

A case study in city diplomacy / the Municipal Alliance for Peace in the Middle East | *Chris van Hemert*

Summary

This chapter presents a review of a real case of city diplomacy involving Palestinian, Israeli and 'international' municipalities. The activities are broken down into three stages or periods, and the various actors involved and issues that arose in these stages are highlighted with lessons drawn.

The first phase covers approximately five years, 1999-2004, during which the basis for the formal establishment of the Municipal Alliance for Peace in the Middle East (MAP) in 2005 was laid. Mediation from international partners at the macro-level, combined with local support – based on idealistic or utilitarian motives – at the micro-level were the dominant factors in this phase. The process leading up to the establishment of MAP was not a bottom-up process. The impetus was provided by the ideas of city diplomacy - but the factors that sustained it were mainly local. There were negative influences, such as the conflict dynamics and limited financial resources, which affected the process but did not halt it.

The second topic reviewed concerns the development of MAP from 2004 onwards. Micro-level support was most apparent immediately following the founding conference in June 2005 but later managerial difficulties and wavering commitment at the micro-level severely impeded MAP's development. Various macro-level factors also slowed the process, but these were at least partially offset by the continuing willingness to engage in dialogue and the willingness of international partners to invest in MAP.

The third stage is about the development of concrete projects as part of MAP activities since 2005. A major issue has been the lack of funding from macro-level actors due to the wider political situation. Micro-level factors proved to be especially important with many hurdles to overcome, with the result that projects took a long time to get started and then deliver concrete results.

And, despite all the problems, there are still local city diplomacy actors willing to bridge the divides.

Introduction

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has affected the lives of many people and has held international diplomacy hostage for decades. Palestinians and Israelis regularly issue loud appeals for peace, security and prosperity while, at the national level, peace talks stagnate. In this context, Israeli and Palestinian local authorities and their associations have requested their international partners to assist in a process of dialogue, and some have responded. This response constitutes a case of city diplomacy.



- 1 Tel Aviv
(ULAI headquarters)
- 2 Ramallah
(APLA headquarters)
- 3 Jerusalem
(MAP secretariat)

The case is special because it combines dialogue with projects, and because it takes place while the conflict remains violent. The process that led to the establishment of the Municipal Alliance for Peace in the Middle East (MAP), and its development provides insights into the possibilities, the impossibilities, the challenges and the conditions faced by city diplomacy.

The Municipal Alliance for Peace in the Middle East (MAP) The Municipal Alliance for Peace in the Middle East is a framework for Israeli-Palestinian municipal dialogue with contributions from foreign municipalities. This trilateral municipal co-operation initiative was instigated by the Association of Palestinian Local Authorities (APLA) and the Union of Local Authorities in Israel (ULAI). Co-operation is to be based on concrete trilateral development projects, covering a variety of areas including specifically culture and youth, environment, economic development and municipal management. These four target areas were defined in order to tackle practical municipal problems, while promoting peace and encouraging greater dialogue between citizens.

MAP was established at a conference in The Hague in June 2005. Its founding was endorsed by 33 Israeli and Palestinian mayors, in the presence of municipal representatives from 15 countries and a range of international organizations including UN Habitat, United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), UNDP, WHO, the Glocal Forum and UNESCO.

MAP is run by an International Board consisting of APLA, ULAI, the UNDP Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People (UNDP/PAPP), UCLG, The Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), the European Network of Local Authorities for Peace in the Middle East (ELPME), the City of Hamar, the City of Rome, the City of Barcelona and the City of Cologne. The President of the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG) chairs the board.

MAP is a network and has yet to be formally incorporated. UNDP/PAPP hosts the MAP Secretariat in Jerusalem. The Secretariat ensures direct communication with Israeli and Palestinian municipalities. It is staffed by an Israeli ULAI liaison officer and a Palestinian APLA liaison officer.

Methodology This chapter identifies both hurdles and favourable factors that influenced the preliminary process of dialogue before MAP was established, during its establishment and during its later institutional development. It identifies lessons learned and the challenges ahead.

A distinction is made between the macro-level and the micro-level. The terms 'macro' here

denotes national or inter/supranational factors and 'micro' refers to local factors. APLA and ULAI are predominantly discussed at the micro-level since they act on behalf of Israeli and Palestinian local authorities and mostly operate on the local level. Foreign associations of local authorities are mostly classified as 'macro'.

The following research questions are addressed in this chapter:

- What have been the most important factors in the MAP process so far?
- Were these factors mainly on the micro- or the macro- level?
- Should the MAP process be regarded as a success?
- Can one learn lessons from these factors, deduce conditions for success, or offer suggestions for city diplomacy in the Middle East?

In the context of Israeli-Palestinian relations, these are sensitive issues that may link to perspectives on right and wrong in the conflict. Further, MAP is still developing. Therefore, answering the research questions necessitates a general, rather than a specific, review of the issues. Measuring the success of MAP is the most challenging of the research questions. Primarily, success means realizing MAP's stated objectives, and the extent to which adverse factors have been overcome. Implementation of trilateral municipal development projects is one of the stated objectives, but this activity only started in 2007. Consequently, evaluating project outcomes is not part of this review. Nevertheless, the process of formulating them and the fact that they are now underway are taken into account.

This chapter is based on written sources, on participant observation by the author and on interviews. The written sources are few, but important, because there needs to be thorough political consensus before something is committed to paper. Participation in meetings, missions and working visits provided the author with useful insights. Many key MAP actors were interviewed to ensure a balanced perspective. The multiplicity of sources has helped to make the analysis as objective as possible. Information that might endanger individuals or be likely to increase political pressure on them has been excluded.

Structure of the chapter This chapter has a sectional structure. Section 2 presents MAP's key actors and their motives for participation. Sections 3, 4 and 5 evaluate the most important positive and negative factors in various stages of MAP's development. Firstly, the start of the dialogue between APLA and ULAI (1999 – 2004) is discussed in Section 3. Next, MAP's establishment and institutional development (2004 – 2007) is reviewed in Section 4. Then the latest phase involving the setting up of municipal projects (2005 – 2007) is commented upon in Section 5. The chapter concludes with an overview of the most important factors, lessons learned, conditions for success and suggestions for city diplomacy in the Middle East in Section 6.

Actors and their motives

This section provides an overview of the most relevant actors in the development of MAP. After presenting the actors, the section will briefly discuss the various motives and roles. This section only deals with key organizations that played a role in MAP's development and are still actively involved on a regular basis. There have been numerous other organizations that, at certain moments in the process, provided valuable contributions.¹

¹ These actors are mentioned in subsequent sections.

Association of Palestinian Local Authorities (APLA) The Association of Palestinian Local Authorities (APLA) was established in June 1997, the first local government association in the Arab world. The objectives of APLA are to represent the interests of its members by advocacy and lobbying; to provide services to its member municipalities; to coordinate with other institutions, agencies and associations for the benefit of its members; and to represent the Palestinian local authorities at the international level.²

The main activities of APLA include: training sessions for the staff and councillors of local authorities on management, planning and decentralization; provision of legal advice to members; participation in national and international forums on local government issues; consultation with donors and international organizations on programmes offering assistance to local authorities; coordination of and assistance to Palestinian participation in the formulation and implementation of local-level development projects.

Union of Local Authorities in Israel (ULAI) The Union of Local Authorities in Israel (ULAI) was established in 1938 as the 'League of Local Councils'. In 1953, Jerusalem, Tel Aviv-Yafo and Haifa joined the organization and the name was changed to ULAI.

