure 1) in where heavy discussions and differences of opinion about the course of things were encouraged as long as everyone pursues the same
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goal. Wageningen always stated that everyone has to be involved in the projects, also the argus-eyed Serbs. Its not that such a demand was implemented on them, but in this regard Wageningen played their role as a persuader. With the help of Dutch municipal officials delicate matters were discussed between the ethnic groups on a basis of equality. These matters concerned for example the alleged location of mass graves. Such painful and intense topics were best discussed on neutral grounds as in Wageningen. The Dutch city facilitated these talks.

This particular case of decentralized cooperation in the field of peace building is a perfect example of a reciprocity of efforts and benefits. Where Serbs and Croats came closer to each other in the city of Wageningen, this was also true regarding the inhabitants of the quarter de Nude in Wageningen. De Nude is a multicultural quarter, which endured internal struggles between different ethnicities. This quarter has just about the same population as the city of Laslovo. Several inhabitants of the quarter, all with different backgrounds, were invited to visit Laslovo in order to see what kind of problems they had to deal with and how they got along. Several (ethnic) problems and tensions were very familiar to them as well. These exchanges left a big impression on the inhabitants of de Nude. Afterwards, they were able to moderate their problems, got closer to each other, and jointly devoted themselves to cooperation with Laslovo until this very day.

Although the democratization project ended in 2003, the city council extended the cooperation with the two towns with another two years. In April 2007 there eventually came an end to the collaborations. Why this decision? Primarily as a result of political reasons. Officially, there is no available money in order to proceed with their City Diplomacy activities. Nevertheless, there are also political parties who’ve said that they’ve done enough and Wageningen had done its task. Thus, the main cause was a shortage of available funds, but next to that the composition of the city council changed over the years. Different people and parties have different priorities. The support in the council declined. However, there are also communal councilors who are in favor of proceeding the cooperation. Especially because of the existence of strong ties between the people and a school in the pluralistic quarter of de Nude and the village of Laslovo, which they’ve established as a sort of bridge builder.
The solid basis, which was so characteristic for this cooperation came into existence thanks to a few persistent and devoted individuals. This cooperation is no exception to the rule, individuals were very vital to its success. One of the Dutch initiators, who has been involved since the first day, is a high school teacher. In 1992 it was this teacher who was the first to take his pupils to Laslovo. The teacher became a dedicated alderman in 1998 (until 2004), and had a leading and motivating role in this. He took care of the political support within the council. In order to keep in touch and be aware of the situation in East-Slavonia the city of Wageningen had a sort of contact man. A guy from Wageningen, who was involved with this cooperation on an early stage, but who got married with a Croatian woman and moved to the region. Ever since, he kept the city council well posted on possible changes. The connection between the beginning and the end of such a cooperation lays often within the inspired and determined individuals involved. Once again, it is as clear as daylight that decentralized cooperation depends very much on individuals.

Coming up with concrete results regarding this cooperation is not that simple. Back in 1992 there was barely any contact between the Croatians, Hungarians and the Serbs. This last group was held responsible for the war in 1991 and 1992, which led to extensive destructions and mass murder. By means of facilitating numerous meetings the community was given the opportunity to have some constructive talks, to start with the restoration of confidence and trust. It should not be seen as a compelled reconciliation, but above all things as offering a neutral platform for productive dialogue. On the basis of examples from the Netherlands it was shown that a lot of problems within municipalities can and should be tackled in a regional context. In this East-Slavonian patchwork of ethnic groups it meant that one ethnic group had to work together with another. Those groups don’t have to agree on the war, but they can come to the notion that agricultural development and waste disposal (see case study Woensdrecht) are best undertaken together with neighboring municipalities. With the help of Wageningen the collaboration between the different mayors was really set in motion. The community also learned that people can come up with initiatives themselves rather than waiting for the involvement of municipal officials. A real civil society was build. Wageningen and the local community really tried to build democracy from the bottom-up. This persuasion into more civil participation was rather successful. Furthermore, Wageningen was able to bring the problems and progressions of these municipalities to the attention of the central government in Zagreb. By organizing seminars, inviting embassies,
but foremost by really trying to find solutions for their internal problems they became more than a few names on a map, the cooperation gave these congregations a face in Zagreb.

**Case study 2: Woensdrecht - Darda**

Within the ‘democratization project of East Slavonia’ the municipality of Woensdrecht established a cooperation with the small town of Darda in Croatia. Woensdrecht is a small municipality in The Netherlands with a population of approximately 22,000 people. In 1997 the Dutch CSO IKV, which coordinated this extensive democratizations project, connected Woensdrecht with Darda. At first, this particular project-based cooperation was set up for a time period of three years, but got extended with another three years.

In January 1997 a Croatian delegation, who was most willing to cooperate and eager to learn from its Dutch colleagues, visited the municipality of Woensdrecht. Its not appropriate to say that this delegation had brought with them a list of suggested gifts, as kids do when they visit Santa Claus. However, this delegation did have a clear perspective about its town, which was in need of better, more efficient, facilitation of their municipal services and wanted to learn from the Dutch experiences. Therefore they had a list with practical points of attention regarding their city. The delegation visited for example Woensdrecht’s waste disposal company and iron and glass recycling companies. In order to get a clear overview of the local situation in Darda and in order to come to an efficient cooperation a Dutch delegation of aldermen and policy advisors visited Darda not long after the Croatian visit in Woensdrecht. During their attendance in Darda it came immediately clear that the waste disposal services weren’t working as wanted. Some streets were covered with big piles of garbage, which was not only revolting but also very unhealthy for the kids who played outside on those streets. Thus, the first priority of this cooperation was to get the waste disposal services up and running again. Within this first project between the two cities the local waste disposal company of Woensdrecht became involved. Together with the municipality they overhauled two garbage trucks. They’ve not only donated them to Darda, but also gave them training about the maintenance and the collection of waste. A sludge-gulper was also donated, with the same participatory approach. In order to get the full potential out of those garbage trucks IKV came with the idea to establish collaboration with Darda and its neighboring municipalities which, ‘by coincidence’ had a different ethnic composition. By doing this, the municipalities were persuaded to start working together.

