

4 A roller coaster of policy shifts

Ghanaian diaspora organizations navigating Dutch migration and development policies

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Diasporas and their organizations throughout the world are involved in political, social, and economic activities in their countries of origin and beyond. These transnational activities often support social and economic development in regions of origin. The potential contribution of diaspora organizations (DOs) to development in countries of origin has been widely recognized since the late 1990s. After decades of distrust, during which the involvement of DOs in their countries of origin (“there”) was regarded with suspicion because of the supposed negative link with integration in countries of residence (“here”), several immigration countries in Europe have increasingly acknowledged the individual and collective efforts of immigrants to support development processes in their countries of origin. Diasporas are seen as possessing specific expertise regarding cultural context and language, and as being capable of bridging differences between “here” and “there”, acting as brokers and connecting worlds.¹ The growing awareness of the potential of migrants and their organizations created a space for DOs in formal development cooperation policies in several immigration countries, such as Spain, France, the United Kingdom, and the Netherlands.² These countries elaborated specific policies to stimulate and integrate the contribution of DOs to development processes in their countries of origin. Discussions at a global level, and within the EU, on remittances and migration management motivated the introduction of these co-development policies, as they are commonly referred to. In some literature, these policies are also referred to as migration and development (M&D) policies, indicating the main issue areas that are involved.

In short, co-development policies entail financial instruments to upgrade the activities of DOs, capacity development programs to strengthen and professionalize DOs, and matching funds for development interventions in countries of origin.³ Co-development is mainly a European phenomenon: The financing of the transnational activities of DOs with public funds in other settings – for example, the United States – is non-existent.⁴

From an international relations (IR) perspective, co-development policies provide an interesting topic of study. By targeting individual migrants, DOs, and diaspora enterprises, state governments interfere in the domain of other state governments, in economic, social, and political terms. By funding development interventions in countries of origin, European donors affect development processes in countries of origin both directly, in terms of types of projects implemented, and indirectly, by influencing social structures at the community level. Moreover, co-development funding may empower a diaspora in its relationship with the state in the country of origin, as is also widely discussed in the literature on political transnationalism of DOs. These studies analyze the claim-making activities of DOs, and the mechanisms DOs employ in their advocacy and lobby, targeting both the country of origin as well as the country of residence, in this way exerting influence.⁵ A much less common perspective is that of the countries of residence influencing DOs, by using DOs to further their own agenda.⁶ In this chapter, I will take that last perspective, by analyzing the meaning of co-development policies for DOs and their responses to these policies.

This chapter examines co-development policies in the Netherlands and the way Ghanaian DOs navigate these policies. The Netherlands first implemented such policies in 2004. Over the years, the objectives and approaches of these policies have changed considerably, and DOs have a relatively large role in these policies, though in different forms. Ghanaian DOs are a relevant case, since they represent a relatively large group in the Netherlands that is eligible for co-development policies. Using a political opportunity structure frame, this chapter analyzes how DOs *ignore, blend, or adapt to* – in short, navigate – these policies at multiple spatial levels, local as well as national. It does so against the background of the recent securitization of migration, and the shifting expectations and policies of the Dutch government in particular regarding the role of DOs.

In this chapter, I first give a short overview of the main debates in the literature on DOs and development. This is followed by a description of the methodology used for data collection and analysis. In the third part, I introduce and provide a typology of Ghanaian DOs. I then describe and analyze the changing Dutch policy context in which these organizations operate. I end the chapter with some conclusions.

Diaspora organizations in development: a review of the literature

There is a growing body of literature on the role of DOs in development processes in countries of origin. Although some of these studies focus on the development impact of this involvement, the large majority focus on the

relationship of the DOs with the country of origin and the characteristics of this involvement.⁷ Studies within the European context point particularly to the transformative role of DOs.⁸ Fewer studies are focused on co-development.⁹ I define co-development as the involvement of immigrants and immigrant organizations in development cooperation programs that are linked to the M&D policies of European donor countries.¹⁰ Co-development policies are assumed to foster development in poor regions in the countries of origin of migrants living in Europe in five ways. First, migrants speak the same languages and have the same cultures as their countries of origin; in other words, they possess specific human and cultural capital that are useful for both development cooperation and capacity-building activities. They are considered local insiders in cases where they are deployed as experts in their regions of origin. Second, the transnational networks of immigrants and their organizations provide European donors with a direct link to local communities. Thus, immigrants also have valuable social capital. Third, immigrant organizations work more efficiently, since they are better informed and can therefore assess the local needs relatively quickly. This bottom-up approach is thought to have wide local support, which is beneficial to the sustainability and embedment of projects. Fourth, the commitment of immigrants to local development is evidenced by their remittances, and these extra financial means generate productive activities and income-generating jobs and improve infrastructure. Finally, the strengthening of transnational social networks between Northern and Southern development partners generates sustainable linkages for future funding, cooperation, and private initiatives.¹¹