ULAI represents the interests of Israeli municipalities, and local and regional councils, in contacts with the Knesset (the Israeli national parliament), the national government and ministries, and other institutions. ULAI's main activities include: providing training to improve service delivery by local authorities; standardizing municipal management, such as through formulating collective labour agreements for municipal employees; assisting local authorities in founding companies, partnerships and co-operatives; and facilitating municipal international co-operation.³

Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG) The Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG) has existed since 1912. VNG promotes and discusses the interests of municipalities with the central government, Parliament, European institutions and other public organizations. Furthermore, the association represents the interests of its members in negotiations on collective labour agreements with the unions of local government personnel.

Besides its advocacy role, VNG assists its members in their administrative tasks. To this end, the association proposes model bylaws, runs an online documentation and information desk, provides services in all areas of municipal interest, and co-operates with relevant national ministries and international organizations.

VNG has a long-standing relationship with ULAI and implemented the project that supported the establishment of APLA.

UNDP/PAPP UNDP's Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People (UNDP/PAPP) commenced operations in 1980.⁴

² VNG International (2005a), p. 25

³ ULAI (1982)

⁴ United Nations General Assembly (1978), A/RES/33/147, art. 2

UNDP/PAPP aims to build technical capacity, and to strengthen the project management and administrative capacities of its Palestinian partner organizations. These include the Palestinian National Authority, local authorities, the private sector and NGOs. UNDP/PAPP's projects focus on social and economic development in fields such as water, health, education facilities, social services, infrastructure and agriculture.

United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) is a worldwide organization linking local governments. UCLG's mission is to be 'the united voice and world advocate of democratic self-government, promoting its values, objectives and interests, through co-operation between local governments, and within the wider international community'.⁵ UCLG was the outcome of a merger between the International Union of Local Authorities (IULA) and the World Federation of United Towns and Cities (FMCU-UTO).

UCLG supports international co-operation between local governments, executes programmes and initiates networks to build the capacity of local governments. The UCLG Committee on City Diplomacy is relevant to the MAP process as an important voice at the international level.

The European section of UCLG is known as the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR). The first political-level meeting between APLA and ULAI took place in Barcelona at the IULA world congress in 1999, on the initiative of CEMR.

European Network of Local Authorities for Peace in the Middle East (ELPME) The European Network of Local Authorities for Peace in the Middle East (ELPME) is an initiative of Belgian, French, Greek, Italian and Spanish local authorities.⁶ Its members include the Central Union of Municipalities and Communes of Greece (KEDKE), Cités Unies France (CUF), the City of Barcelona, Fons Català de Cooperació al Desenvolupament and the Italian Co-ordination of Local Authorities for Peace and Human Rights.

ELPME has the following objectives: to promote dialogue between Israeli and Palestinian municipalities, to lobby the European Union to increase its commitment, to create a large movement of local authorities, and to support peace initiatives between Israelis and Palestinians.

Motives of the MAP partners Among the MAP actors, various motives for involvement can be discerned. Starting with APLA, one can identify a utilitarian stance toward MAP. Its support is rooted in the needs of Palestinian municipalities. Its approach emphasizes tangible, material results, because these legitimize the participation of local politicians.⁷ The dialogue in this view is instrumental for technical reconstruction. As Mr Isam Akel, APLA's executive director, explains: 'Peace brings stability, and stability is necessary for reconstruction. At the same time, stability is essential for durable peace. So, peace, reconstruction and stability are interdependent'. In addition to this utilitarian view,

⁵ UCLG (2004), art. 2

⁶ For the founding declaration of ELPME, see ELPME (2005) or http://www.andaluciasolidaria.org/conferenciaeuropea/docs/Declaracion_I_Conferencia_EUROPEA_ESP.pdf

⁷ Interview Mr Isam Akel

APLA sees MAP as a platform through which the plight of Palestinians can be brought to international attention.

For ULAI, the dialogue itself is the key activity: it emphasizes people-to-people actions with support of municipal leaders. Peace-building has been an important focus of ULAI's activities over the last decade.⁸ Mr Avi Rabinovitch, ULAI's deputy director general, confided as early as 1990 that 'once you have looked each other in the eye, you will not use violence anymore'.⁹ In addition, ULAI perceives opportunities to enhance its image through co-operation with Palestinian municipalities.¹⁰

The collective efforts of MAP's international partners may be viewed as a single factor in MAP's development, but their motives are illustrative of their diversity. ELPME, for instance, stresses its ideological commitments, while UNDP approaches MAP from an institutional perspective of local government autonomy.¹¹ VNG sees how ideological and mundane motives can go hand in hand: it believes in Israeli-Palestinian dialogue and it is encouraged by its good relations with both ULAI and APLA. However, it also recognizes the extra benefits that an important international initiative such as MAP can bring to its organization. The same is true in the city marketing considerations of participating municipalities.¹²

Foreign partners also differ in defining their roles. UNDP/PAPP does not regard itself as a mediator since it does not pretend to have the power to persuade parties. According to Mr Timothy Rothermel, UNDP Special Representative at the time of MAP's establishment, the term facilitator and funder would be better terminology.¹³ Some agree with this view because they associate mediation with calming warring parties and do not see MAP as having such a role. Others however do use the term mediator, at least for the first phase of the MAP process. According to Mr Wim Deetman, MAP's chairman from its establishment through to 31 December 2007, the key prerequisite is to be very reserved in expressing one's opinion about political developments and attitudes.

Values and priorities are influenced by the conflict, by political developments and by changes in association leadership. This context makes it difficult to act solely on idealistic grounds. The MAP process only advances when multiple motives are allowed to drive it.

Is it a problem that there are different motives? Mr Jeremy Smith, IULA secretary-general when MAP was founded and currently secretary-general of CEMR, describes this situation as follows: 'there are ultimate objectives and realistic objectives, and those are not necessarily in contradiction'.¹⁴ In the words of Mr Flavio Lotti of ELPME, 'it is not necessary to only have one [end goal], as long as you operate coherently, [and] the goals do not conflict'. Although a certain idealism is probably an important motivator for most partners,

⁸ Interview Mr Avi Rabinovitch

⁹ Interview Mr Peter Knip and Ms Alexandra Sizoo

¹⁰ Interview Mr Timothy Rothermel

¹¹ Interview Mr Timothy Rothermel

¹² Interview Mr Peter Knip and Ms Alexandra Sizoo

According to Wim Deetman, former mayor of the City of The Hague, MAP provided a good example for creating a profile as 'International City of Peace and Justice', but this was not the leitmotiv, which was to contribute to dialogue. Ralph Pans refers to the strong international profile of many Italian and French municipalities.

¹³ Interview Mr Timothy Rothermel

¹⁴ Interview Mr Jeremy Smith

the clear prospect of projects and external incentives is essential for some. Apart from the direct material interests, practical incentives can also reduce the level of local political support required to allow involvement. According to Isam Akel, as long as the various actors, spurred by different motives, speak in the same 'peace-building voice', their efforts should be welcomed even if they do not have the same priorities as those defined by MAP's end goals.

The differences in their approaches to MAP by ULAI and APLA are interesting. For APLA, the dialogue serves to promote technical projects, while ULAI's approach stresses a string of easy-to-organize dialogue activities. Nevertheless, the process does advance, albeit in fits and starts. Thus, fully-shared motives are not a precondition for progress. However, individual motives should not be allowed to take precedence over the common goal; and both the instruments of the MAP process and its outcomes need to be adhered to at some minimum level.¹⁵ Wim Deetman has never doubted that they do.¹⁶

The process that led to MAP

The Municipal Alliance for Peace in the Middle East was launched in 2005. This was the culmination of a long process of preparations and dialogue between APLA, ULAI and their international partners including the cities of Athens, Barcelona, Rome and The Hague. Especially in this initial phase, most meetings took place outside the region, away from political tension.¹⁷ These activities led to the conviction among the involved parties that they were on the way towards achieving important progress at the local level.