A second project between Woensdrecht and Darda consisted of youth exchanges. Quite some youth in Darda had left the city in search of a better future. Youth is the future, also from an
economic point of view. These youth exchanges, which were organized by Darda, Woensdrecht, and the Belgium municipality of Stabroek, resulted not only in growing public awareness on all sides, but also in the establishment of youth centers in Darda. Until this very day there are still youth exchanges with the municipalities on a two year basis. A third project can best be seen in line with the first one. It entails overhauling and donating a fire truck.

These three projects were all very concrete and had to do with the facilitation of everyday municipal services, as the collection of garbage and emergency services. Every municipality has to deal with this kind of facilitation of services, this makes municipalities also the best partners for this cooperation. Furthermore, this cooperation fell under ‘the democratization project of East-Slavonia’ for a reason, next to these three concrete projects, a lot of attention went to the municipal apparatus and the promotion of good governance. The municipality of Darda learned to be more transparent, to talk more often with their inhabitants. A dialogue oriented process strengthens the possibility of sustainable change. Municipal officials from Darda were invited to Woensdrecht to attend council meetings. Back home, they’ve tried to apply their acquired knowledge in their municipality. The IKV, the Croatian institute for local government, and the municipalities involved in this extended East-Slavonia project composed and published a real useful manual for these Croatian officials as a sort of support in their development into a full-fledge local body with a good civil society. Communication played an important part in this; transparency to the public and listening to public is also a form of communication. The results of these efforts are not directly visible to the eye, especially in comparison with the above mentioned projects, but that makes them not less important.

Furthermore, in the context of this cooperation there was and still is a great interaction between the municipality of Woensdrecht and his inhabitants. Civil initiatives sprung up like mushrooms. People wanted to raise money for Darda. However, the Dutch municipality opposed this. Money makes people depended and the cooperation was initiated with a participatory approach: people have to learn things themselves in order to sustain themselves. Nevertheless, the municipality of Woensdrecht had a real bridge building function. It didn’t want to get actively involved with civil initiatives, but they gave those initiatives a platform. Although the East Slavonia project had come to an end in 2003, contacts between the inhabitants of Woensdrecht and Darda are still there. Also the
cooperation between the two municipalities didn’t really end as well. However, there are no additional funds available anymore and the priority of the collaboration changed too. From 1997 to 2003 the cooperation fell under the supervision of the Communication Department. Now that the characteristics of the cooperation altered, now that there is a fair municipal apparatus in Darda, the contacts with Darda currently fall under the regulation of Welfare Policies.

**Case study 3: Tilburg – Tuzla**

Until half way through the 20th century Tilburg was a flourishing textile town. According to the current mayor, Mr. Veerman, the local authority of Tilburg can be seen as a pioneer in its way of thinking about organization. Participation of citizens and continually wanting to innovate are, in words of the mayor, strong points of this municipality (Veerman, 2007). Together with several foundations the municipality maintains contacts with other local authorities across Europe. The municipality of Tilburg propagates itself as a city with five different citybonds. In practice this is a different story. Tilburg doesn’t officially reports the collaboration with Tuzla as a city cooperation, according to Thea Ellerbeck, the senior project advisor of this cooperation, but it constantly promotes these contacts in regard to there other ‘official’ city cooperations. Where the other five cooperations make use of a whole team of civil servants and the support of the city council, only a handful of people work for the cooperation Tilburg – Tuzla. In that account, the Tilburg – Tuzla cooperation is actually a private foundation. However, there is a thin line that connects the foundation with the municipality in practice as well. Although municipal officials have been involved with exchanges in this context, there are no officials who’ve worked for this cooperation on a fulltime basis. Their contribution has always been a sporadically involvement within a project. In order to keep the foundation running it actually does receive funds from the municipality of Tilburg.

Even though this cooperation doesn’t receive as much support from their municipality as in the case of full-fledge City Diplomacies, it can be very interesting to see how they’ve cut their coat according to their cloth. They don’t have the in-house technical assistance and know-how as genuine decentralized cooperation has, albeit they’ve made great contributions to the society in Tuzla with limited means. This itself is worth mentioning, but the foundation’s situation is also very exceptional. To a large extend it depends on funds from an ambivalent municipality, which, to the outside, shows of with the Tuzla cooperation, but in reality it leaves the foundation to its own devices.
In order to get sufficient funds the Tilburg – Tuzla foundation has to meet certain conditions:
- Consolidate the global awareness of the people living in the city of Tilburg and enlarge the local support for international cooperation, sustainable development and the pluralistic society.
- The activities are to be developed on the basis of multiple focal points; sustainability, equal partnership, peace, human rights, democracy, and migration.

The cooperation between Tilburg and Tuzla originated in 1996, from the ABC-program (Assistance for Bosnian Communities). The ABC-program focused on the reconstruction, development of the society, and democratization of the city and region of Tuzla. Tuzla is still a multi-ethnic city, due to the decisive and concerted behavior of both the mayor and several CSOs during the war in Bosnia. The ethnic parties are in the opposition and the city is ruled by a coalition of social democrats and liberal parties. Within this ABC-program several Dutch municipalities had a cooperation with the municipality of Tuzla. In this day and age, the Tilburg - Tuzla foundation dedicates itself to the physical and social reconstruction of the Tuzla municipality in Bosnia Herzegovina. This is the same starting point as with the ABC-program, but with a clear emphasis on the collaboration with and inclusion of private organizations, educational institutions and civilians in both Tilburg and Tuzla.