Although policy makers value the role of migrants and their organizations in development cooperation, most authors advocate a critical reflection on their formalized position. These authors refer to the rather marginal role assigned to DOs as development agents,¹² the conceptualization of development as a sedentary phenomenon,¹³ the incoherence of M&D policies, and the difficulties that DOs encounter in this combined field, particularly regarding issues of legitimacy.¹⁴ Oliver Bakewell classifies the two policy fields (migration and development) as an “unhappy marriage,”¹⁵ because of the highly divergent interests and agendas in both issue areas. Other authors observe that the role of diasporas and their organizations as development actors matches current neoliberal policies, in which the individualization and depoliticization of development is taking place.¹⁶

DOs are influenced by these co-development policies in terms of funding, as well as by the agendas of the country of origin, the country of residence, and supranational institutions, such as the European Union. Most studies that focus on the relationship between DOs and states do so by assigning to the former a rather independent, autonomous role: they portray DOs as

organizations that lobby for change, exert political influence, and claim space in the country of origin and residence, suggesting that the relationship between DOs and states is unidirectional. However, both the country of origin and that of residence can – and do – affect the activities and agendas of DOs; for example, to realize their own foreign policy agenda.¹⁷

This will lead to different types of relationships. In some cases, a reciprocal relationship between DOs and the state can be observed, especially when the interests of DOs and states overlap. Both can then cooperate to achieve common goals, and both can try to influence each other to further their own interests. Next to such reciprocal relationships, also more conflictuous situations can exist. Development activities of DOs can conflict with those of the government of the country of origin, which is – from a donor perspective – the partner in development. Second, some authors note that the very fact that DOs were often operating low profile, almost invisible to the outside world, explained partly the success of their development activities. By becoming part of the development industry, they will also become more prone to co-optation mechanisms. A third observation is that not only countries of origin may claim “their” citizens to further their own agenda: but countries of residence also make claims to these immigrants and the DOs that connect them.¹⁸

Obviously, the tensions previously mentioned affect DOs and will result in different responses of DOs. These responses will depend on the adaptive capacity of organizations; that is, the conditions that enable them to anticipate and respond to change, and to recover from and minimize the negative consequences of change.¹⁹ Roughly, three types of responses can be identified, namely ignorance, blending, and adaptation. *Ignorance* is understood here as the decision – often purposefully made – not to change the current practice, to maintain the status quo. By *blending* I understand the incorporation into current practice of new experiences and knowledge derived from events in the policy environment; for example, a new topic, a new target group, without changing the status quo. Finally, *adaptation* refers to new actions and behaviors, resulting from new knowledge and conditions and leading to structural changes in the approach of the organization. The type of response will depend on several factors, such as leadership, resources, and skills.²⁰

This quick scan of the literature leads to a few observations. First, the focus of most studies is on the relationship between DOs and their respective countries of origin. The relationship between diaspora and immigration host state remains underexplored. Second, many studies are rather critical about co-development policies in relation to diasporas. Third, we do not know anything about the way diasporas respond to these policies. This chapter addresses these knowledge gaps.

Methodology

This contribution is based on key-informant interviews with representatives of 20 Ghanaian DOs in the Netherlands and their professional networks in Ghana, and with representatives of government ministries and development NGOs in the Netherlands and Ghana.²¹ First, we made an inventory of Ghanaian DOs in the Netherlands since the 1980s by consulting several databases and inventories.²² A total of 261 DOs were found. Of the organizations that were still operational, we selected only those maintaining transnational relations (i.e., organizations that focus only on the Netherlands and do not develop activities in Ghana were disregarded). We considered only DOs that were registered as foundations or associations at the Chamber of Commerce in the Netherlands.

Of these organizations, we selected the top 20 in terms of size and their importance in the field as indicated by third parties, using a multiple entry points approach, through existing inventories, interviews with experts and leaders of DOs (individual or umbrella organizations), and the Ghanaian embassy in The Hague. Two additional criteria guided this selection: An organization must have been founded by migrants, and it must have existed for at least three years. We interviewed the representatives of these organizations – generally the chair or, in three cases, one of the other board members – in order to gain a better understanding of the origin of the organizations, their activities in the Netherlands and in Ghana, their institutional context, and their views on development. In addition, desk research was carried out that used secondary data (such as policy documents) and evaluated several initiatives in the field of co-development.