Mutual co-operation between APLA and ULAI was spurred on by the international agreement fostered by the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) in Barcelona in March 1999.¹⁸ Subsequently, various exchange visits took place, and discussions were held hosted by international local government partners. These culminated in a meeting between the executive administrators of APLA and ULAI at an IULA/FMCU-UTO meeting in Guadalajara in June 2002. At this meeting, the first practical ideas for co-operation, in the form of a joint municipal conference in Israel and Palestine and a municipal reconstruction programme, were conceived.¹⁹

Declarations were drafted, discussed and sometimes signed. For instance, in 2002, the 'Rome Declaration' was adopted (but not signed). This stated that 'while aiming at a peaceful and secure solution to the problem, both sides should promote socio-economic as well as people-to-people co-operation on the local level for the purposes of rehabilitation, economic development and prosperity, as well as the sustainability of peace'.²⁰

A meeting at the Wittenburg Estate near The Hague took place in January 2003. A very important common understanding was reached (the Wittenburg Declaration) on prevailing political issues including violence and terrorism, Jerusalem, settlements, water, refugees and

¹⁵ Interview Mr Jeremy Smith

¹⁶ Interview Mr Wim Deetman

¹⁷ This strategy has also been used by other initiatives such as the Glocal Forum.

¹⁸ APLA/ULAI/CEMR (1999)

¹⁹ FMCU-UTO (2002), p. 1

²⁰ Municipalities of Nablus/Rishon leZion/Qalqilya/Ashdod/Ra'anana (2002)

²¹ APLA/ULAI/IULA/FMCU/VNG (2003)

borders.²¹ The remainder of 2003 saw no concrete progress, but the willingness of APLA and ULAI to co-operate was again confirmed in the signing of the 'KEDKE Declaration', at the invitation of the Central Union of Municipalities and Communes in Greece (KEDKE).

This section now discusses the process leading up to MAP's formal establishment, covering roughly the period 1999 - 2004. The most important factors affecting the process during this period are assessed. Activities following the KEDKE Declaration are discussed in the subsequent section.

Impact of the conflict dynamics The conflict dynamics severely undermined the confidence that national Israeli and Palestinian leaders would reach an agreement acceptable to both parties during the period being considered (1999-2004). After an earlier period of hope, the Oslo Accords (1993), the Interim Agreement (on West Bank and Gaza, 1995), the Wye River Memorandum (1998) and the Camp David summit (2000) resulted in little change on the ground. Subsequently, the second intifada started in 2000.

Within the MAP framework, international visits ran into practical problems, such as the Israeli Defense Forces closing off roads after the Netanya hotel bombing in March 2002. 'Before every step forward, a step backward was required first'.²² The sustained facilitation of a process of dialogue required much resilience before MAP was even established.

Palestinian and Israeli municipalities alike suffered the effects of violence. Palestinian mayors and the national leadership were criticized by Israel and the international community for not making enough efforts to stop the bombings. Israeli and Palestinian mayors saw their municipalities hit by violent actions and subsequent retaliations, causing outcry over civilian casualties.

Cancelled meetings, 'partially because of travel restrictions, but possibly also because at that moment [the actors were] not very keen',²³ led to a difficult situation in 2002 with APLA not being represented at the political level. For politicians, participation in MAP carries more risk than for administrators.

When meetings took place, there was constant tension over the balance of proposals. For instance, ULAI denounced one proposed initiative – an International Conference of Local Authorities for Palestine – aimed at the reconstruction of Palestinian municipalities, as being 'in competition with that of ULAI and call[ing] into question a commitment made [by ULAI] in conjunction with APLA and the VNG'. The perceived problem was that APLA and the VNG had confirmed the start of dialogue between APLA and ULAI in the near future, but that this initiative insufficiently involved ULAI.²⁴ ULAI felt that the focus of this initiative was too one-sided and focused disproportionately on the interests of the Palestinian municipalities.²⁵

Nevertheless, contacts on the local level were maintained, and agreements between APLA and ULAI that would form the basis for more elaborate co-operation were signed during this

²² Interview Mr Joop van den Berg

²³ Knip, P. (2002), p. 1

²⁴ CEMR (2002), p. 2

period. Jeremy Smith, former Secretary General of IULA, explains ‘... that general willingness to co-operate was there. There was hope on the ground. Later the situation worsened and the process became more complex, but even then there was a follow-up through meetings organized by the VNG’.

While the non-attendance at a meeting may, by one party, be accepted or seen as the inevitable consequence of travel restrictions, another party may regard it as a deliberate refusal to attend the meeting or a slight. In this way, the conflict influences the thoughts and attitudes of the involved parties.²⁶ The conflict at the macro-level has therefore clearly resulted in obstacles and difficulties at the micro-level. However, the impact has not been as severe as one might have expected: it did not stop the process as a whole progressing. The foundations for MAP were established.

Impact of financial constraints Throughout MAP’s conception phase, financing activities was a continuous source of concern. The Netherlands’ Ministry of Foreign Affairs initially allowed VNG to draw on funds allocated to VNG International’s technical assistance work with APLA. Direct contacts between VNG board members and ministers were required to achieve this agreement.²⁷ This ensured some stability at the operational level.

A grant proposal submitted in 2002 to the EU Partnership for Peace Programme was unsuccessful, with the EU citing a lack of funds.²⁸ However, the application feedback also identified significant concerns: ‘The proposed activities under the programme may be adversely affected by external circumstances that are beyond the direct control of the project. Particularly the security circumstances and travel restrictions on the West Bank can change rapidly, without prior notice.’²⁹ Jeremy Smith saw this lack of EU funding for the dialogue process as perhaps the most significant obstacle in this phase of MAP’s development.³⁰ Early in 2004, however, the Netherlands’ Ministry of Foreign Affairs approved new funding for the dialogue through VNG.³¹

Not only the international partners, but also APLA and ULAI were facing severe financial constraints. Mr Joop van den Berg, at the time chairman of the Board of Directors of VNG, observed that this might actually have had a positive, rather than a negative, influence on APLA’s willingness to participate in MAP. The logic being that the lack of available finances from national Palestinian institutions increased the interest of Palestinian local authorities in tapping external funds.³²

The uncertainty of funding for the process and the willingness of international parties in the process to finance the follow-up to the initiative have been crucial macro-level factors in this phase of MAP’s development.

25 Interview Mr Jeremy Smith.

The proposal was modified in Guadalajara in 2002 to incorporate the shared priorities .

26 Interview Mr Jeremy Smith

27 Interview Mr Joop van den Berg

28 VNG International (2004b), Annex 1, p. 1

29 VNG International (2002), p. 21

30 Interview Mr Jeremy Smith

31 VNG International (2004b) p. 3.

This period saw the first discussions about the Municipal Alliance for Peace in the Middle East in terms of the format in which it was eventually established in June 2005.

32 Interview Mr Joop van den Berg

Impact of the involvement of international partners The support of the international partners has been essential. The first time this support manifested itself on a large scale was in 2002, when over thirty international local authorities, municipal associations, APLA and ULAI discussed a joint Israeli-Palestinian municipal conference and reconstruction programme. A working group was established consisting of ULAI, APLA, IULA, Cités Unies France (CUF), the City of Rome, the Union of Belgian Cities and Municipalities (VBSG) and the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG).³³

An even-handed approach from the international side was essential to keep the process going. Having been involved in the establishment of APLA in 1997, VNG also continued to maintain its long-standing relationship with ULAI, and always visited both APLA and ULAI when in the region. This impartial approach helped to resolve matters whenever criticism was voiced.