The main goals of the Tilburg – Tuzla foundation are:
- Assist the reconstruction of the higher professional education in Tuzla.
  Higher professional education is of great importance to the psychical reconstruction of Tuzla. The city needs (local) professionals, who can make the city truly liveable and who can rebuild the hope and heritage of a better future. Several educational institutions in Tilburg are collaborating with their Tuzlan counterparts.
- Youth exchange programs.
  The cooperation intends to involve local Dutch Youth in global affairs such as conflict, peace, refugees, and the position of asylum seekers by organizing exchange programs.
- Carry out information, education and communication activities within the society of Tilburg in order to enlarge their global awaking.
  By means of clear communication about the projects in Tuzla, regarding the development in their higher educational system and the youth exchange programs, not only the citizens’ awareness will increase, but with it their popular support and as a
consequence new potential funds can be tapped as well. Something that is even more important for a private foundation.

These main goals were chosen for a reason. Youth in Tuzla still has little perspective and believes that they should pursue their happiness outside Bosnia Herzegovina. Improving their educational system gives them a better opportunity to develop their talents in their own environment. While they come together, youth from both cities can not only learn a lot from each other, but the can also motivate each other by means of workshops, seminars but also with cultural expressions as festivals.

With the strive for collaboration between private organizations, educational institutions, and civilians the Tilburg – Tuzla foundation occupies the position of intermediary and bridge builder. It makes contact, gives advises and provides the facilitation on behalf of the cooperation between Tilburg and Tuzla. Quite some tangible progressions are made in the perspective of their first main goal: Assisting the reconstruction of the higher professional education in Tuzla. In collaboration with educational institutions in the region of Tilburg, a number of projects have been executed the last four years:

- Arranging an open information center for the Electro Technical School of Tuzla.
- Tuzlan teachers were educated in computer sciences to make use of the information center’s full potential.
- Reconstructing four classrooms and furnishing the classroom, which is used for practical assignments, in the Transportation School of Tuzla.
- Renovating the heat generator in the Electro Technical School of Tuzla.
- Constructing water pipes in the former refugee camp of Duje.

Furthermore, a new project, which will be arranged with a Dutch educational institution, entails the concept of ‘young business’. A project in which Tuzlan youth will learn to set up their own company or firm, all within the walls of the school.

In regard to the second main goal, the youth exchanges, it was imperative that the Tuzlan youth saw improvement in their perspectives of the future. The Tilburg – Tuzla foundation would like to see the development of youth initiatives in Tuzla. Initiatives, in which they fully make use of their talent. Youth exchanges can accomplish the motivation and understanding in order to develop such initiatives in the first place. In practice this means that youth from two youth centers in the city of Tilburg have been to Tuzla and youth form Tuzla visited the youth centers in order to share their thoughts and dilemmas with their
contemporaries, but foremost to have a good time as well. A next project of the Tilburg - Tuzla foundation is to start off a youth board in Tuzla, in which representatives can plead for their own cause. Since there is no real connection with the foundation and the municipality of Tuzla, this is a sort of detour in order to establish democratic participation of the youth, without the support of the municipality. All these educational programs and youth exchanges contribute to the democratic participation of the Tuzlan youth. They are the ones who can challenge their local government when something needs to be done.

The foundation witnessed some impediments with a few conservative head teachers. These teachers weren’t used to an independent youth that opposes the authorities. According to some of them, this is just not done. Consequently, these stubborn teachers weren’t always that willing to cooperate. Thus, people involved in this cooperation had to be very determined in order to work with some of these teachers. This foundation is also dealing with people in Bosnia who continuously ask for help and money. The foundation is appropriately reluctant to give money. It demands a solid project plan, which states the points of interests and a concrete time-money analyses. The foundation provides a format for their project plan. It can possible monitor and facilitate it, but it is very disinclined to give money, without any plan and responsibility. It uses explicit conditionality and policy dialogue.

It was said that there was little assistance from the Dutch municipality, consequently there was also no real support from the municipality of Tuzla. In practice, this meant that there was no pressure asserted form a higher, municipal level, to cooperate. In view of the concept of City Diplomacy, this made it harder and more complicated to convince people of the necessity of some projects. Giving youth the motivation and support to participate in the decision making processes is one thing, but a municipality, which gives them an opportunity and support is something else. The cooperation doesn’t make use of the unique character and expertise of municipal officials. As a result there is no attempt to pave the road for democratic participation and good governance within and from the municipality, as happens within full-fledge City Diplomacy. The synergy between the municipality and its population is hardly present in this cooperation, the foundation’s persuasive influences are therefore less powerful as in the case of a more comprehensive approach, with municipal officials involved. The ambivalent behavior of the municipality of Tilburg makes it harder for this cooperation to make their contributions to the society as a whole, but is nevertheless
doing a great job with their modest means. If it wasn’t for the determined individuals involved within this foundation, it would be truly stuck with nothing more than good intentions. In the case of the Tuzla foundation, the city of Tilburg doesn’t use the potential of the multidisciplinary undertaking of City Diplomacy to its fullest and thus leaves the foundation to his fate. In this particular case a municipality which is doing nothing can become an obstacle to a cooperation, which is involved with another foreign community and/or municipality. The municipal expertise would have been a welcome proficiency in order to improve the democratic participation of the youth. While the window of opportunity is closing it seems a case of missed chances on the municipality level.
VII. Potential roles for City Diplomacy

“If a state fails to provide security or is too weak to protect its citizens, is unable to provide basic social amenities such as health care, schools and even food, local governments have a growing role to play.” (VNG, 2007). Transformation and reconstruction assistance must be coherent and responsive to local needs. But for most City Diplomacy must be a multidisciplinary undertaking. Nevertheless, one should not make any illusions about the potential of City Diplomacy in war-torn society it will not work as the antidote or wonder drug. It has the prospective of being helpful at strengthening the community from the local level to the top.