Analysis of the data took into account the characteristics of the organizations, resulting in a typology of organizations based on geographical orientation, activities, professionalization, and budget. Adaptive capacity was also considered, based on human and financial resources (skills, money, and time) and leadership (ambitions of chair, vision).

Ghanaians in the Netherlands

About 23,000 Ghanaians live in the Netherlands. The majority of Ghanaian migrants entered the Netherlands in the 1980s and 1990s, seeking economic opportunities. A large proportion of this group settled in Amsterdam's Southeast district and, to a lesser extent, in Rotterdam and The Hague. Although part of the Ghanaian community is medium or high skilled, the majority are employed in the lower segments of the economy, such as cleaning. This can be traced to their relatively low proficiency in Dutch, the non-recognition of educational qualifications and discriminatory practices.

A minority are found in the entrepreneurial sector. Overall, the Ghanaian community is considered relatively close and well-organized, with a strong presence in the form of Ghanaian churches, food, video and clothing shops, radio broadcasts, and magazines.

Many Ghanaians maintain close links with Ghana and their relatives and friends through WhatsApp, Skype, and travel, and they often send remittances at both the individual and the collective levels.²³ Despite these forms of transnational engagement, the Ghanaian government has not made any formal efforts to link up with the Ghanaian diaspora in the Netherlands. Ghana has implemented hardly any diaspora engagement policies,²⁴ although several authors observe an increasing interest on the part of the Ghanaian government in its diaspora.²⁵ Since 2006, for instance, Ghanaian citizens have been entitled to vote from abroad. Moreover, in 2001 and in 2017, the Ghanaian government organized a Homecoming Summit.²⁶ During the 2017 Summit, a website was launched to inform Ghanaian migrants abroad about investment opportunities. Despite these signs of increased interest, the presentation of the National Migration Policy in April 2016 shows that interest in the diaspora is still limited. The policy aims to guide the management of Ghana's internal, intra-regional, and international migration flows, and to promote the benefits and minimize the costs of migration. The IOM, the EU, and other donors supported the elaboration of the policy, both financially and during the drafting process. The diaspora, however, was not involved in the debate on this policy.²⁷

Introducing the Ghanaian diaspora organizations

Ghanaian DOs are relatively young organizations. They are mainly based in the Randstad (the Netherlands' main urban agglomeration), which includes in Amsterdam Southeast district, Rotterdam, and The Hague. Thirteen of the 20 organizations interviewed have been established since 2000, six were set up in the period 1990–2000, and only one was established before 1990. The majority of the organizations were created to support the integration of the migrant group in the Netherlands. The organizations can be divided into four categories based on their motives to become engaged in Ghana, their main focus, their activities, and their budget.²⁸

A first group (three organizations) consists of *charities* that are predominantly focused on Ghana, where they implement projects. “Doing something good” was often mentioned as the main motive, and the majority of the activities are focused on fundraising. A particular characteristic is that these organizations were founded in the 1990s and often have a mixed (Ghanaian–Dutch) board. Funds are obtained in various ways. Giving lectures to the public, in the process explaining the need for more funds and

convincing the audience to make a financial contribution, is one of the most popular instruments, as is organizing cultural and charity events, such as food markets. Most of their budgets, which range from 15,000 to 80,000 euros, is derived from donations.

A second group (six organizations) consists of *civic organizations*. Their aim is to represent the interest of Ghanaians in the Netherlands, but they are also involved in activities in Ghana. Recogin – a network organization whose activities aim to support Ghanaian self-organizations in the Netherlands – belongs to this category. These organizations carry out fundraising and other activities, most of which are focused on social services (e.g., homework supervision, running food banks, lobbying and advocacy, language courses, environmental education, and advisory activities). The average annual budget of these organizations is considerable, namely 20,000–60,000 euros, which is derived from a large variety of sources: donations, local governments, co-financing agencies, Dutch ministries (Social Affairs, Justice), and private foundations.

Hometown associations (HTAs) constitute the third category (seven organizations). These organizations represent households that originate from one specific village, region, or province in Ghana, and their main aim is to support the integration of their members into Dutch society. Not surprisingly, their transnational activities are directed toward one specific geographical location. Examples of such organizations are the Okyeman Foundation, the Okuapeman Association, the Kwahuman Association, the Kwahu Youngsters, and the Stichting Ghana–Haarlem.²⁹ Their main aim is to support the respective communities in adjusting to Dutch society by informing members about such matters as the Dutch secondary school system, the introduction of the chip card for public transport, and national and local elections. These are membership organizations, each representing 20–70 households. They meet regularly, often every other weekend, and many hold a special end-of-year event. The meetings are generally guided by an agenda and are concluded with drinks. Members pay a fee, ranging from 5 to 10 euros a month. These fees are used to rent the venue, pay for the catering, and feed a credit fund for all kinds of specific – and urgent – events; for example, illnesses, funerals, and weddings. Members who do not pay the monthly fee are still welcome at the meetings, but access to financial support via the credit fund is denied. At the end of each year, some funds are raised for a relatively small project in Ghana, for example, shipping second-hand computers to a school in Ghana. Compared to the other organizational types, HTAs have relatively small budgets (up to 5,000 euros per year), which are mainly derived from membership fees and other donations.