The roles of IULA and FMCU-UTO (merged as UCLG since 2004) were complex. APLA and ULAI had both been members of IULA, but IULA had closer historical ties with ULAI than with APLA. Some FMCU-UTO members supported the Palestinian cause explicitly, and the organization had signed resolutions that condemned the state of Israel for its actions or emphasized Palestinian suffering.³⁴ FMCU-UTO tried to insist that the membership of Israeli local authorities would be conditional upon Israel respecting UN resolution 242³⁵ and withdrawing from the West Bank and Gaza. For ULAI, it was very important that VNG stated unequivocally that local authorities did not have the mandate to discuss the Israeli-Palestinian conflict at the national level, and that the best contribution local authorities could make would be to engage in dialogue.³⁶ Without the ongoing plans to create a single worldwide organization for local government, there would have been less impetus to promote the dialogue process and the merger plans raised the question as to how to accommodate both associations.³⁷

Since this period, there has been constant mediation by international partners and, indeed, it is hard to imagine MAP succeeding without it.

Impact of sustained local willingness to engage in dialogue Despite the difficult circumstances, APLA and ULAI delegations did meet on various occasions. The general willingness to meet each other at that time may have been supported by the address of US President Bush on 24 June 2002 in which he spoke for the first time of the 'vision [of] two states living side by side in peace and security' and presented the principles of the Road Map for Peace.³⁸ There was even an acceptance of the view that a responsibility of local authorities was to provide security, freedom and prosperity. The involved parties were convinced that, at the local level, modest but real contributions could be made.

Meetings and initiatives such as 'Local Authorities – together we are creating HOPE', in

³³ Knip, P. (2002), p. 1

³⁴ Interview Mr Peter Knip and Ms Alexandra Sizoo.

For examples of resolutions, see European Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine (1998) or FMCU-UTO (1998)

³⁵ For the full text of United Nations Security Council resolution S/RES/242, see <http://domino.un.org/unispal.nsf>

³⁶ Knip, P. (2007)

³⁷ Interview Mr Jeremy Smith

which ULAI put forward a number of municipal project proposals, sustained the dialogue.³⁹ Another contribution was the declarations, such as the Barcelona declaration of 1999, the Rome Declaration of 2002, the Wittenburg Declaration and the KEDKE Declaration of 2003 on the issue. The Wittenburg Declaration marks a watershed in the process as it addressed many political issues, such as violence and terrorism, Jerusalem, settlements, water, refugees and borders.⁴⁰ Unfortunately, it was never shared with the members of APLA and ULAI due to the sensitive nature of the declaration and the difficult political situation in the region at the time.⁴¹ Consequently, its impact has been less substantial than it might otherwise have been.

Declarations get mixed press, largely because they are not legally binding. They only have value if they are signed in good faith and not as a diplomatic token of appreciation towards the meeting's host. Declarations tend to be relevant at a specific time and in a specific place, and their value wears off as the political context changes and leaders are replaced. However, declarations have been useful as reminders of agreements reached in the past, providing a reason to move on.

The sustained local willingness based on meetings and declarations has created momentum at the micro-level while, at the macro-level, the international partners see one of their preconditions for involvement, namely local commitment, satisfied.

Impact of the involvement of associations of municipalities The leaderships of the local government associations, APLA and ULAI, were of tremendous importance in the phase leading up to MAP. A politically charged process will not take root if the involved mayors are only speaking on behalf of their own municipalities. A mechanism to bring in the support of many municipalities is needed, and this can be realized through the presidents of associations.⁴³

Association presidents are in a position to communicate with national governments, who need to support the process, or at least refrain from blocking it, if it is to succeed. The Glocal Forum, as one of its activities, also ensures information sharing and interaction with national government officials. On behalf of MAP, APLA and ULAI have always, behind the scenes, fine-tuned all activities through their contacts with the national authorities. For instance, Avi Rabinovitch of ULAI explained how the success of the municipal Israeli-Palestinian dialogue is always brought to the attention of high ranking military officers and the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, since this ensures support for MAP.⁴⁴ These efforts go beyond the traditional role of Israeli and Palestinian municipal actors, who do not normally coordinate with the military and their Ministry of Foreign Affairs directly.⁴⁵

One particular aspect of APLA's political leadership's involvement was the prospect of

38 The White House (2002)

39 ULAI (2002)

40 APLA/ULAI/IULA/FMCU/VNG (2003)

41 VNG International (2004b), annex 1, p. 1

42 These reflections were expressed by most interviewees. Avi Rabinovitch notes that in difficult times declarations have little influence on the process. They might have a positive effect on the attitude of the international audience, but it is far more important that internal dialogue and co-operation continue.

43 Interview Mr Wim Deetman

reconstruction projects being launched as part of the MAP process.⁴⁶ This has been identified as a dominant motive, as noted in Section 2. Activities visible to the citizens are seen as politically important. In addition to gaining visible hardware, APLA recognized that Israeli municipalities shared many of their own practical problems and could be useful sources of practical insights, best practices and lessons learned.⁴⁷

Apart from the importance of political leadership, it is also crucial to work with administrators who are reliable, diligent and truly committed to the mission of the co-operation activity. The promotion of the process by administrators, with political backing from the presidents of the associations, is a condition for success, especially since the political leadership does not always have the time to follow events closely.⁴⁸ As we will see later, for example in the discussions on 'managerial difficulties', one could argue that this worked better in the phase leading up to the formal start of MAP than in subsequent phases.

In what is a highly political context, the involvements of APLA and ULAI have been essential at the micro-level. They have ensured the backing of both the national governments and their members.

Intermediate conclusion Mediation from international partners at the macro-level, combined with the support – based on idealistic or utilitarian motives – at the micro-level were the dominant factors in this phase. The process leading up to the establishment of MAP was not a bottom-up process, building on the level of Israeli and Palestinian municipalities; it was primarily the idea of associations of municipalities and their international partners. The impetus was provided by the ideas of city diplomacy, but the factors that sustained it were mainly local. Negative influences such as the conflict dynamics and limited financial resources affected the process but did not halt it.

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MAP's establishment and development

This section discusses the establishment and institutional development of MAP, roughly covering the period 2004 - 2007. Operational processes have been important in this phase, alongside city diplomacy as a political process. The municipal dialogue on the association level was sustained, and the first interest from individual Israeli and Palestinian municipalities appeared.

Impact of the conflict dynamics The conflict dynamics became more volatile in this period. In 2003, Israeli President Ariel Sharon and Palestinian then-Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas were still discussing the implementation of the Road Map for Peace. Abbas managed to persuade Hamas and Islamic Jihad to agree to a ceasefire. However, the truce disintegrated with a series of suicide bombings, raids and assassinations. The construction of the separation barrier was speeded up. In autumn 2004, Israeli forces entered Gaza after a series of rocket attacks. In August 2005, Sharon ordered the withdrawal of Israeli settlers

⁴⁴ Interview Mr Avi Rabinovitch

⁴⁵ Tagar, Z. (2007), p. 13

⁴⁶ Interview Mr Joop van den Berg

⁴⁷ Interview Mr Isam Akel

⁴⁸ Interview Mr Wim Deetman

from Gaza. In Palestine, Hamas became more powerful in 2006; Israel became involved in what amounted to a short war against Hezbollah.

