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**Title:** Donors-promoted public sector reforms in developing countries and the Local Knowledge Syndrome : the Dutch-Yemen NPT Program for developing the Higher Education Sector in Yemen  
**Issue Date:** 2014-04-17
CHAPTER 10

THE PROBLEMS FACING THE PROCESS OF INCORPORATING LOCAL KNOWLEDGE DURING THE POLICY DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NPT PROGRAM
10.1 Introduction

The previous chapters subjected the Dutch-Yemen NPT program's objectives and practices to critical empirical analysis. It was demonstrated that the local knowledge problem, was a key factor in negatively influencing the effectiveness of the Dutch-Yemen NPT program. Information on local knowledge in the development process remained an unopened “black box”. Ultimately, this study observes that the reform content of the Dutch-Yemen NPT program has been largely based on ambiguous or inadequate knowledge of the informal institutions, within the Yemeni direct and indirect recipient organizations; and several unjustified projects on capacity and capability building and institutional reforms. There was a poor understanding of what institutions are and how to build/redesign effective institutions.

It seems that the policy-making process of the Dutch NPT program, was faced with 'the paradox of compliance', which shows a societal relevance of the topic of “policy fit” (Thomson, Torenvlied & Arregui, 2007). The policy makers in MinBuza mainly use a 'top-down' designed aid policy reform, that they claim “fits” for all participant recipient countries. However, these countries have different local characteristics and aspects, which results in non-compliance in the implementation process. Since recipient countries have different characteristics, and therefore different approaches to compliance, it is not uncommon that the Dutch contractors implement MinBuza's aid policy incorrectly, unevenly, or even not at all; even in cooperation with their counterparts in those countries (Versluis, 2005). However, in this study, we argue that there is hope and opportunity to incorporate information on LK during the actual policy implementation process. The implementation of an aid policy is the most vital phase, as it is at this stage that the success or failure of an aid project is determined, based on the LK explanation and the “development associability approach” of the ANT theory. This is especially the case, as the quantitative results revealed that two projects were more effective the others, in terms of achieving their specific and overall objectives.

The purpose of this chapter is to investigate the factors affecting the process of incorporating local knowledge during the policy design and implementation, of institutional development aid programs. The aim is, to test the corresponding hypotheses and to contribute to improving our understanding of institutional change in a poor policy environment, as well as helping practitioners diagnose and address key problems, that institutional reforms have struggled with. Practical implications drawn from the process of designing and implementing the Dutch-Yemen NPT
program are used, to illustrate the relevance between the theoretical elements of the
different approaches in policy making and implementation and the empirical analysis.
The combining paradigm of the theoretical and empirical analysis in this chapter can help leading scholars of the PCP approach, to rethink their arguments. As we discussed in Chapter 2, PCP scholars assert that foreign aid programs cannot be effective in a poor policy environment, and that aid interventions are harming poor nations rather than helping them.

This chapter is organized in five sections. It begins with an analysis of the most important factors that influence the process of incorporating local knowledge, during the policy design of the Dutch-Yemen NPT program. In the second section, we offer an analysis of the factors that influence the process of incorporating local knowledge during the policy implementation of the Dutch-Yemen NPT program. The focus in the third section is on the factors created by the LKS at both the middle management and operational levels.

In section four, we present our main proposed model for effective institutional reforms, which is the “development associability approach”. The development associability approach is derived from the actor network perspective, which we looked at in Chapters 1 and 3. This approach can be divided into two: (1) the harmony model, where there are harmonious interactions between contractors and their counterparts, and (2) the conflict model, where the interactions are characterised by mistrust, poor communication and conflict. As we see in this section, the successful NPT projects, which are those which incorporated local knowledge, are those which followed the harmony model.

The final section of the chapter offers some concluding remarks and in particular discusses the salience of the development associability approach.