Problems ‘plain’ Decentralized Cooperation deals with are sometimes a lack of long-term planning, failure in local revenue mobilization, competition with other officials, inherent centralization in donor programs, and poor resource management (Blair, 1995; in Frerks, 1996). Next to these basic dilemmas of Decentralized Cooperation, City Diplomacy will witness different and even less clear circumstances. Nonetheless, lets first take a look at its potentials in the context of post-conflict circumstances and the above mentioned case studies, before assessing the dilemmas. When municipalities think of City Diplomacy they often relate it to projects. Its true that within the City Diplomacy movement projects are indeed ubiquitous. As said before collaborations between cities often start with projects. Later on in the process, this can evolve into a more sustainable cooperation: City Diplomacy. However, besides being a project-partner there are quite a few roles City Diplomacy could play as well. With the help of the VNG’s first attempt and the illustrated case studies, there will now be a distinction of five responsibilities, which local governments can take in their peace building efforts. These are roles City Diplomacy can play both in a project (as a project-partner) and outside the executed projects. The five responsibilities are: local governments as; bridge builders, mediators, persuaders, facilitators and trainers.

**Bridge builder**

The VNG argues that local governments can lobby the international community with clear messages in favor of a peaceful world, lobby for financial support to peace initiatives at the local level, express acts of solidarity to local governments affected by conflicts (VNG, 2007). They definitely can and there are quite some examples of it. A small remark has to be made. Cities themselves have the ability to lobby at a local level, the bottom-up level. They can easily get in touch with neighboring cities or the capital city of the country they got involved with. For European Cities the road to Brussels is neatly paved for them. The municipalities
can ask for help or subsidies on behave of their partner cities. However, lobbying the international community is not something a single city easily does, unless its a very powerful and big city. These lobby efforts are mostly done with a cohort of cities, which for example are all active in the same region. Also municipal associations as the Dutch VNG, the Canadian FCM or the more international UCLG play a big part in this. Its these organizations which can lobby in the name of their members (cities) for more global awareness. These organizations have the expertise of true diplomacy and lobbying on the top-down level. Through solidarity visits, local governments can generate international attention for the situation their colleagues are forced to deal with, but should do this with the help of their associates on a higher level in order to get a better range. Lobbying on a local level can concern quite some more activities than just raising awareness. In order to avoid this entanglement of different actors and levels the term bridge builder is chosen here.

Municipalities in post-conflict areas can feel alienated from the rest of the world. Cooperation with foreign municipalities represents their contact with the international community. City Diplomacy in particular can, in that sense, be seen as bridge builders. On the one hand, a bridge meant for that war-torn society and on the other hand a bridge, which the society on the other side of this cooperation can use. Specifically, this ‘bridge’ can create more awareness in the societies not affected by war. Through City Diplomacy and the initiatives of their municipality or civil society organizations they can get more familiar with the matter of the post-conflict area. This can create a sort of snowball effect. The initiative taken by municipality officials can generate more initiatives from society and stimulate them to think and maybe participate in projects (as seen in both Wageningen and Woensdrecht). Municipal governments can play a crucial role in encouraging and facilitating participation of peace initiatives on the local level. Public participation and community based mechanisms such as consultations and public information campaigns may be effectively undertaken by the municipal governments. And also in partnerships with foreign municipalities, peace advocates, peace bodies in the community, and municipal associations. By working within such strategic partnerships municipal governments may optimize their positive peace building impacts (Bush, 2003).

**Mediators**

Just as the mentioned Mary Kaldor, Lake & Rothchild argue as well that the weak state can be a cause of conflict. “State weakness, whether it arises incrementally out of competition between groups or from extremists actively seeking to destroy ethnic peace, is a necessary
precondition for violent ethnic conflict to erupt”. (Lake & Rothchild, 1996). However, they do make some nuances. The state itself doesn’t have to be weak or appear to be weak. If ‘plausible’ futures are sufficiently threatening, groups may begin acting today as if the state were in fact weak, setting off processes that bring about the disintegration of the state. (Lake & Rothchild, 1996). Here comes another important aspect to the fore: Fear. Although a state can, thus, partially be institutionalized fear can ignite brutal processes within society anyhow. City Diplomacy can try to take away that fear through mediation. In order to reconstruct society the grievances that cause fear have to be met. With the help of City Diplomacy the conflicting parties can be stimulated to cooperate in addressing their problems and grievances, focusing on the practical solutions rather than political ones. According to the VNG this can be seen as a special subcategory of the phenomenon of the ‘third party intervention’. Through diplomacy by third parties, the conflicting parties enter into dialogue to discuss the political conditions of a cooperation framework (VNG 2007).

**Persuader**

A proper working administrative and protecting local body, which not only takes care of the local police-force but also makes contributions to the different needs within its municipality can give local groups a better sense of security. Impartial local institutions, which listen without prejudices to grievances of local communities can contribute to local peace and a ‘safety-net’ and thus reducing fear. However in post-conflict society there is almost never an impartial local body with sound institutions. Its often soaked with hidden corruption. The municipality’s task is to create equal opportunities and distribution of services, but with the war still in the servants’ minds and with the wrong people on the right positions its hard to create an impartial local authority. When basic needs and municipal services are not equally distributed among the community they may increase competition and friction between the groups. With the help of impartial partnership and the experience of the partner the post-conflict municipality should be able to foresee better in its citizens’ needs. This doesn’t mean that a whole new cohort of civil servants should replace the ones that are in charge, regardless of the cultural heritage, rather City Diplomacy should make those people in charge convinced of the necessity of democratic values. The local authority should therefore be ‘professionalized’. Legitimate government is government that is legal, accepted and seen as just in moral sense. This implies the promotion of citizenship and the creation of equal opportunities for all citizens, irrespective of the ethnic or cultural background (VNG, 2007). One should not force people to change. City Diplomacy isn’t a ‘cooperation’ in which one should force the other party, but it can indeed be the case that one gives people a reason to
change their minds and actions. Municipalities have direct and indirect influences on the impacts of, and responses to violence and insecurity within its jurisdiction. For example, municipal governments are in a position to ensure that law enforcement strategies are fair as well as effective. When the law enforcement is by most seen as fair it takes away fear (Bush, 2004). City Diplomacy can help with the professionalization of established fair law enforcements, by means of persuasion.