These events all had impacts on the development of MAP at the micro-level. There were few opportunities for Palestinian MAP partners to travel. For instance, a planned roundtable session preparing for the establishment of MAP, in The Hague, had to be cancelled.⁴⁹ Local politicians also became less motivated to publicly affiliate themselves with initiatives such as MAP.⁵⁰

When the declaration for the founding conference was discussed at a preparatory meeting in 2005, a reference to the 'Israeli occupation' was deleted from the text.⁵¹ Nevertheless, since a general agreement on political issues had already been reached in Wittenburg, MAP's founding conference in The Hague could focus on the objectives of MAP itself, such as initiating 'on-the-ground co-operation through joint projects in Palestinian, Israeli and international partner municipalities, that are aimed at promoting lasting peace in the region'.⁵²

National governments continued to support MAP, or at least not impede its development.⁵³ In 2005, local elections took place, with Hamas gaining power in many municipalities, and in 2006 Hamas won legislative elections. The rise of Hamas influenced MAP in several ways. Firstly, APLA struggled to come to terms with the new reality and, as of late 2007, it still had no new Executive Board. ULAI adopted a more distant stance to the dialogue, preferring to see how matters would develop, and the Government of Israel discouraged its municipalities from talking to Hamas-run municipalities.⁵⁴ Secondly, struggles between Fatah and Hamas greatly affected the environment for organizing projects. It became increasingly difficult to organize MAP activities, especially in Gaza. Thirdly, the situation provided a justification for foreign partners to opt out, claiming they could not participate as long as Hamas was in power due to their own government's standpoint. Few new MAP partners presented themselves, and some existing ones became less active. Wim Deetman regretted this stating, 'if the local willingness to co-operate exists, there can be no excuse not to endorse it as a third party, regardless of political considerations'.

As in the previous period, the conflict dynamic had continually hindered the development of MAP at the micro-level. At the macro-level, the rise of Hamas resulted in reduced commitment from various bodies, but this did not prevent willing actors from exploring opportunities to co-operate. The conflict dynamic also influenced the management of MAP and the financing of MAP activities. These aspects are discussed in the subsections below.

Impact of financial constraints Financing MAP's activities continued to be a source of concern. Funding opportunities became increasingly scarce as funding agencies became worried that money would benefit bodies and people officially excluded on the basis of various lists and government policies. Additionally, the unstable project environment, especially for peace-building activities, made donors reluctant to advance money, a fact observed by Ms Benedetta Alfieri of the Glocal Forum.⁵⁵

49 VNG International (2004b), pp. 4 and 9

50 Interview Mr Ralph Pans

51 VNG International (2005b)

52 APLA/ULAI/VNG (2005)

53 Interviews Mr Ralph Pans and Mr Timothy Rothermel

54 Interview Mr Peter Knip and Ms Alexandra Sizoo

55 Interview Ms Benedetta Alfieri

Attempts to obtain grants from donors such as the EU Partnership for Peace, or to create a multi-donor trust fund for MAP, failed to get off the ground. A donor conference in 2005 resulted in plenty of goodwill but no funds. According to Mr Peter Knip, director of VNG's agency for international co-operation, national governments and donor agencies did not sufficiently recognize the possible role for local governments in development co-operation, let alone in peace-building.⁵⁶

Funding was eventually obtained from the Netherlands' Ministry of Foreign Affairs to formally create MAP and sustain it thereafter. Since late 2005, MAP has received additional financial support from UNDP/PAPP which was still able to allocate funds to Palestinian beneficiaries without legal implications⁵⁷, unlike many other donor organizations.

Impact of managerial difficulties Once MAP was established, a secretariat was created in Jerusalem. Its responsibilities and tasks are: to support lobbying activities, to assist in the formulation and implementation of project proposals, to co-ordinate and foster mutual learning, and to mobilize resources. Political sensitivities, constant worries over funding and vulnerable personal relationships have hampered its work.⁵⁸ Both APLA and ULAI failed to assign staff members to deal with MAP affairs. After two years of operation, only a few of its objectives have been realized. Practical commitment is a problem for all the parties involved. The secretariat of the MAP chairman, based at VNG, tends to do most of the international communication because the secretariat in Jerusalem is fully occupied with fine-tuning local activities with APLA and ULAI. Reflecting on the situation, Wim Deetman notes that an effective local secretariat is of utmost importance, and Isam Akel states that the local secretariat deserves greater support from MAP's stakeholders and partners.

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With the conflict dynamics intensifying and constituencies splitting, relationships within MAP's International Board became fraught. Mutual tolerance between APLA and ULAI at the executive level deteriorated. Mr Jens Toyberg-Frandzen, Special Representative of UNDP/PAPP observed, 'There is room for improvement'. In a letter to the APLA presidency, the MAP chairman commented that 'the communication and co-operation between [APLA and ULAI] at the moment is not optimal, which harms the prospects of MAP as a whole'.⁵⁹ During meetings, difficulties can be discussed and resolved before they become a serious problem but the number of face-to-face meetings between officers and political leaders has been insufficient to resolve this issue.⁶⁰ Jens Toyberg-Frandzen considers the impact of managerial difficulties at the local level to be more severe than the impact of the conflict dynamics and emphasizes that ownership, commitment and the organizational setup are major factors in determining MAP's effectiveness and efficiency.

A declaration signed by APLA, ULAI and VNG in 2007 does indicate a willingness and desire to eliminate managerial difficulties – by further institutionalizing MAP and incorporating it

⁵⁶ Knip, P. (2005), p. 3.

Ms Benedetta Alfieri of the Glocal Forum notes that donors do not see local government peace-building initiatives as a top priority relative to humanitarian crises.

⁵⁷ International Crisis Group (2006), p. 27.

Mr Jens Toyberg-Frandzen does note, however, that long-term interventions through MAP are difficult due to the current lack of a clear vision for its financial sustainability.

⁵⁸ Interview Mr Ralph Pans

⁵⁹ VNG International (2007), p. 1

⁶⁰ Interview Mr Isam Akel

within a foundation, by installing an international team member in the Secretariat and by appointing a rapid intervention team of Israeli and Palestinian mayors to deal with urgent on-the-ground issues.⁶¹ Although the long-term significance of the various declarations is uncertain, as discussed in Section 3, schemes for the institutionalization of MAP have been developed and approved since July 2007. These should be implemented in 2008.

The managerial problems at MAP's core institutions illustrate how capacity and personality problems create micro-level issues, and how important it is to have local champions who stand up against the radicalization of constituencies.

The involvement of international partners 'Since peace-building efforts, in the Israeli-Palestinian context, do not take place spontaneously, outside stimulation is required'.⁶² This was as true during the establishment phase as in the preceding initial phase. Wim Deetman argues that grassroots support is essential, and MAP should not be a hobby for its international partners.

VNG continued the support it had given since 2002 during this phase, and the support of UNDP/PAPP became more prominent with the establishment of a secretariat in Jerusalem. The City Diplomacy label and the UCLG Commission on City Diplomacy provided a framework to get international organizations and local authorities on board.

There are many peace initiatives that try to stimulate dialogue between Israeli and Palestinian citizens or organizations including: COPPEM, the European Network of Local Authorities for Peace in the Middle East (ELPME), Friends of the Earth Middle East (FoEME), the Glocal Forum and the WHO EPIC network, to name but a few. Timothy Rothermel sees a positive aspect to this and argues that it increases the number of potentially effective dialogue tracks. According to Flavio Lotti, MAP could, as an overall network, in theory provide an alternative to the ad hoc actions of a large number of actors.