### 10.2 Policy Analysis at the Strategic/Policy Level

The main purpose of this section is to examine the causal factors, which tend to systematically undervalue LKS in its formal and informal aspects, through the lens of strategic and policy thinking. This lens enlarges the principles and priorities, the content and approach of the development programs in the public sector reforms in poor countries. Before examining these causal factors, it is crucial to ask what aspects of local knowledge and ideas were key and available to the decision maker during the

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1 - When referring to ‘capacity development for promoting public sector reform programs’ I am not talking about any specific program, but discussing capacity development programs in general. However, the focus is on the NPT program and the interaction between the Yemeni and Dutch governments or their representative in this regard.
policy-making of the NPT program. Furthermore, what were the influential assumptions or theories of change that the Dutch-NPT intervention was based on?

I answer these two questions in the remainder of this section, but first I briefly examine the assumptions and theories of change practiced by the donor community from 1950 onwards, and see how Dutch development cooperation went along with these changes. The latest wave of the governance agenda also had its effects on the NPT program. During these examinations, I show that local knowledge is downplayed in the donors’ reform agendas, in both specific and wider contexts. The section then concludes with an outline of the causal factors creating the LKS at the strategic and policy level based on the ideas of the actor network perspective, and its associability development approach, as it claims to make LK visible.

The Netherlands is represented in a large number of countries and in many international organisations. It is a main donor within the international donor community, and it is active in public sector reforms programs (MinBuZa, 2011). It also has a role in setting the reform agenda, in the overall framework defined by donors for developing countries. Over time, this agenda has changed and formed three waves of reforms with different targets and objectives. Firstly from the 1950s there was a focus on capacity development of organizations and individuals, then by the 1980s the focus was on reorganizing the public and private sectors; and since the 1990s the focus has been on reshaping the whole governance system. In the first wave of reforms, the underlying assumption was that they were definitive solutions for promoting the managerial capacity of the administrative system and particular organizations. The private sector was the key sector regarded as a driver for promoting development in the second wave. The third wave is based on the idea, that good governance is essential for having effective government institutions to drive development. This is a response to the “combination of factors– including poor outcomes of the reforms, major ideological shifts, and influential academic theories worldwide published and developed in western countries” (Baimyrzaeva, 2010).

There is insufficient space in this chapter to review all the changes in aid policy since 1950s. In fact such an endeavor needs a complete study to be accomplished. Here we summarise the first three waves. The 1st wave started in the 1950s and ended in the 1960s. The foreign aid strategies of 1950s focused on “macroeconomic development, national planning, and construction of capital-intensive industries, highways and power-generating systems, and on rebuilding the financial capacity of European countries to invest in their own reconstruction” (Rondinelli, 2003: 28).
Development was used to build up modern governance system in the European countries directly after WWII. The same content of the reforms agenda were applied in developing countries, without taking into consideration the existing systems with different administrative, economic, social, and political contexts in the poor nations. The aid programs were mainly implemented by the USID, the American aid based on Marshall Help to Europe. USID was successful in reconstructing the economies of Europe, the American system of public administration, became more or less the model of public sector reform to be implemented by aid organizations in poor countries too. This model was followed by the European aid organizations, without the proper attention given to differences in conditions and needs in the poor nations, until these conditions appeared to create obstacles to achieving high levels of effectiveness of the aid programs (Rondinelli, 2003).

The IMF, the World Bank and its leading economic scholars and experts, headed the 2nd wave (1980s-1997). They focused on economic growth and sectoral adjustment packages. The idea was that privatization of public institutions, would lead to economic development. The influential schools of thought for this wave were (1) Neoclassical Economics (2) Public Choice Theory (3) New Public Management. Most aid interventions involved deregulation, decentralization, privatization, macroeconomics, liberalization, downsizing bureaucracy, and focusing on results, importing western institutional models and private sector principles (See for example Rondinelli, 2003; Akramov, 2006; Kanbur, et al., 1999; Baimyrzaeva, 2010). During the second wave the public administration agenda was not taken into consideration, and development aid just focused on the economic sector. At the end, they realized that no development process could take place, without a good administration system. This was the start of the third wave in which the good governance package became the response to these lessons learned.