Furthermore, if the people with the municipal body are entrenched with true democratic values they are certainly the ones who can meet the grievances within its community. The fact that local governments know local needs better than any other actor makes cities the appropriate player on assisting development and with it solving or dampening grievances (Van Der Pluijm, 2007). An example of a situation in which an unjust municipal body can evoke conflict, rather than prevent it is given by Bush and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM). Local authorities influence access to scarce land through land allocation, land use planning and land management. A transparent system of land use planning serves as a mechanism for preventing conflict. In the area of provision of basic services, local governments and their servants incapable or unwilling of expanding the delivery of basic infrastructure and services into traditionally marginalized and neglected areas may in fact contribute to conflict created by socio-economic inequalities (Bush, 2004).

**Facilitator**

Another opportunity of decentralized cooperation lies in their capacity of facilitating dialogue between different parties. Lake & Rothchild also mention three causes of conflict escalation within a weak state: Information failure, problems of credible commitment, and the security dilemma. The one thing these causes have in common is the insecurity it creates within a community. Out of fear of their own existence and the role of the group in the future one is inclined to use brutal force. “Fearful that the other might preempt a group has an incentive to strike first and negotiate later” (Lake & Rothchild, 1996). The lines of communication should be open and used consistently in order to prevent pro-active use of violence but ultimately and above all things better communication and providence of neutral information should be able to take away fear. Credible commitments or reciprocal trust can be induced by efficient and impartial institutions. In order to be most efficient local institutions are again the ones to deal with. City Diplomacy can again play an important role in this facilitations of dialogues. This is also seen in all three case studies. With the technical expertise and experience from their own municipality they know how to smooth the
progress of communication. Its true, however, that their experience has to be seen in another context, which isn’t quite familiar with such hostile conditions. This facilitation can be a process in which a neutral third party conducts a meeting, assisting a group in establishing an agenda and structure for the meeting and encouraging constructive communication throughout the process. The facilitator prepared to help the group addressing underlying needs or tensions. The facilitator creates an atmosphere where participants are comfortable expressing individual or group concerns. The facilitation process often contributes to the group’s capacity for conducting future meetings more effectively on its own. Facilitation differs from group mediation in that it does not follow a predetermined format and is not necessarily issue or agreement oriented (FCAC, 2007).

City Diplomacy can also facilitate, or pave the road, for local initiatives. Municipal governments can also provide emergency shelters and support services for abused women and their children on an on-going basis. Under crisis and war-like conditions, similar services may be offered to displaced persons. At the level of long range planning, municipalities can realize policies that ensure the integration of principles of safety, justice and equity into urban design and service delivery (Bush, 2003). City Diplomacy can help municipalities facilitating and initiating such policies. That is that facilitating can also mean that local authorities become project partners. The VNG speaks in this regard of ‘implementing’ cooperation projects with partners in conflict or post-conflict areas (VNG, 2007). The word and actions involved with implementation should be avoided within City Diplomacy. City Diplomacy still is a cooperation that very much depends on the goodwill of both sides and reciprocity of efforts. There is no donor or recipient (at least in theory). To put it in a corny way: everyone is equal. Thus, the implementation of projects is always in consultation with the local authority at that place, therefore one should think in terms of ‘facilitation’.

**Trainer**

City Diplomacy, as said above, should not be seen as an implementation or one way donor flow. Training and education to local governments is part of this principle. With the help of City Diplomacy local government units of the post-conflict municipality can be trained in peace negotiation, facilitation and dialogue skills. These skills are not intended to enable them to negotiate peace agreements, but rather are meant to be used during the normal work of municipal governments (Bush, 2003). The published manual in the case study of Woensdrecht is a great example of this. Peter Knip of the VNG made a relevant remark on
the role of peace and governance training initiatives: “they have to be built upon local experiences. Local cultures, including traditions, methods and structures should not just be understood or taken into account; they should be a foundation for the efforts that are undertaken by the actors of City Diplomacy” (Knip, 2006). The process should begin with the people who are affected by conflict, their experiences and questions. Again, the interaction between the two parties, the two municipalities, come to the fore, an important aspect of City Diplomacy. In order to take away the already mentioned fear completely the municipality must play an active role in engaging civil society in local decision making. The local government must therefore commit to genuine public participation. This means that all relevant actors in decision making must be included. If certain actors become excluded from these processes, this can easily become a source of further conflict. A last point that is not only related to the ‘trainer’ aspect, but which can be related to all roles of City Diplomacy is that, in the words of Knip, “City Diplomacy should be very reluctant to put the conflict as such continuously on the agenda. Developing concrete and palpable projects that create new possibilities for people is far more productive. Because empowerment of the people lies at the core of peace building work”. (Knip, 2006).