However, one should not overlook the fact that these initiatives have different mandates, and they need their own identity and individual successes to survive. Additionally, donors and international municipalities have criteria and preferences for co-operation with particular Israeli or Palestinian municipalities.⁶³ A disadvantage of this is that APLA and ULAI officials participate in a plethora of international meetings and conferences, distracting them from operations at home. Isam Akel argues that it would be good if all the various initiatives were streamlined within a single mechanism, to prevent the constant diluting of efforts.

Organizing MAP's 2005 founding conference was a true exercise in city diplomacy. All the identified agencies and organizations that might attend were visited by VNG, APLA and ULAI jointly in advance. A commitment to participation in the conference and beyond was discussed and made explicit in the conference background document.⁶⁴ Political and geographical spread, as well as the sizes of the attending municipalities, were finely tuned.⁶⁵ After the establishment of MAP, a broad awareness among international organizations and municipal associations emerged. This resulted in moral support, human resources and

61 See APLA/ULAI/VNG (2007)

62 Interview Mr Timothy Rothermel

63 Knip, P. (2007)

64 VNG International (2005d), Annex 1, p. 2

65 VNG International (2004b), p. 7

financial support.⁶⁶ The conflict dynamic and wider political developments, however, rendered international partners less effective than they might otherwise have been. As an example, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), one of MAP's International Board members, suffered from a lack of funding for MAP-related activities as a result of the Canadian response to Hamas' rise to power.⁶⁷

While some useful progress was made without the involvement of international MAP partners, such as an agreement to organize a joint visit to the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs to discuss the safety and mobility of Palestinian citizens and mayors,⁶⁸ the involvement of international partners remained crucial if MAP was to move forward.

The need for mediation, their financial constraints and the lack of capacity in APLA and ULAI have made support by international partners a crucial macro-level factor in MAP's establishment and successful continuation. Paradoxically, because it creates competition for funds and results, the proliferation of international peace initiatives has had a disturbing impact overall. The disarray at the macro-level is also unhelpful to APLA and ULAI.

Impact of involvement by local associations of municipalities and their political leaders As in the preceding phase, APLA and ULAI have been highly relevant through their mobilization of support among local political leaders, citizens and national political parties, and in convincing international partners that MAP is a local rather than a foreign initiative. As a demonstration of the importance of their support, a meeting of 'Mayors for Peace' in the Middle East in 2004 never raised much interest from Israeli mayors because it lacked a full ULAI endorsement.⁷⁰ Benedetta Alfieri of the Glocal Forum recognizes the need for local commitment for the success of their activities: 'It is the personal commitment of individuals to counteract the cycle of violence and conflict [that] is most often the strongest stimulating factor for peace-building initiatives'.

The commitment to realizing MAP's objectives faltered in this phase. Several reasons can be identified: change within the APLA membership following local elections, the practical obstacles resulting from intra-Palestinian unrest and travel restrictions, and severe tension over an ULAI Congress in Jerusalem.⁷¹

APLA has had four different presidents during the period covering MAP's establishment and development, and two executive directors. This has harmed the continuity of the process, although changes in leadership can also have positive effects. The limited opportunities to meet with the APLA presidency have hindered political decision-making.⁷² Since the elections of January 2006, the APLA General Assembly has not convened nor has a new Board been elected. Renewed institutions would probably have a larger number of Hamas members, which would increase the level of democratic representation, but might also

⁶⁶ Interview Mr Avi Rabinovitch

⁶⁷ Interview Mr Wim Deetman

⁶⁸ Pans, R. (2005a), p. 3

⁶⁹ Pans, R. (2005b), p. 4 and VNG International (2005c), p. 4

⁷⁰ VNG International (2004a), p. 11

⁷¹ From 9-12 March 2008, ULAI organized a congress in Jerusalem celebrating the 70-year anniversary of ULAI and the 60-year anniversary of the State of Israel. This congress sparked off strong protests among Palestinian local and national government actors.

⁷² Interview Mr Wim Deetman

negatively affect the willingness of the international community to invest,⁷³ which is already a critical obstacle to MAP's development.⁷⁴

In conclusion, both APLA and ULAI carry the process forward at times, but equally they can become micro-level liabilities whenever they fail to explicitly commit and take action.

Willingness to engage in dialogue Initially, the willingness to engage in real dialogue seen in the preceding phase continued into this one. The extensive list of 33 Palestinian and Israeli municipalities participating in the founding conference bears witness to this.⁷⁵ While APLA, ULAI and VNG reconfirmed their commitment 'at the political, executive and administrative level', to the objectives of MAP in Jerusalem in July 2007, this declaration was signed by the associations, not by individual municipalities.

At the micro-level, sustained local willingness remained an important favourable factor in MAP's development. The fact that local willingness to talk was reconfirmed by APLA and ULAI in 2007, and that Israeli and Palestinian municipalities continued to discuss project opportunities with international partners should be seen as a positive omen. Nevertheless, it is impossible to claim with any confidence that local support increased in this period, and it probably did not. According to Benedetta Alfieri, the culture of fear 'that is perpetuated by media, politicians and religious leaders' heavily affects both the Israeli and the Palestinian sides, and the willingness of citizens to work together.⁷⁶

Intermediate conclusion Both during and after MAP's establishment, progress was made on the macro- and the micro- levels in equal measures. Micro-level support was most apparent immediately following the founding conference. Negative and positive factors were more or less in balance. Financial constraints and the reaction of the international community to the rise of Hamas slowed the process, but this was at least partially offset by the continuing willingness to engage in dialogue and the willingness of international partners to invest in MAP.

Managerial difficulties and wavering commitment at the micro-level have severely impeded MAP's recent development. Although the obstacles present themselves as micro-level practical problems, such as travel restrictions, one should note that political tensions determine the vigour with which they are addressed.

Towards trilateral municipal projects

MAP's hallmarks are the trilateral municipal co-operation projects: city diplomacy in the form of concrete actions. Whereas the associations of municipalities and the international organizations were the drivers of the process in the earlier two phases, individual municipalities are now more central. The year 2007 saw projects starting to be implemented. Two projects started in the environment field, involving 11 municipalities (four Palestinian, four Israeli, three Dutch). Politicians, municipal staff and citizens are in regular contact to implement project activities. The formulation of three other projects, on

⁷³ Interview Mr Joop van den Berg

⁷⁴ Interview Mr Timothy Rothermel

⁷⁵ See Annex 6 in VNG International (2005d)

⁷⁶ Interview Ms Benedetta Alfieri

water management, sewage and park development, started in late 2007 and early 2008. It is too early to make definitive claims on MAP's successes. Instead, this section will analyze the conception and initiation of the projects. The activities analyzed took place in a period that started with the establishment of MAP in June 2005 and ran through to the end of 2007. Chronologically this section partly overlaps the previous section and, therefore, not all contextual aspects need to be reiterated.

Impact of the conflict dynamic The impact of the conflict dynamic on the projects is much the same as reported in the preceding section. On the micro- and the macro- levels, participation in MAP projects is constantly reassessed by the various parties. The attraction of the resulting concrete outcomes for citizens has protected the concept of instigating projects, as has also been the case in projects linked to other initiatives.⁷⁷ However, raids and incursions have forced the participating municipalities to concentrate on the security and needs of their citizens.⁷⁸ The MAP Secretariat concluded in 2006 that 'The humanitarian crisis that followed the elections reached an unprecedented level in the Palestinian territories and in some deeply affected areas peace became secondary to survival'.⁷⁹ In 2007, the potential benefits of concrete projects encouraged municipalities to maintain a dialogue and continue to prepare and implement project activities.