The main reform assumption of the third wave (from 1997-onwards), which the policy objectives and priorities of the NPT program were based upon, is that poor governance, is the cause for underdevelopment. Poor governance is translated into a perceived weak or lack of effective government institutions. Influential schools of thoughts or theories of change here are the “Public Choice Approach” and “New Public Management”. The approach to reforms adopted first by the most influential multilateral donors, like the UNDP and the World Bank, mainly focused on importing best practices of OECD countries (Baimyrzaeva, 2010).

In the foreign aid arena, the term ‘governance’ has been difficult to be defined
satisfactorily. Baimyrzaeva (2010) analyzed the World Development Reports over time and shows a long list of institutional preconditions presented, to achieve good governance. These preconditions grew from 45 in 1997 to 116 in 2002. Grindle (2007) presents some of these preconditions and argues that “getting good governance calls for improvements that touch virtually all aspects of the public sector—from institutions that set the rules of the game for economic and political interaction, to decision-making structures that determine priorities among public problems and allocate resources to respond to them, to organizations that manage administrative systems and deliver goods and services to citizens, to human resources that staff government bureaucracies, to the interface of officials and citizens in political and bureaucratic arenas” (2007: 553). Jenkins and Plowden (2006) argue that in the good governance agenda, new elements were introduced in the aid programs that were hot topics in the donor countries themselves, such as gender and democratization2. From the above arguments, one could deduce that the third wave has paid attention to both the political and administrative sides of the governance. It aims at strengthening government institutions’ capacity, accountability, and transparency; deregulation and privatization; voice and participation. “It covers not only civil services and Cabinets, local authorities and public corporations, but also legislatures, electoral systems and their working, and the often literally innumerable population of voluntary or non-governmental organizations which are lumped together under the heading ‘civil society’. It is, increasingly, seen as including corruption (and its prevention) and transparency (or its absence)” (2006:9)3. The precondition, as it is the main focus of this study (NPT-related reform content), is capacity development/building, which informs donors’ efforts to strengthen the government’s capacity through organizational/institutional restructuring, functional reviews, training, and transfer of skills and equipment (Baimyrzaeva, 2010; see also Chapter 5).

The experiences of the two earlier waves, where a change of the government or the stimulation of the private sector, did not work in poor and fragile states; it convinced donors to try to completely change the whole governance system. This change was, however, not based on robust empirical research, but on explicit and implicit assumptions. Local realities and the understanding of the informal system and the rule of the games, on the basis of ‘what is present’ were not taken seriously into consideration. The first and second waves were foreign concepts introduced to

2 - Now under the influence of the western economic crisis there is again a shift of focus towards stability, ignoring the government and focusing directly on youth, the unemployed, and young members of political parties.
3 - I first introduced the concept of good enough governance in Chapter 1. For an analysis of the development of the concept of governance, see Grindle (2004 and 2007).
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systems in developing countries. The third wave on governance, which is the result of the first two waves, is for that reason also a foreign concept. The current institutional development agenda of donors looks more like a “patchwork” of competing ideas and terms based on limited research, which draws from empirically flawed \textit{a priori} ideas about human behavior (Baimyrzaeva, 2010)\textsuperscript{4}. This is especially important to understand that the informal systems and the rule of the games on the basis of ‘what is present’ were really downplayed and not taking seriously into consideration (Grindle, 2004)\textsuperscript{5}.

Translating this ambitious reform agenda of totally replacing the governance system, into practice has become a big challenge. The good governance agenda might be beautiful words on paper, but it is not sufficient as a practical guide\textsuperscript{6} (Grindle, 2007). The experiences of the governance agenda of reforms in recipient countries show that “some activities were well planned initially, but unsuccessful in practice” (Addison, 2003). Some, as with other aid activities, were inappropriate and misconceived in the first place. They took little account of local conditions or of the most effective sequence in which to try to introduce changes. They rested on “overoptimistic assumptions about the ability of institutions to influence people's behavior and about the time it would take to put working organizations into operation. The results of much of this intervention have been haphazard and sometimes perverse” (Jenkins and Plowden, 2006: 12).