The last category is composed of *development organizations* (four organizations), most of which evolved from civic organizations. Examples of

these organizations are Sankofa, AfroEuro, and Asda. They obtain considerable funds, ranging from 100,000 to 250,000 euros annually, that are derived from a wide range of sources: government ministries and co-financing agencies, as well as the EU, foundations, and private donations. They implement development projects on a relatively large scale, often have various projects at different locations, and sometimes also extend their work to other countries. These organizations have a certain degree of professionalization, which is also expressed in the number of paid employees (1–3) and is facilitated by their larger budgets. They maintain up-to-date websites that provide project summaries and annual reports.

Thus, the 20 organizations are extremely diverse in terms of transnational activities, budgets, professionalization, and orientation toward Ghana. The next section describes how they reacted to Dutch government M&D policies over time.

The rise and fall of DO-state cooperation

Except for the four development organizations, the Ghanaian organizations interviewed were primarily established to support the integration of their communities in the Netherlands. This applies to, for example, the HTAs in the Amsterdam Southeast district and also to civic organizations, such as Recogin, the umbrella organization in the same district. Development activities in Ghana are not the core business of these organizations, but are considered a “byproduct.” Until 2006, most contact with the Dutch state (if any) took place at the local level, namely with the municipality in which the DOs reside. There was hardly any contact with the national government. Contact with the local government consisted mainly of a funding relationship, and some HTAs could, for example, use the town hall or a community center for their meetings. Ghanaian DOs could apply for matching funds from local International Cooperation Centers,³⁰ for awareness-raising in the Netherlands or for project implementation in the region of origin. Almost all organizations interviewed had received funds from the local government, some only once, although a considerable number did so on a more frequent basis. These funds constituted a minor part of the overall budgets of organizations, and there were hardly any strings attached to these subsidies:

Every year, we applied to the municipality for funds, often to cover the costs of an event, for the drinks, to pay a speaker, the venue . . . or for a project, when we hadn’t raised sufficient funds to cover the expenses. This was always approved, almost automatically, without any critical comments regarding the character of the activity.³¹

Next to these subsidies, some Ghanaian organizations in Amsterdam were contracted by the local government for service provision; for example, to offer computer training to Ghanaian newcomers in order to facilitate their access to the labor market.

Phase 1: rise of DO-state cooperation

In 2004, the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs introduced the first policy memorandum on M&D, an integrated approach that attempted to align M&D policies. The memorandum referred to the collective engagement of the knowledge and experience of DOs in relation to their region of origin, whose development potential was also mentioned, linked to DOs. According to the memorandum: “It is rather obvious that we explore how migrant organizations can become more involved in shaping Dutch development policies and how they can be more effectively supported in their activities oriented toward development.”³²

One of the aims of the 2004 policy was the establishment of an institution – an *umbrella organization* – as a partner for the Dutch government. This is a quite common approach by the Dutch government, as it prefers to talk to one representative of all DOs.³³ Ghanaian DOs reacted a bit suspiciously to the government’s request: “For us, such an umbrella did not work, there are so many different migrant organizations, each with its own background, problems and agenda. How would they expect us to organize this?”³⁴ Others were more positive and were lured by the prospect that organizing into a network would also offer opportunities for funding. As a result, and with the financial support of Oxfam–Novib, 2007 saw the establishment of the Diaspora Forum for Development (DFD) – a network of 40 DOs for various migrant groups, such as Ghanaians, Bolivians, Filipinos, and Sudanese.