The interest of foreign municipalities has also been affected. In 2006, the Dutch municipality of Groningen, which has ties with the Palestinian municipality of Jabalya, decided not to start a project but to mark time until the Dutch government had officially stated its position on the new balance of power in Palestine.⁸⁰ Municipalities in other countries experienced similar obstacles and uncertainties stemming from the positions of their national governments. Similarly, activities on water projects, under the umbrella of Friends of the Earth Middle East, temporarily came to a halt when the conflict intensified, while trilateral project developments by the Glocal Forum had to be modified and sometimes even terminated.⁸¹

As in the other two phases, micro-level practicalities influenced MAP's development. Practical hindrances seem to have larger effects than national, ideological differences. As Isam Akel notes: 'Even the most extreme radicals ultimately want peace. Disagreement over what is the right moment and practical obstacles such as travel restrictions are the main problems.'

Impact of financial constraints The problems after January 2006 in funding Palestinian project beneficiaries poses a serious threat to trilateral municipal co-operation and will probably continue to do so into the future.⁸² Lack of any clear commitment that funds will be available once a project is implemented reinforces local hesitation. The few available sources of funding are often earmarked for specific goals, thus limiting possibilities.

⁷⁷ EcoPeace/Friends of the Earth Middle East (2005), p. 12

⁷⁸ MAP Secretariat (2006), p. 3

⁷⁹ MAP Secretariat (2006), p. 3

⁸⁰ VNG International (2006), p. 1

⁸¹ Tagar, Z. (2007), p. 13 and Interview Ms Benedetta Alfieri

⁸² Interview Mr Jens Toyberg-Frandzen

The decision by the Netherlands' Ministry of Foreign Affairs to allow MAP projects to be implemented under the VNG LOGO South programme has been vital to progress. The only other concrete commitment came from Fons Català in 2006. In 2007, project identification with a number of other donors started and was continued into 2008. From this, the formulation of three new projects started towards the end of 2007 or in early 2008. Other initiatives, such as those by Friends of the Earth Middle East and the Glocal Forum, show a similar dependence on external funding for project implementation.⁸³

Lack of funding sources at the macro-level has caused municipalities to be hesitant about participating. The few available funding sources are often only open to countries on the OECD/DAC⁸⁴ list of developing countries, thus denying funding to Israeli municipalities. Through their direct impact on project implementation, macro-level financial constraints became a micro-level factor. 'The national and international umbrella has affected day-to-day issues at the local level as the capacity of projects in the Middle East cannot avoid the needs of funds and of security, which could not in the past years be granted by most partners involved in the programmes'.⁸⁵

Impact of managerial difficulties The general management difficulties that MAP has encountered in its core institutions have also manifested themselves at the project level.

The secretariat in Jerusalem monitors the project formulation process, keeping a keen eye on the potential emergence of conflict between involved municipalities. Friction has occurred. For instance, there was a clash between an Israeli and a Palestinian municipality over a project proposal in 2007. Lack of coordination between the MAP Secretariat and ULAI led to a rough draft of the proposal, drawn up by the Palestinian municipality, being presented to the Israeli municipality, which then felt offended by certain phrases in the proposal that it deemed to be politically biased. Despite mediation efforts by their Dutch partner, they cancelled their foreseen presence at a joint meeting.

Apart from managing the politics, the technicalities also need managing. Cobbling together limited and conditional sources of funding results in an abundance of guidelines and criteria. This situation has led to much criticism: municipalities feel that procedures are too stringent, draw too heavily on their internal organizations and do not reflect the needs on the ground.

Overall, it is fair to say that the micro-level has seen its share of conflicts in the project formulation process between Israeli and Palestinian municipalities. At the macro-level, donor-imposed conditions and procedures appear as obstacles to project formulation and implementation.

Willingness to engage in dialogue It is remarkable that municipalities have remained willing to formulate projects, even in these very difficult times. In this respect, MAP's experiences are similar to projects fostered by other initiatives such as Friends of the Earth Middle East, where local leadership, mediation by third parties, and mutual interest in peace

⁸³ Tagar, Z. (2007), pp. 13-14 and Interview Ms Benedetta Alfieri

⁸⁴ OECD/DAC: Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)

⁸⁵ Ms Benedetta Alfieri

and finding solutions to shared problems proved essential catalysts for co-operation.⁸⁶ Nevertheless, overall, support from Palestinian and Israeli municipalities does seem to have decreased, and it is not difficult to see why. Opportunities to deliver material results have always been important motivators for Palestinian municipalities, but they see how long it takes to even start to realize them.

Some of the initial ideas of the founding conference,⁸⁷ such as youth parliaments, joint radio programmes and joint local markets were never implemented. There are two aspects to this:

- The different project preferences of APLA and ULAI, which were never explicitly discussed by the international partners.⁸⁸
- The lack of funds and the slow engagement of the VNG LOGO South programme, making it clear that even international partners had difficulties in getting from the dialogue stage to the project stage.

These aspects reflect an interesting problem with the adopted model of trilateral co-operation: 'The two main stakeholders can be tempted to sit back and expect the foreign municipality to solve any problems'.⁸⁹ Overall, however, a modest interest in participating in MAP projects has endured over the years – an important micro-level factor. Nevertheless, the lack of concrete results remains a threat.

Limits to municipal capacity for projects One special factor in this phase is that city diplomacy in the form of concrete projects draws heavily on the internal organizations and on the competencies of the involved municipalities. In the MAP environment, the diplomatic qualities and technical competencies of local civil servants and local politicians in the projects need to be high. Other organizations can assist but, in the projects, they cannot substitute for municipalities.

It has been stated a couple of times that mayors in Israel and Palestine have to deal with issues of legitimacy and popular support. This is equally true of the foreign municipalities in a trilateral co-operation. Legitimacy and popular support need to be carefully maintained both in the field and at home. Friends of the Earth Middle East seeks to overcome this challenge through a strong focus on community participation and development,⁹⁰ while the Glocal Forum has so far mainly focused on working with youth. Despite this approach, they do believe that mayors are 'poised to be the new diplomats of our world' and that, ultimately, local governments are responsible for city diplomacy activities. Therefore, expectations and project objectives should not be too ambitious, and mayors should be duly credited for successes.⁹¹

MAP has yet to provide an example of 'city diplomacy going wrong' due to insufficient municipal capacity, but the wrangle over a project proposal described in the assessment of managerial difficulties demonstrates that projects do not take the need for diplomacy out of City Diplomacy.

Although not a bottleneck per se, limited municipal capacity can be a risk factor.

⁸⁶ Tagar, Z. (2007), p. 14

⁸⁷ See annex 5 in VNG International (2005d)

⁸⁸ Interview Mr Ralph Pans

⁸⁹ Interview Mr Ralph Pans

⁹⁰ EcoPeace/Friends of the Earth Middle East (2005), pp. 36-38

⁹¹ Interview Ms Benedetta Alfieri

Intermediate conclusion Micro-level factors especially prove to be very important in the project phase of MAP's development. The other identified issue was the lack of funding from macro-level actors who choose not to provide funds in case these should reach Hamas.

There appears to be more hurdles to overcome than favourable factors at both levels, and it takes much longer than it should for projects to start and then deliver concrete results. Managerial difficulties have increased, and there remains the ever-present constraints such as travel restrictions. A willingness to support the trilateral co-operation model among local stakeholders, however, remains.

Despite all the problems, a positive development in the project phase is the shift of responsibilities towards the municipalities. While the legitimacy of MAP at the local level as a whole has probably decreased, the municipalities involved in the two existing projects did take the lead in formulating and starting them, with the help of the MAP Secretariat in Jerusalem. This reflects a situation in which there are still local city diplomacy actors willing to bridge the divides.