In conclusion, the briefly-analyzed three waves of public sector reforms promoted by leading donors in poor countries over the last five decades show that donors adopted reform agendas relying on western assumptions and theories of change. Foreign aid literature and theories have been mostly developed, and tested in western/democratic countries with a thriving civil society and sound public administration systems. They have nothing to say on “how” to translate the reform agenda into practice (see also Chapter 9 to consider the example of the NPT program practices in Yemen).

It can be argued that the “black box” of LKS activities remains closed. Formal structures have been changed by traditional top-down, supply-driven and a one size

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\textsuperscript{4} - This comprehensive reform package of the current wave reflects “rationalistic attitudes” of donors acting similar to Simon’s (1947) satisfied man and his cousin Scott’s (1998) simplified man in functions and attitudes in policymaking and implementation. (see Chapter 3)

\textsuperscript{5} - It is not completely valid to assign the reforms’ failures mainly to recipient countries’ conditions, such as their culture, backwardness, history, and weak capacity as many donors and some academics have said. It is a combination of both donors’ lack of local and practical knowledge and the internal conditions of the recipient countries.

\textsuperscript{6} - We have two main approaches based on these practices, one is the traditional which is supply-driven and the other is based on demand. I mention about these two approaches and their relations to the third wave of reform later in this section.
fits all approach to reform, without taking into consideration if a country even has the capacity to fulfill these changes. The top-down approach is an externally-determined agenda of reform, as seen in all three waves of aid. Some donor agencies have claimed that they have changed their approach of reform to “bottom-up” in the third wave, but state that these changes could not yet be enacted. The top-down approach, to reform is falling out of favor, at least in policy rhetoric, and the reforms are being tailored to beneficiaries’ ‘specific needs and make lending support locally driven and owned’ (Baimyrzaeva, 2010).

In Chapter 3 we identified three approaches in policy making and implementation theory from the literature. These are “top-down” (Van Meter and Van Horn, 1975; Mazmanian and Sabatier, 1981, 1983, 1989; Matland, 1995), “bottom-up” (Berman, 1978 and 1980; Hjern and Porter, 1981; Hjern, 1982; Hjern and Hull, 1982; Hull and Hjern, 1987; Lipsky, 1978; Nilsen at al, 2013), and hybrid (synthesis) or the “backward mapping and forward mapping approaches” (Elmore, 1985; Birkland, 2005). The top-down approach is considered by many scholars such as Matland (1995), as focusing more on the statute framers as key actors. The main assumption of the top-down approach is that, the people in the process of service delivery have the necessary knowledge and expertise of the related problems, and that they are in strong position to suggest sound and purposeful polices. This approach sees local actors as impediments to successful implementation, and calls for the control of their shirking behavior. Underlining Matland’s argument, Nilsen at al (2013) highlights, that many researchers critiqued the top-down perspective for “viewing implementation as a purely administrative process and failing to account for the role of the frontline staff who put the policy into action”(2012:2).

Matland (1995) also added that the top-down approach takes the statutory language as its starting point, which fails to reflect the significance of activities done earlier in the policy-making process (Matland, 1995). The author also included two studies to support his ideas. The first study is related to Winter (1985 & 1986) and states, that most barriers to implementation occur in the initial stages of the policy making process, and as such these processes must be carefully studied to understand the policy implementation. The second study belongs to Nakamura and Smallwood (1980), who argue that implementers obtain vital cues about the intensity of demands, and the size, stability, and consensus among those advocating for change, through the policy formation process. Therefore, an analysis that takes policy as given without

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7 - Some of those scholars are Berman (1978), Hoppe, van de Graaf, and van Dijk (1985), and Baier, March and Saetren (1986).
considering history might miss important connections (1995: 147).