In 2008, the government introduced the second policy memorandum on M&D, which covered six policy priorities.³⁵ Although the emphasis was on migration control, management, and sustainable return (also in financial terms), one of the priorities was the strengthening of DOs. The intention was that mainstreaming DOs into development cooperation would generate additional and country-specific knowledge. The memorandum mentioned various initiatives that were intended to achieve this aim, including (again) the establishment of an umbrella organization. Apparently, the umbrella organization established in 2007 did not qualify any longer as a sparring partner for the Dutch government. As a response to this renewed call from the ministry, in 2010 the Dutch Consortium of Migrant Organizations (DCMO) was established, supported by co-financing agency Cordaid. Some of the members of the DCMO were previously part of the Diaspora Forum

for Development, and according to our respondents, internal disagreement led to a schism. Apparently the main viewpoint within the Diaspora Forum for Development was to maintain some “healthy distance” from the Dutch government, to preserve the migrant identity. DCMO members were much more eager to collaborate with the government, as service providers; for example, by implementing circular migration programs.³⁶

A second initiative particularly geared toward DOs was *professionalization*. Several initiatives developed under the 2004 policy framework had revealed the weaknesses and vulnerability of DOs, particularly regarding project and financial administration.³⁷ The 2008 policy note observed:

It is also important that migrant organizations with the strength and capacity to expand are given the opportunity to do so. This is a long-term process. Funding will be made available for targeted investment in a number of organizations which meet the criteria. The objective is to enable a number of migrant organizations to grow into full-fledged development cooperation partners at country and thematic levels.³⁸

Within the framework of the 2008 policy, the government financed projects aimed at professionalization. These projects were often linked to one of the other priorities within the framework of general development policies. The Dutch government decided to increasingly mainstream DOs into the framework of development cooperation, regarding not only skills but also – and more importantly – theme, target group, location, and approach. For Ghanaian HTAs, these criteria represented an insurmountable barrier: Their legitimacy was firmly rooted in attachment to a certain geographical location, not to Ghana as a whole; and most HTAs, which depend on donations from the Ghanaian migrant community in the Netherlands, did not consider setting aside their geographical orientation a viable option:

How can we explain to our brothers and sisters that their money – for which they worked very hard – will be spent on people they don’t know, a village they’ve never been to, instead of constructing a school their nephews can visit?³⁹

Representatives of charities reasoned similarly and also said that they did not consider changing the theme they were working on or their approach:

We’d already heard that shipping containers will not be eligible for co-funding, as this is not considered a sustainable intervention. We have already done so for years, with positive results, and everyone knows what we are doing, we hardly need to explain, so why change, what would we gain?⁴⁰

This period also marked the introduction of “consultation meetings” – meetings held twice a year at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to inform DOs about policy implementation and to learn about the mutual concerns. Later, these meetings were used to prepare for the Global Forum on M&D. They were attended by many people (90–140 people on average), not only policy advisors from the ministries involved, DOs, and development NGOs, but also academics and consultancy firms. These meetings were, and are still, regarded as network events.

Not all Ghanaian DOs attended these meetings. HTAs and charities, for example, often did not know about these meetings, and others knew but were not interested or did not have time to go. Generally, development organizations did attend, also because they were informed by the umbrella organizations, DFD and DCMO. They liked these consultation meetings, seeing them as a way to get to know people working at the ministry and development NGOs, and thus gain access to resources. In addition, many of them used the meetings as a way to exert influence, also at the international level:

We can voice the concerns of our community, and in this way put circular migration on the agenda, or advocate a reduction in the transaction costs of remittances. And of course, we will not change the world, but at least we do what we can do, we use our space.⁴¹

Overall, the M&D climate in these years could be best described as “dynamic,” with enthusiasm, and also as offering numerous opportunities for funding, at the ministry as well as at lower government levels and co-financing development NGOs. Becoming a development NGO was high on the agenda of many Ghanaian DOs – 14 of the 20 organizations interviewed mentioned this as an option they would like to explore – and with the increasing recognition and the availability of funds from the national government, this wish could materialize. Some Ghanaian DOs that had worked mainly on integration in the Netherlands decided to shift their mission statements and focus their activities more on Ghana. The fact that some Ghanaian organizations had already been able to make this shift encouraged other Ghanaian organizations, which saw that this option was within their reach. A Ghanaian development organization remarked about this: “Of course, funding opportunities guide our organization . . . we believe we have something to add in this field – many of us being young professionals, we know the local culture, we know how to handle complex projects.”⁴²

Phase 2: the decline of DO-state cooperation

Only a handful of Ghanaian DOs actually succeeded in acquiring considerable amounts of money and establishing a firm position within formal

development cooperation. This was partly linked to the Dutch government's shift in M&D policies in general since 2011, and more specifically to a change in the role of DOs in these policies. Certain policies were abolished, such as circular migration, and the focus on return and migration management was intensified. Development was made subordinate to migration policies, which was reflected in activities, including those targeting DOs. Three reasons explain this shift. First, it reflects the general policies of the Dutch government of the Rutte I and II cabinets,⁴³ which were working with a different political coalition and had a much tougher stance on migration. The introduction of conditional Official Development Assistance (ODA) exemplifies this hard line. In October 2012, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs suspended 10 million euros of the ODA budget earmarked for Ghana. The main reason was that the Ghanaian government was not honoring the agreements it had made with the Dutch government regarding the return of rejected asylum seekers, and thus did not meet the criteria of conditional ODA. The 10 million euros represented only 6 percent of the total Dutch aid to Ghana and thus did not have a huge impact. According to the minister, "it should be interpreted as a symbolic sign of disapproval."⁴⁴