With this last remark of the director of VNG international, Peter Knip, City Diplomacy gets back to the spirit of decentralized cooperation: Empowerment and development. According to Brown (2001) the cause of conflicts are mounting economic problems. “The emergence of elite competition may be the proximate cause of conflicts in places such as the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, but hostilities escalate because of the existence of underlying problems, problematic group histories and economic problems, and a combustible setting.” (Brown, 2001). Municipalities can in addition play a role in promoting local economic development by engaging the local business community as a partner, and lobbying the other levels of government for programs and resources (this is what the municipality of Wageningen tried to do). With this City Diplomacy returns to the essence of decentralized cooperation, as it is known for in developing countries and which it was originally intended for. Decentralized cooperation can help to build the capacity of the municipality to influence local economic development. Development generates security and vice versa. See here the complementarities of City Diplomacy as part of decentralized cooperation. This is also a good example of the long term vision of City Diplomacy as part of decentralized cooperation. When the tasks of City Diplomacy are fulfilled, and the collaboration turned into a sustainable relationship, the cooperation can focus on other initiatives within the field.
of decentralized cooperation. However, this is purely theoretical. Scares and complications of conflicts will be visible for years and can boil under the surface for decades. And in addition, the municipality of Wageningen showed that the changing composition of the council can result in the withdrawal of City Diplomacy initiatives when the post-conflict city’s first crucial years are over.
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VIII. Challenges for City Diplomacy
All the dilemmas and problems known in the field of decentralized cooperation are also relevant within City Diplomacy. However, there are also specific predicaments. A first problem is that one has to deal with ‘stacked’ problems. One does not only have to deal with transitional countries, but also with a society that has a strong conflict aggravation. This translates, for instance, into traumatized individuals. The conflict may be over, the fighting may be stopped, but the war isn’t necessarily out of the people’s minds. This adds another dimension to this kind of cooperation. These conflict dimensions are not always clear to the eye, but are indeed present and can not be overlooked. When there was a struggle between ethnic or religious groups during armed conflict, there still will be one afterwards. Another factor that contributes to these particular conflict dimensions is a total lack of continuity. The only continuity there is, is the ongoing interruption of it. Other conflict dimensions can be the dilemmas between ‘Reconciliation vs. Accountability’, ‘Justice vs. Amnesty’, ‘Reintegration vs. Punishment’, and ‘Peace vs. Justice’ to name a few. Also the existence of a war economy deserves attention. The presences of concentric circles is not a rare phenomenon in contemporary wars and post-conflict areas. These circles direct most of the money of the region’s economic assets to one particular group. This happens at a state level, as can be seen with a Tutsi clan in the Burundi conflict, but it also happens on a local level, especially in ethnic heterogeneous cities, as seen in Bosnia Herzegovina. Another point of attention is the international involvement in all levels and facets of a (post)conflict area. City Diplomacy has to cope with top-down implementations of all kinds of actors like UN agencies, NATO and the World Bank. There are a lot of forces that have to be dealt with, and which contribute to a highly complex actor analyses. One that is even more complex than in the field of ‘plain’ Decentralized Cooperation.

In a situation where there is a need for everything of anything people will appeal to municipal officials to donate money. Donating money is not what distinguishes City Diplomacy from other actors in the field of peace building. Donating money to the post-conflict municipality should therefore not be the policy of municipalities involved with City Diplomacy. Donating money was something that the municipality of Woensdrecht also strongly opposed. DC’s strong points lays in the technical assistance. Municipalities should be well aware of the fact that agencies like the World Bank and UNDP, who do donate money as well, aren’t capable of providing municipal in-house technical assistance and expertise in order to establish and execute local democracy, like City Diplomacy can. In
addition, Musch (2005) argues that aid can in fact crowd out local government. Musch notes that humanitarian relief organizations are especially good at creating non-governmental channels for distributing aid. This gives such organizations control over their approach. Propping up local governments for distribution slows down the relief operation, which is an undesirable option. The problem is that this leaves local governments with no means to do something for their constituencies and to gain legitimacy. NGOs often have more resources, better staff, a better image, and are by no means inclined to remove themselves and their patron-client networks from the local scene. The logic of relief operations poses serious drawbacks when institution building gets on the agenda later on (Musch, 2005).

An often heard critique on DC is the necessity of a legal framework. The absence of a legal framework can indeed be problematic. It is a big problem when the city doesn’t have the space and autonomy to manoeuvre or to undertake anything. In conflict prone areas, however, it doesn’t have to be an insurmountable problem, this may sound illogical, but City Diplomacy depends very much on goodwill and good intentions in order to carry out good governance. Where there’s no legal framework mayors and their corporation won’t be able to sign contracts independently. But legal contracts aren’t necessarily of highest importance, since a material component will be barely under discussion. Technical assistance and expertise, the information component is what matters in such a cooperation. This is not to say that there never is a material component what so ever, there definitely is as seen with the municipality of Woensdrecht, but what is important here is that in times where there is no real legal framework City Diplomacy can still make a contribution. City Diplomacy is known for its tailor-made approach. City Diplomacy can just as much be tailor-made and compliant with the absence of a legal framework as with the presence of one. Nevertheless, the presence of a legal framework is preferable, beyond dispute.

**Elites**

Furthermore, people involved with City Diplomacy will often, quite emphatically, be confronted with reluctant municipal officials, who don’t have the desires or needs to serve the common interests of the community. Quite a number of officials, even mayors, only want to sit out there 2 or 4 years as an ‘official’ for their own personal benefits. They won’t serve other groups within their society. They don’t want to give money to or create jobs for ethically or religiously different groups, which they were in conflict with. In practice, those people want to make sure that, at first, their own interests are served. Consequently, the reliability of one’s interlocutor or project-partner can be a problem in City Diplomacy. As
already stated, the war is over, but the pattern of thinking that gave rise to it is still in their heads. Peace and reconciliation won’t suddenly be omnipresent. Patterns of thinking will long be dominant in people’s mind, just as the deep-rooted hate, which some bear with them. Conflict doesn’t suddenly stop in the psyche. In order to solve contemporary, dynamic conflicts and transform society one is often dependent on those few local people. In times of conflict local leaders have gained a lot of power. Those elites were able to change the minds of ordinary civilians. In almost all contemporary conflicts with the great example of Rwanda, local leaders were able to make the everyday peasant believe in grievances against other groups within society. However its not only their persuasive powers that can form an obstacle, also their economic and social power (concentric circle) can form a burden on progress.

An author that also sees the role of elites as a possible cause or catalyst of conflict is Dan Smith. Smith (2004) argues that differences between communities or ethnic groups within society don’t necessarily have to lead to conflict. Its only until elites start to distinguish themselves on the basis of ethnicity when those differences can become a catalysts for conflict. Ethnic groups will consequently by mobilized along ethnic lines. Furthermore Smith argues that it is not ethnic diversity as such that is a cause of conflict, but rather ethnic politics. “It is the injection of ethnic difference into political loyalties, and the politicization of ethnic identities that is so dangerous.” (Smith, 2004). This is something actors involved in City Diplomacy have to take in to consideration. The statement of the Human rights watch in 1995 can be seen in line with this: “While communal tensions are obviously a necessary ingredient of an explosive mix, they alone are not sufficient to unleash widespread violence. Rather, time after time the proximate cause of communal violence is governmental exploitation of communal differences (Human rights Watch, 1995).