According to Nilsen et al (2013), the bottom-up approach focuses its interest on the actions of the local implementers (and the importance of implementing structures or networks), as opposed to the central government, and emphasizes not so much the goals of a policy, but rather the nature of the social problem that a policy was intended to address. In line with the main argument of this study based on the “development associability approach” ideas (explained in different parts of this study), bottom-uppers are less concerned with the implementation of a policy per se, and more interested in understanding actor interaction in a specific policy setting. Therefore, the contextual factors within the implementation place and time, can completely dominate rules created at the top of the pyramid. Under these conditions, according to the bottom-uppers, if local level implementers are not given the freedom to adapt the program to local conditions it is likely to fail (Palumbo, Maynard-Moody, and Wright, 1984, in Matland, 1995). However, the bottom-up approach is not free from criticism. Nilsen et al (2013) added that the bottom-uppers “tended to overemphasize the autonomy of the frontline staff and lacked an explicit theory explaining what influenced the process and how change occurred. The inductive nature of most bottom-up research combined with results that found most of the relevant factors varied from site to site led to few general conclusions or policy recommendations” (2013: 2-3).

Elmore (1985) suggested a useful approach for policy designers, that the views of micro implementers and target groups must be considered in planning an implementation strategy. This approach advocates the use of both forward mapping (top-down approach), and backward mapping (bottom-up approach). Here forward mapping involves stating exact plan objectives, going into detailed means-ends schemes, and identifying obvious outcome criteria by which to review policy at each stage. Backward mapping states that behavior should be changed at the lowest level, “describing a set of operations that can insure the change, and repeating the procedure upwards by steps until the central level is reached. By using backward mapping, policy designers may find more appropriate tools than those initially chosen. This process insures consideration of the micro implementers’ and target groups’ interpretations of the policy problem and possible solutions” (in Matland, 1995: 5) 8.

8 - Sabatier (1986) moved away from the top-down perspective, claiming the approach was only appropriate to implementing policies with precise law, limited research funds, and if the situation is well structured. Bottom-up approaches will be appropriate in conditions where different policies are focused towards a specific problem; and the synthesis approach, specifically the advocacy coalition framework, should be used to explain policy changes over a period of at least ten years. Goggin et al. (1990) suggests a communications model of intergovernmental policy implementation which perceives implementation at the core of a series of communication channels. Winter (1990, 1994) suggested an “Inte-
Elmore’s (1985) “backward-mapping” approach is one of our concerns in this research: how to realize a systematic approach for ensuring the process of incorporating local knowledge in the process of policy design. One conclusion can also be drawn based on the information of the policy making of the donors during the three stated waves of reforms, and the main theoretical elements of the above presented on the approaches of policy implementation. Ultimately, the key argument of the Public Choice approach is that aid programs will not work in poor policy environments, is not completely accurate. The problem is when the donors make no effort to adapt an appropriate aid policy implementation method. Without incorporating the specific characteristics, values, ideologies, attitudes and behavior of people and governments in their programs, the expected outcomes will not occur. Therefore, there is a need to adapt a “bottom-up approach”, in practice and not in theory in order to discuss these issues between the recipient countries and donor organizations. In other words, how to adapt the aid programs to the country and not the other way around. As remarked before, the Dutch development cooperation has followed the international development lines (“top-down approach”), and so the Dutch reform programs have faced the same problems. We now look at this in more detail for the NPT program.

**NPT policy formulation and the top-down approach**

Before the NPT program was established in 2002, a number of other higher education programs, also administered by Nuffic were executed under other names, such as the Program of University Cooperation and the Joint Financing Program for Cooperation in Higher Education (HMO). The ingredients are more or less the same, and the change in name reflects the change of ministers over time. The content of the Dutch-NPT program (2002-2010), was based upon the good governance elements of the third wave. Aside from the Dutch strong focal sectors of education, water and health, two new western concepts were introduced; namely gender and
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While market relations remained from the second wave, was kept (see Chapter 6). On paper, the main difference with the former programs was that the NPT program had to be proposed by the Southern Partner. In response to widespread criticism of the traditional approach of donor-supply-driven organizational models from the Global North to the Global South, MinBuZa stated NPT was a program with demand driven approach, tailor-made practice based more on local expertise and knowledge networks.