Second, rather critical assessments of the role of migration organizations as development actors marked the start of a different treatment of DOs. An official evaluation of Dutch migration policy concluded that overall, only very few DOs had become more professional over the previous years. In addition, it was observed that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had been cooperating with the same organizations for 10 years; hence, efforts to increase the number of organizations that qualify as "professional" were deemed to have failed. Another evaluation questioned the character of projects involving migrants in regions of origin. Although programs claimed to be demand-driven, thus increasing local ownership, the findings from the evaluation indicated that many assignments had been initiated unilaterally by DOs in the Netherlands.⁴⁵

Finally, the forced collaboration between DOs and other partners, such as development NGOs, appeared to be challenging. Cultural differences between NGOs and DOs, which had rather different constituencies and distinctive operating methods, appeared to complement each other but also led to clashes.⁴⁶ As a result, in 2014 the minister for development cooperation announced that: "The government will stop subsidizing the projects of migrant organizations since they have limited success, while the management load is considerable."⁴⁷

Instead, the government opted to focus on collaboration with governments in regions of origin, stimulating "brain gain." An example of such approach was the creation of a database of Dutch individuals from migrant backgrounds who would like to work abroad for private-sector businesses, the government, or NGOs.

For some of the few Ghanaian DOs that had become largely dependent on funds from the ministry, the decreasing availability of funds was a death blow, as there were hardly any alternatives. At the local municipal level, minority policies had been abolished around 2008, blocking requests for specific groups such as DOs. Within the development sector, economic crisis and budget cuts resulted in fewer resources than ever. DFD, the umbrella organization of DOs, died a quick death, and the office closed in 2014 because of financial difficulties. The other umbrella organization – the Dutch Consortium for Migrant Organizations – was managed so badly that in 2015 it was declared bankrupt. Other migrant-driven initiatives also perished, sometimes because of a lack of funding and sometimes because of mismanagement. Other DOs feared the moment their subsidy would be withdrawn:

At this moment, we hardly see any options. Our subsidy – which pays the salaries of two staff members – ends in seven months, and we do not have any alternative. We talked to the ministry, to Oxfam, to the EU, but nothing. The criteria for new projects are sky-high, and many NGOs are experiencing hard times themselves, and they do not want to run any risks.⁴⁸

In 2016, three Dutch ministries⁴⁹ launched a study on the potential role of DOs in stimulating return migration and preventing irregular migration. The outcome was titled “Shared Concerns, Inadequate Cooperation.”⁵⁰ Based on interviews with 10 DOs, representing a wide variety of countries, the report concluded that few organizations were involved in the prevention of irregular migration. In addition, they did not consider collaboration with the Dutch government a viable option, as the report stated:

Organizations such as AGAP [a Guinean DO] and Sierra Leone Central Union say they do not want to collaborate on the repatriation of their fellow countrymen. “Even if they offered me a million, I’d tell them to get lost. I’m not corrupt,” said the chairperson of AGAP. “I know many organizations which cooperate and get money. I’ll let you in on a secret. I closed our account because we don’t get any money anyway. I’m poor, but I’m proud.”⁵¹

Most Ghanaian DOs were equally critical about possible cooperation with Dutch authorities in the field of return migration. They considered it proof of the instrumental view of the government on DOs. As one put it:

They [the Dutch government] explore another track, promising some funds, positioning us again as “service providers” that can simply be hired by the government. In a way, they also assign us all kinds of

duties. Apparently, we – small organizations – are responsible for integration in the Netherlands, the development of our villages, and now also for stopping migration!⁵²

To summarize, over the years the Dutch government has implemented several policies under the umbrella of M&D, applying a rather instrumental approach and positioning the DOs as its service providers, without much consideration or knowledge of the specific position of these organizations. The current agenda on M&D is mainly focused on migration management, the prevention of migration through improved border control, and reducing irregular migration, by sticking to the old but still popular belief that development will stop migration, as reflected in the “Addressing the root causes of migration” approach, which was introduced to provide youths in Africa with jobs and thus offer an alternative to migration.⁵³