When one wants to change the minds of civil society one often has to change those of the powerful elites first. Put differently: personal changes of heart or mind within individual leaders or small groups with decision-making power at critical moments may be crucial. Some external interveners try to reach these leaders and bring about this personal change directly (Mitchell, 2000; in Miall 2004). Conciliatory gestures by leaders, which express personal changes, would play an important role in this context (Miall, 2004). Pacts based on elite consensus, however, can prove very difficult to maintain. Parties cooperate in pacts because the potential costs of defection are high in terms of insecurity and the destruction of
property. But pacts require continuing negotiations among the elites involved, a process that is likely to entail a heavy commitment to conflict management and the reconstruction of society over the years, and which places a heavy burden on City Diplomacy. Moreover, some will argue that City Diplomacy is therefore perhaps not the most appropriate mechanism to deal with such a delicate matter. In the words of Rothchild: “The relative ease of the creation of the past can thus become the source of administrative difficulties and centrifugal tendencies, creating doubt that these arrangements can act as a foundation for long-term, stable relations” (Rothchild, 1995). Mechanisms of participation and accountability are in practice often dominated by local elites to the exclusion of the marginalized (Devas & Grant 2003; in Bontebal, 2006). Participation must be learned and also wanted. Local elites think in terms of their social class and often are not prepared to get involved with such new approaches. Obstacles of power, social exclusion, and minimal organizational capacity mean that few gains will be made by the subordinated. “Decentralization efforts are in some cases a guise for national political elites to expand their control through developing new local institutions or restructuring existing ones.” (Smoke, 2003; in Bontebal, 2006).

However, if elites are indeed capable of gaining so much power one could also try to make use of them. This is indeed feasible, but also one of the biggest challenges City Diplomacy is facing. This is were good leadership is needed. Only good, strong, and persistent leadership from one side is able to counteract the leadership of the elites in war-torn society on the other. With the use of good leadership of both parties one is able to keep precious cultural values and relationships (e.g. tribal chiefs) intact, but with a different captain or ideology at the helm. Advocates of City Diplomacy will certainly agree with the fact that one should make use of existing communal and cultural relationships with the exploitation of good leadership. The matter of fact is that elites play a very important role in City Diplomacy. And in order to make it work there has to be mutual trust between the ‘Northern’ city officials and the elites in the ‘Southern’ city. Another, very plausible possibility, in some circumstances, is evading the involvement of some stubborn elites by developing democratic participation from below, the cooperation of the city of Wageningen was a pre-eminently example of that. Eventually, this is what City Diplomacy is all about. The case study of Wageningen showed the empowerment of different, often opposing, groups within society who, together, learned to confront their municipal officials thanks to a participatory program. Literally getting around the difficulty of the elites sounds very logical and most definitely desirable. It is something that should be done whenever possible, since the
development of a good civil society and good governance is the aim of City Diplomacy. However, in post-conflict societies one often doesn’t escape the involvement of elites, particularly in such a complex and by hatred contaminated society, this comprehensive approach is exactly what’s missing in the Tilburg – Tuzla cooperation.

**Requisites for successful City Diplomacy**

Nevertheless, what path to choose or what measure to take to deal with elites properly depends very much on the unique local context. City Diplomacy can only work when it is designed and put into practice properly, which also means that it should be tailor-made. There are no recipes for this, as the respective environments seem to differ to such a degree that even the simplest assumption needs to be ascertained. The first, most sensible, prerequisite to promote success is therefore to indicate which factors and circumstances will affect the performance of City Diplomacy and will thus require careful (actor) analysis in the first place. Furthermore, municipal officials also have to take four more requisites into account in order to deal with the delicate matter of tenacious and powerful elites, who aren’t that willing to cooperate at the one hand and in order to transfer the expertise and technical know-how to the right people on the other:

1. **Personal competences.** It must be clear by now that City Diplomacy depends very much on individuals as could be seen in all the case studies as well. The political leadership and the commitment of the Northern party can really make the difference. In the past, some Northern mayors or officials have been manipulated without even knowing it. They are in need of some sort of persistence. These officials must be able to get to the bottom of the societal processes in conflict prone areas. Questions to be asked are: Who has what kind of interests and will do anything in his power to convince the other party? A force field analysis can be a welcome expedient for municipal official, which are ought to know the potential hazards and consequences with the involvement of certain actors. When officials are not familiar with those hazards and consequences, they, themselves, can become a hazard to the cooperation. Individuals can easily be wrapped up. Officials concerned with City Diplomacy should have the guts, a real backbone, to bring sensitive matters up to discussion. Moreover, officials occupied with City Diplomacy must have the ability to get a real hold on the region, but have to remain impartial at all times. Peter Knip (2006) stated furthermore that “the quality of staff involved is crucial. It is extremely important to have the right people involved in the process of City Diplomacy, which unfortunately
is not always the case: commitment, openness, flexibility, self-confidence and ability to adapt are essential competences for playing a positive role in peace building”.
(Knip, 2006).

2. **In-house technical assistance and expertise.** One has to have expertise themselves in order to apply local types of third party facilitation. Also experience and know-how are required to initiate projects and to bring different parties closer together. Questions to be asked here are: How do you get people to endorse daily projects? How do you get them to participate in those projects? How do you get elites to sit down at the table? However, such endorsement implies neither any warranty to the quality of the project, nor any liability to the outcome of it. Other proficiencies include, organizing training seminars and inviting delegations to your municipality. Thus, and again, it depends very much on the abilities of an individual. This encompasses, undeniably, the immediate risk of losing (tacit) knowledge if an official decides to leave the municipality in search of a new career elsewhere.