For the assistance to Yemen, it was more or less expected that the direct recipient organizations would make a self-analysis, determining their own identity, their position in the society, and their ways of realizing their business and communicating LK to Nuffic. The framework for how to make this self-analysis was never supplied in detail, and many partners in Yemen kept on repeating formal information already known by the donors. Lacking the specific data, the proposals became like any other proposal from any other country, and that gave the NPT program the chance to continue the supply-driven approach. In Vietnam, the demand-driven approach seems to have worked, according to the final evaluation report of the NPT program. Once more for Yemen a detailed framework was never developed in detail, leading the MinBuza-Nuffic-supported program to face the high expectations set by the Ministry’s own overall policies and objectives, based on the wider world development institutions approach, especially the Western models of institutional changes (IOB, MinBuza, 2011: 56-60).

The Dutch government should realize that the method of putting some recipient countries in the driver’s seat of development, is a heavy burden for the majority of governments in the NPT programs. Most of them suffer from very weak planning and administrative capacities like Yemen; and they do not have a clear development philosophy. Moreover, one should be aware that giving the governments this role implies that the donors support an authority, which is often seen as corrupt by the public. Often governments collect lists of Christmas wishes to support their family

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11 - The new shift of the Dutch policy claim to put countries in the driver's seat, putting a grid over the governments of the recipient countries, especially those with a very weak capacity such as Yemen as a very weak state. However, one may question whether this move is actually taking place in practice. This point is expanded upon in section three of this chapter when we analyze the plan of implementation of the Dutch-Yemen NPT program.

12 - Only by the help of an outsider who was the manager of the NPT program in Yemen could the different Yemeni universities come up with proposals.
members, without analyzing priorities for NPT assistance. The NPT cases discussed in the Chapter 9 can be seen as an example of such a list. Another example is the list of proposals to the Gulf cooperation council program in Yemen.

Dutch authorities like MinBuza and Nuffic did not receive sufficient tools to analyze and assess the package of the proposals from the Yemeni partners; simply they have lack of capacity of how to manage these projects. These packages were often characterized by the use of the development jargon, without making the proposals operationalisable. For example, a consultation organized by IOB in May 2008 made clear that the Ministry and many of the Dutch contractors involved in capacity development, could not clearly define what capacity means and how capacity development works (MinBuZa, 2011:105). Up to 2007, MinBuZa had not published a single policy document to guide decision making and operations on capacity development, thus making the southern approach a difficult exercise to implement, for both the northern and southern partners. In principle, the supply-organizations model was maintained. Within this model, it seems according of a number of interviewees at the policy level that the Dutch capacity development support, is still provided on the basis of “immediate needs”. The interviewees added that, the Dutch contractors are under pressure to spend money and demonstrate results, which are visible and quickly obtained, as they are accountable to Dutch taxpayers for the use of the money. The incorporation of local knowledge which is not visible, often leads to increase of costs and unforeseen circumstances and events. Local knowledge needs time and efforts to be incorporated. Thus a lack of time, leads to a downplaying of the role of local knowledge, resulting again in a one-size fits all approach for the policymaking for the NPT in fourteen countries.

This approach shows faith in what Scoot (1998) calls “aggressive schemes of social engineering”, rather than adopting “control-oriented styles that takes into consideration the formal and informal institutions of the organizations in the recipient countries. Many of the current forms of assistance are not only ineffective but tend to perpetuate if not exacerbate the problems of development” (Ellerman, 2009: 4). The NPT agenda retained its primary northern emphasis on changing institutional hardware – i.e. formal structures and procedures – while neglecting the institutional software of society – power relations, culture, norms and mental models– underlying and animating the hardware shaping its performance13. This argument is

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13 - Some of the results I found in chapter 9 about the five cases chosen from the Dutch-Yemen NPT program, confirmed by Awortwi (2011) in his study about the he four year programme (2004-2007) “capacity building in good governance and public administration in Mozambique”, which was sponsored by The Netherlands organization for international cooperation in higher education (Nuffic) as part of the Dutch-Mozambique NPT program.
confirmed by Bettina Bock (2012), the Dutch former NPT-WRTC project manager. She points out donors are still not recognizing that the lack of local knowledge and the “black box” has not been open yet. In her summary, she said:

Capacity development departs from the idea that people learn how to take care of development themselves. It is seen as “an endogenous process that involves the main actors taking responsibility for the process of change”. At the same time, programs for capacity development such as the NPT program redefine the direction of the development and the capacities needed to arrive there. We could even say that the program not only aims at transferring our institutions—our way of doing things but also even presupposes this transfer in order to fulfill the NPT “rules of the game”. This seems to be a paradox if we think in terms of ‘us enabling an endogenous process to develop’. At the same time, the experience of a NPT project in Yemen seems to demonstrate that this dominance is needed for disrupting the local relations of power and the locally dominant way of doing things. In doing so new ways of acting open up and new players may be allowed to enter the stage. Maybe capacity building is not so much about learning new competencies but about disrupting existing constellation of power and identity, and allowing for the development of a new sense of control among those supposed to be powerless (in WI:2007:39).

Jenkins and Plowden (2006) underline the statement of Bettina Bock (2007), arguing that “part of what needs analysis and understanding is the relationships between organizations and their context. Any case, it is not a new discovery that how organizations work, and how people behave in organizational settings, are powerfully affected by the cultures both of the organizations themselves and of the wider social context in which the organizations are set” (Jenkins and Plowden, 2006:136). Rondinelli (1993) points out that the difficulties that international agencies and central governments faced in formulating policies and projects comprehensively, arose from the fact that many hidden obstacles and problems could not be identified in advance and therefore could not be dealt with in the initial design.

Consequently attention on incorporating local knowledge is still lacking and the new shift did not provide the magic solution. The one-size fits all approach was the best practice adopted during the policymaking approach. In accordance with Dutch bilateral policy, NPT focused on the group of 36 countries with which the Netherlands had already entered into a multi-year partnership, but was run in initially 15 countries and later in 14. It was envisaged that NICHE would be implemented in the 14 NPT partner countries and 9 others.

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14 The 15 countries were: Benin, Colombia, Eritrea (NPT was stopped in view of the worsening political situation), Ethiopia, Ghana, Guatemala, Indonesia, Mozambique, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Vietnam, Yemen and Zambia. In addition, the program initially covered Peru. However, it never went beyond the identification phase once Peru was taken from the list of Netherlands partner countries.

15 The nine additional countries are Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Egypt, Kenya, Kosovo, Nicaragua, South Sudan, and Suriname.
As discussed in Chapter 9, where we focusing on the NPT program for promoting the higher education sector in Yemen, it falls short of being a tool to explore what, specifically, needs to be done in the real world context. It was really difficult for Dutch contractors to understand all of the intricacies of the complex institutional reform processes, in a traditional country like Yemen. The most vivid examples of these intricacies in the higher education sector in Yemen, are the violations of the standards by the interactions between organizations and their context such as, social and political ties; the controlling procedures in the appointments and promotions of both academic and administrative posts; not abiding by current rules; the absence of rules that stipulate powers and responsibilities; the absence of the follow-up and evaluation principle; the absence of reward and punishment principle, and so on. These points are easily noticeable, but the Dutch contractors have ignored them. The result has been that some of the selected ECs have largely or partly failed.

This brief overview of the Dutch NPT program indicates that at the central level there is very little chance of changing public sector institutions in recipient countries, through the social engineering approach.

While the social engineering approach is not getting local knowledge to the surface, the ‘development associability’ approach claims to make LK visible. The main idea of the development associability approach is that the LKS can be solved by physical and non-physical interactions, between government institutions and their actors. These approach could correct data only supplied within the formal structure of power used in donor policies (see Chapter 3). This approach sees strategic policy interaction as important, in increasing our understanding, the learning and exchanging of ideas, and through communication opening the black box of a development process.