Conclusions

This chapter investigated both hurdles to be overcome and favourable factors in three phases of MAP's development: the start of the dialogue between APLA and ULAI, MAP's establishment and institutional development, and the identification and start of the first municipal projects. Four research questions were posed, and these questions structure the conclusions to this chapter.

What have been the dominant factors in the MAP process? The MAP process has been influenced by several factors, some of which were initially favourable but turned into potential liabilities. Especially during the current project phase, the obstacles have outnumbered the favourable factors.

The decisive favourable factors in the MAP process are seen as the MAP format itself, the continued support of MAP's international partners, the sustained willingness on the local level – even during difficult times (such as the second intifada) – and the involvement of APLA and ULAI. Within APLA and ULAI, the roles played by their political leaders have been crucial in getting national level backing. The will to co-operate by APLA and ULAI would probably not have been sufficient on its own, in practice one requires at least tacit acceptance from national governments for initiatives such as MAP to develop and succeed.

On the negative side, the MAP process has been hindered by a lack of financing, the local impact of the conflict dynamics, the failure to achieve quick concrete results and managerial difficulties. If Hamas had not become so prominent, more funding would probably have been made available, which would have likely eased project development. The lack of capacity in both APLA and ULAI, and the tensions between them, also hindered progress.

The combination of many actors, many peace initiatives and political tensions has resulted in vague goals, little incorporation of each other's activities and few co-ordinated procedures. However, ideology has not, so far, made communication impossible. The conflict has mainly been a problem for MAP when it has had practical consequences.

Were these factors mainly on the micro- or the macro- level? The ratio of macro- to micro- level impacts has shifted over time. The start of the dialogue between APLA and ULAI (Section 3) was mainly a macro-level process, MAP's establishment and institutional development (Section 4) saw a fairly even balance between micro- and macro- factors. The nascent project phase (Section 5) was dominated more by micro-level factors.

Macro-level actors create micro-level consequences when they make their actions or local-level funding conditional on what is happening in the wider Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The war between Israel and Hezbollah and the rise to prominence of Hamas are cases in point that hugely influenced international organizations, foreign municipalities and national governments. Stemming from this situation, financial constraints, travel restrictions and tensions between APLA and ULAI became micro-level factors in their own right. Flavio Lotti notes that 'in the Middle East there is not really a distinction between the local and the national levels, because the conflict is so intricate. [Mayors] are under great political pressure, from their local electorate, but also from the national level'.

In the case of MAP, the impetus for city diplomacy has come mainly from the international macro-level, whereas most of the obstacles have followed developments at the micro-level. The conflict dynamic and the local factors have become increasingly difficult to deal with. This raises an awkward question for city diplomacy: at what point does the reliance on international partners become too great, and the prospects of results too remote?

Should the MAP process be regarded as a success? It is too early to determine whether the MAP process is a success in terms of its stated aims. The first municipal projects have only recently started, and MAP is still in the process of further institutionalization. MAP's mission to be a broad-based, action-oriented movement working towards peace⁹² has not yet been achieved. The practice witnessed in the ongoing projects and the realization of their objectives, not their inception, will be the acid test.

In terms of overcoming difficulties, some indicators are encouraging. Project development as a practical topic for dialogue has provided a vehicle to circumvent political debate, both on the association and the municipal levels. The repeated and mutual acknowledgement by APLA and ULAI of the need for dialogue, the development of the MAP models and programme, and the first municipal projects bringing people with goodwill together are measures of success. Given the difficult circumstances, these achievements should not be lightly dismissed.

One problem is that local tensions are currently very high, at a time when the local, micro-level has become more important for MAP. Isam Akel has remarked that in the current circumstances, 'those who talk about peace, are sometimes still drawn into war'. This emphasizes the importance of persistence in supporting dialogue. Within the next year, MAP will have to decide whether city diplomacy, in the form of trilateral municipal concrete action, stands a realistic chance of success in the Israeli-Palestinian context, or whether dialogue through conferences is all that can be hoped for in the current political climate.

Can one learn lessons from these factors, deduce conditions for success, or offer suggestions for city diplomacy in the Middle East? The analysis of the MAP process presented in the chapter leads to the following observations, which may be seen as lessons learned, conditions for success or suggestions for other local government actors active in city diplomacy, especially in the Middle East:

- A process such as MAP needs extreme patience, constant nurturing (politically and often financially) and regular face-to-face contacts, which initially are more effective if they take place outside the conflict region.
- This type of process is very dependent on donor funding. Cumbersome bureaucratic procedures, donor preconditions and political preferences have resulted in missed opportunities and slowed the dialogue process.
- Sufficient capacity of the main local stakeholders is important and the qualities of individual local politicians and local civil servants matter. Furthermore, there is no reason to assume that foreign municipalities automatically have sufficient capacity and quality.
- The MAP case presents a dilemma of legitimacy versus efficiency and effectiveness in city diplomacy. While having many international actors and peace initiatives under one umbrella creates legitimacy, the streamlining of efforts, or at least coordination between different initiatives, which is necessary to retain efficiency and prevent the available capacity of local stakeholders becoming exhausted is often difficult.
- Trilateral technical co-operation can be a very useful basis for dialogue. Third parties can provide technical and financial assistance, a neutral zone for meetings, and access to their network. On the downside, trilateral co-operation may make project development more complex than in a bilateral situation. It is also more difficult to organize than dialogue.
- True commitment and ownership by local stakeholders – municipalities and their associations – requires the support of mayors, councils, citizens and civil society, but also concrete results. Tangible outputs can be the cement in co-operation exercises.
- City diplomacy is typically attempted in situations marked by dynamic, difficult environments. These require realism, pragmatism and proper on-the-ground assistance in setting project goals. Donors need to understand this and respond appropriately.
- The influence of a single municipality is limited, especially in complex regions such as the Middle East. City diplomacy can work when parties at the national level are stalemated, but only if national governments leave room for it: politically, practically and legally. Ideally, there should already be rapprochement.⁹³
- Conflict resolution, development aid and community development are not mutually exclusive; they can go hand-in-hand and reinforce each other.
- National, international and supranational governments should acknowledge that local governments can play an important role in peace-building and conflict resolution; and should operate accordingly.

Final Reflections Finally, a reflection on city diplomacy, based on the conclusions of this chapter. There are those who argue that city diplomacy, as a concept, can never have negative effects: failures are the result of insufficiently qualified actors, poor programme designs, bad timing or the simple refusal of partners to agree, and that this does not detract

⁹³ Isam Akel emphasises that the mandate of municipalities is to serve citizens. 'If the best interest of the citizens is to live in peace, then the municipal mandate is to work towards that goal. Local leaders are closer to citizens than national governments and thus they can lobby national governments bottom-up to invest in grassroots dialogue. No municipality should be prevented from improving the lives of citizens. However, national policy should be left to national governments.'

from the inherent value of city diplomacy. Others feel that there will only be negative consequences if the activities become too detached from national or international objectives (implying that one should stay within the boundaries of these objectives).

No-one, however, claims that city diplomacy is a bad idea in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The deadlock at the national/international level results in local-level dialogue and municipal projects being seen as attractive alternatives. Especially in situations where the main objective is to change mentalities, such as in MAP, municipalities are good motors for change.⁹⁴ After all, as Avi Rabinovitch put it, 'local leaders are the future national leaders; they should be prepared to lead the way in the peace process'. Isam Akel admits that 'it may take time, but in the end there is no choice but negotiated peace. The sooner we realize it, the better for the people and the more lives we save'.

To conclude, using the words of Wim Deetman on the role of municipalities in peace-building: 'Today's world has become a global village, with ever closer connections between the different layers of government. This comes with responsibilities'.