3. **Support.** As a municipality concerned with City Diplomacy one needs to arrange the required ‘outside’ support and assistance. To make City Diplomacy a success more partners are to be involved. Don’t think that just two municipalities can manage such a multifaceted cooperation. There just can’t be any form of City Diplomacy without the assistance of civil society organizations. When the Northern municipality wants to be in contact and up-to-date continuously, CSOs are considered necessary. But also the projects preceding this sort of decentralized cooperation and which made City Diplomacy possible in the first place are often initiated by CSOs. With the help of and an integrated approach with CSOs, experienced neighboring municipalities, and even UN agencies the process of cooperation will turn out to be more efficiently. In addition, Peter Knip of the VNG also notes that “coordination and cooperation with other levels of society simultaneously is very beneficial. And recognition of local initiatives by national or international authorities is highly encouraging”. (Knip, 2006).

4. **Compatibility of municipalities.** The degree to which the dominant behavior, attitude, size of the municipality and cultural heritage are conducive to the partner municipality. The case study of Wageningen showed that the framework of their quarter of de Nûde was more conducive to the situation of the village of Laslovo.
As witnessed with the case studies of both Wageningen and Tilburg, there isn’t always a majority within the council, which supports the initiation or continuation of City Diplomacy efforts. One has to keep in mind that the decision to get involved or proceed with City Diplomacy are made by just a section of the entire council. A section with indeed those strong-minded individuals. This dissension in the council can also be seen within the population of an entire municipality. This explains possible the half-hearted actions of the council of Tilburg regarding the Tilburg - Tuzla foundation. Remember that the public support vis-à-vis City Diplomacy can decline as well. Especially when the going gets tough in conflict prone areas. When there is the threat of a violence more questions will be asked by both the population and the council concerning the deployment of their own professionals. Inhabitants of a municipality involved with City Diplomacy can get inclined to oppose the municipal’s efforts abroad, since it gets really far from the core business of municipalities. Why spending so much on problems abroad when there are enough problems at home, which for instance also inclined different ethnicities? Hence, there will always be a controversy at hand concerning City Diplomacy.
IX. Conclusion

The conceptual mapping in this research aims both at circumscribing City Diplomacy and at examining how this concept relates to actually real life dilemmas in post-conflict areas. The City Diplomacy topics, representing concrete roles and activities carried out in the context of peace building and in the domain of municipal international relations, are likely to continue shaping City Diplomacy in practice. Working in a conflict region is a complex and precarious affair. However, the instruments and roles cities can play in such a delicate and multifaceted environment are not entirely new to them. According to the VNG its all about linking and twinning methodology, technical assistance, advising on municipal policy development, cooperation with citizens and civil society organizations, awareness raising activities, promoting mutual understanding, capacity building programs, and advocacy and lobby activities at the level of national governments and sometimes the international community (VNG, 2007).

The first main research question was approached by means of describing the contemporary peace building dilemmas and an actor analyses. Why should there be a peace building equivalent of decentralized cooperation? Is there a demand for such a cooperation? Because of the weakness of the state, it can no longer fulfill its tasks sufficiently and effectively. This leaves room for cities to come in and take its place. Municipalities in donor countries possess in-house technical expertise, are routinely practicing medium and long-term project planning and budgeting, and they involve their communities in decision-making over time through a range of mechanisms. As established institutions, they can engage in development cooperation by choice rather than necessity, without becoming dependent on it (Hafteck, 2003).

The second question comprised the potential roles of City Diplomacy both abroad as in their home country: What are the potential roles City Diplomacy can play? It is said several times that City Diplomacy is more or less a product of an evolving process. This process consists of executed projects between two international municipalities. By this means its obvious that City Diplomacy can be seen as a project-partner in the first place. However, within these projects or external of it, more on a consultancy basis, they can play quite a few roles: City Diplomacy as; Bridge builder, mediator, persuader, facilitator, and trainer. Its not unreasonable to think that more roles will unfold in the future. Especially when the concept of City Diplomacy becomes more known and used all over the world. However, it is very
desirable that a necessary growing awareness of City Diplomacy and the growing involvement of local government organizations in City Diplomacy does not result in a significant shift in the raison d’être of City Diplomacy: to enable good governance, promote social cohesion and enrich the lives of local communities in conflict prone areas by raising the awareness of the ones and the living standards of the others (Hafteck, 2003). Thus, the reciprocity of efforts and benefits is something that one must bear in mind. The interaction with its inhabitants makes it also easier for municipalities to justify their municipal activities abroad.

It are neither the roles nor the activities unfolded by City Diplomacy, which unveil its true nature. The challenges and dilemmas show the real ins and outs of it. Hence the question: What are the challenges for this form of decentralized cooperation in the field of peace building? The stacked problems created this complex environment and asks for a comprehensive approach. Also ‘outside’ support is required for encouragement and assistance, in order to make City Diplomacy a success. However, it are the individuals who really make the difference and who make the greatest contributions to a successful cooperation. Most cities involved in City Diplomacy are not that big and powerful in order to get a whole committee involved with a cooperation abroad. This is only seen in powerful and progressive cities, which yet can be seen as bridgeheads to other cities around the globe. Nonetheless, the individuals bear most of the cooperation. In all Dutch case studies these individuals had a prominent responsibility. Next to the fact that these individuals contribute to the cooperation’s continuity it can be an Achilles’ heel as well. These individuals ought to have the right spirit and competences in order to counteract the potential impediments as the mentioned tenacious elites.

City Diplomacy should not be seen as a new panacea and as an aid modality that works independently in conflict areas. However, by means of effective consultation and efficient coordination with other actors involved in peace building, from the UN-forces to the local NGOs, it can be a real addition to the already comprehensive approach, but with its own field of expertise.
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XI. Interviewees

Dion van den Berg – Senior Policy Adviser, Inter-Church Peace Council (IKV) (28 May 2007)

Tjitske Zwerver – Senior Advisor, Municipality of Wageningen (18 June 2007)

Arne Musch – Senior Project Manager, Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG) (19 June 2007)

Jan Prop – Coordinator Communication Department, Municipality of Woensdrecht (20 June 2007)

Thea Ellerbeck – Senior Project Advisor, Tilburg – Tuzla Foundation (25 June 2007)