Analysis

This exploration of the way Ghanaian DOs in the Netherlands navigate Dutch M&D policies reveals some interesting findings. First, it shows that Dutch M&D policies influence the funding structure of these DOs, and through this, also their agendas. This creates tension between the agendas of the government and those of DOs and their members. The Dutch government increasingly focused its efforts on “mainstreaming”⁵⁴ the diaspora into formal development cooperation policies: They needed to professionalize, to comply with the main principles of development cooperation – such as offering support to different geographical areas and collaboration with the government – and to act as development NGOs, and in recent years even foster the return of migrants. This ideal of “development actor” clashes with the very nature of some DOs, especially with small charities, most civic organizations, and all HTAs. They represent certain groups of people with very localized geographical backgrounds. They do not want to support the country at the national level; their aim is to support their region of origin, or a city or smaller area in that region. This process of mainstreaming also negatively influences the legitimacy of these organization vis-à-vis their constituents, namely Ghanaian communities in the Netherlands. By scaling up and increasing their professionalization, they may distance themselves from these communities. Increasing financial dependence on the Dutch government might also result in a position that is too close for comfort; being close to the government might have its advantages, but when an NGO is too close, it loses the ability to critically observe and comment. Jennifer Brinkerhoff⁵⁵ refers in this sense to a similar process that occurred to development NGOs in the 1990s: By filling the gaps in recipient countries

in the Global South where governments had withdrawn from social sector activities, NGOs provided support in these niches, often supported by formal ODA. In time, however, they also became more dependent on the funds provided by donors, which ultimately raised the question: How can one criticize the hand that feeds you?

Second, Ghanaian organizations responded in different ways to the fickleness of the Dutch policy context, when the government shifted its emphasis from the issue area of development to migration. Not a single HTA decided to “follow the money,” as a president of one HTA mockingly referred to the rapidly changing policy framework of the Dutch government. They simply *ignored* the changing policies at the national level, as these were opposed to the organizations’ own mission, goals, or identity, and *blended in* those at the local level, as they were able to handle these policies and adjust them to their own agenda. Other organizations, in particular development organizations as well as some civic organizations, *adapted* to the changing policies and changed their practice: as a result of these policy changes, they introduced new themes, target groups, regions, and approaches. An important factor that explains the different responses is the connection of these DOs with their constituents, namely the Ghanaian communities. HTAs are member organizations; the board members live in the same area and meet the households on a frequent and often personal basis. They often feel alienated from the Dutch government, in particular at the national level. In addition, their inability to scale up plays an important role: They do not have the skills or the capacity, in terms of time and human resources, to embark upon a professionalization trajectory, which is necessary for recognition as a formal actor in development cooperation. The position of development organizations contrasts sharply with that of HTAs, as dependence on a decreasing pool of external funds makes them vulnerable and forces them to respond. In fact, speaking in terms of *adaptive* capacity, their resilience is limited, and the majority of development organizations have no choice other than to *adapt*, to change their repertoire in order to secure access to funding. In addition, over the last few years they have lost contact with the Ghanaian community, so questions about legitimacy towards their members hardly play a role in current daily practice. Finally, personal leadership is important, as these development organizations are often chaired by a small board, with the chair acting as a director. The income of the director often depends on funding of donors, and as such, many efforts will be made to guarantee a stable income.

Third, the number of DOs that actually participate in transnational activities through co-development policies is relatively small. A focus on co-development might obscure the fact that the majority of DOs implement activities in the country of origin outside the framework of co-development. As such, this focus reveals only part of what is happening on the ground.

From an international relations perspective, it is interesting to note how these Dutch policies influence Ghana in different ways. In these policies, the Dutch government emphasizes certain themes and approaches, such as capacity building, and underplays other topics, such as the shipping of goods. By requesting the support of DOs in preventing irregular migration, they interfere in the Ghanaian government's migration management. Moreover, investing in co-development also raises questions regarding the role of Ghana in the provision of health and educational services, and the power plays at stake. To what extent can DOs as transnational actors claim political space in countries of origin, by financing and implementing development projects?⁵⁶

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have examined Dutch co-development policies and the way Ghanaian DOs in the Netherlands navigate, and are shaped by, these policies. A few conclusions can be drawn.

First, Dutch M&D policies can at best be described as highly capricious, changing every few years to accommodate changing political agendas. Over the years, the role of DOs has been instrumentalized: they have been used as a tool to meet the policy agenda on migration and, to a lesser extent, development. This has been very evident in recent years, when the Dutch government actively explored the possibility of using DOs to stop irregular migration. In terms of IR theory, realist scholars would expect a strong state to exert power, but the changes in its policies, combining two issue areas, undermined the state's effectiveness in dealing with the DOs. It also resulted in rather instrumental policies, with a state using DOs for furthering its own foreign policy goals. Since these goals were not shared by DOs and their members, the success of this approach was very limited, as the Dutch case demonstrates that DOs cannot be manipulated by the state if their own interests and identities conflict with state interests. In the Dutch case, the inability of the state to control DOs was reinforced by the complete lack of coherent policies. The drastic shifts in policies and the related role of DOs did not lead to mutual understanding or a shared interest. On the contrary, it provoked a lot of distrust and a situation where DOs openly complained about the unreliability of the Dutch state. Both the instrumental approach as well as the lack of coherence challenge realist assumptions; this case shows that DOs are actors in their own right. Although the Dutch state was able to "construct" umbrella organizations – a creation of actors which constructivists would expect and stress, both umbrella organizations failed in the end. This failure shows that most DOs share few ideas and norms and are not focused on collaboration, especially not in state-based

frameworks. This is most likely due to the fact that umbrella organizations needed to follow the Dutch government's changing interpretation of M&D, whereas DOs are reluctant to halt migration and foster return. Instead, they cover many issues (e.g., education), and their identity revolves more around ethnic or homeland ties than around the Dutch state's interpretation of the M&D issue areas. Development DOs did become dependent on state funding but increasingly feared for their future. In other words, if the state wants to exert its power, it needs more consistent and coherent policies. At the same time, it would then need DOs with stronger adaptive capacities to implement its policies.

Second, the changing policy context provoked different responses from the Ghanaian DOs: ignorance, blending, and adaptation. Different types of organizations responded differently, and the findings of this study show there is no one homogenous response from one diasporic community. While some civic organizations, HTAs, and charities tend to *ignore* the changing policies, most civic organizations tend to *blend*; for example, by using knowledge acquired in capacity-building programs in their programs. Development organizations indeed "follow the money" and *adapt* to the policies, resulting in more drastic changes to their approach. A few factors explain the adaptive capacity of these organizations: the type of relationship they have with their constituents and members – the Ghanaian community – as well as their adaptive capacity in terms of time and human resources, including skills. In addition, those actors whose boundaries are most permeable in terms of membership, the HTAs with members in the Netherlands and with a network based on the wider community (family and other villagers "back home") are most distant to instrumental policies and most clear about their identity. Leadership and personal ambitions also have an impact. In addition, the civic organizations, HTAs, and charities are rather small organizations that generally fly below the radar of the Dutch – and Ghanaian – governments.

Ghanaian DOs in the Netherlands navigate and are shaped by multilevel configurations of different actors, local, national, and supranational. Moreover, the DOs purposefully navigate these multilevel configurations; they ignore, blend, or adapt, and thus they claim their working space in their chosen issue areas and local orientation and protect them from the Dutch government. They are actors in their own right that navigate, exploit, and show the limits of state power.

Notes

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- 10 Nijenhuis and Broekhuis, "Institutionalising Transnational Migrants' Activities."
- 11 Oliver Bakewell, "'Keeping Them in Their Place': The Ambivalent Relationship between Development and Migration in Africa," *Third World Quarterly* 29, no. 7 (2009): 1341–1358; Østergaard-Nielsen, "Mobilising the Moroccans."
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- 14 Sinatti and Horst, "Migrants as Agents of Development."

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- 29 "Stichting" is Dutch for foundation.
- 30 These are centers that promoted international cooperation at the municipal level, linked to the government. This often took the form of the provision of small matching grants to civil initiatives.
- 31 Ghanaian HTA, Amsterdam.
- 32 Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Schriftelijk Overleg Migratie en Ontwikkeling* (The Hague: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2014).
- 33 In 1997, the government created the LOM (Landelijk Overleg Minderheden) – a national platform for ethnic (Surinamese, Moroccan, Turkish, etc.) umbrella organizations to communicate with the government. It meets three or four times a year and is chaired by the minister of integration.
- 34 Ghanaian civic organization, Amsterdam.

- 35 Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Beleidsnotitie Internationale Ontwikkeling en Migratie 2008* (The Hague: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2008), 55–56.
- 36 Circular migration is the temporary and usually repetitive movement of migrants between home and host areas, typically for the purpose of employment.
- 37 Nijenhuis and Broekhuis, “Institutionalising Transnational Migrants’ Activities”; Janet Rodenburg and Ton van Naerssen, *Potentials or Illusions? The Contribution of Temporary Return Migrants to Reconstruction and Development in Their Countries of Origin*. Study commissioned by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cordaid, carried out by Pharos in collaboration with SMS (2011).
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- 39 Ghanaian HTA, The Hague.
- 40 Ghanaian charity, Haarlem.
- 41 Ghanaian development organization, The Hague.
- 42 Ghanaian development organization, Almere.
- 43 Cabinets named after Mark Rutte, the Prime Minister leading these cabinets.
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