Strategic planning is theoretically essential to fully consider the local setting, and to address the local knowledge deficiency, giving us the chance to open the black box of information. However there are several factors and actors, which create obstacles to this process and make it difficult to develop a fruitful interaction at the policy making level. For our understanding, in this study, we will try to explain the factors that could possibly influence the human and non-human interactions, as proposed by the ANT ideas and by focusing on characteristics of the processes of policymaking. These are: (1) the unclear vision on the final goal, (2) diplomatic language and

16 - The main assumption of the ANT as presented in Chapter 3.
development jargon used in the interactions between actors, (3) the dominance of the English language in the development aid realm, (4) lack of knowledge of theory of change in recipient countries, (5) lack of information on the local knowledge practices supplied by online networks, and (6) lack of institutional memory.

In the process of interaction between the donors and the recipients at the policy making level, meetings are unclear and without a common understanding of the rule of the game. Annika Lysén (2003) remarks that certain meetings like round tables, seminars and conferences are tools to get the knowledge on the table, but if they are not followed up by other activities, the formal ideas of knowledge will take over again. Moreover, local knowledge is actually not used as an input for the policymaking process. Instead “financial problems and budget considerations take up considerable discussion time. It is more rare to meet in an open meetings to discuss implications and impacts of ongoing programmes and lessons learnt from evaluations, even though this does happen” (Lysén, 2003: 97).

The diplomatic language stresses the commonalities of the aid cooperation, but disguises LK with its informal aspects (DSO- MinBuza, NPT policy officer noted). The diplomatic language is the only instrument that allows, through cautious gradation, to deal with the counterparts without using words that can discover the rule of the game. Yet in Yemen, as in many traditional countries, the language has power; it rests on the fact that it contains the local ideas and the informal aspects of knowledge (Abu Jaber, 2001). This is due to oral culture being more important, than literary culture in Yemeni society. One of the interviewers confirmed that in Yemen the unwritten (informal) prescriptions, have greater influence on behavior than formal government laws and rules. Informal and unwritten prescriptions are hard to observe by policymakers on the donor side, and they need a long time of oral and behavioral interactions to be incorporated. The interviewees added that the policymakers on the Dutch side used development terminology or jargon such as empowerment, people-centered development and bottom-up development, but without clearly defining their meanings. These jargon terms negatively affect interactions at the policy level, because the policymakers in Yemen could not overcome the ambiguous use of jargon by the Dutch side17.

The development terminology or jargon is not only a problem in the interactions

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17 - “Development jargon as order words”, a study by Jimmy Roth and Jeremy ranks (1997), confirmed the idea of the development terminology or jargon used by policy makers when they are dealing with the recipient policy makers. The authors found that “development jargon could be misused when its meaning is clear. Where it is used clearly, but without allowing its meanings and implications to be contested, it is being used as an order…they added that to overcome the ambiguous use of jargon, one needs simply to ask appropriate and pertinent questions” (1997:282).
between the policy makers from both sides of foreign aid formula- donors and their counterparts. Development terminology such as governance is a fuzzy concept, which has different explanations in Arabic literature. The concept means different things and it includes different sub-concepts. In some documents, we found the term took the name “Alhukm Al Rasheed” and “Tsharikeah”, and in the other documents, the concept was presented by the title of “Al-Hakmeayh”, which involves a high degree of abstraction that may not fit a translation of the western concept of governance. The concept of “Al-Hakmeayh” is explained by a very ideological paradox in term of “Al-Hakmeayh for Allah”: the rule is for God (see for example Salwa Shaarawi, 2001). The Arab researchers, moreover, are trying to translate word-for-word the definitions of the World Bank, United Nations and the other related donors organizations for the concept of governance into their own language. Most of the researchers referred their work to the western literature, where we can find only concepts and terms that are western related. There is no space for local knowledge terminology or to bring along new ideas of change based on the local context.

Interviewees regarded the concept of empowerment of women or gender as an invitation to distort women’s character in a traditional country, by calling for a removal of the differences between men and women. As we explained in the former chapters of this study, the term gender was associated with a feminism theme in a negative sense. It was linked with local concepts such as aggressive women, free women, promiscuity, and to advocate homosexuality. One of the Dutch experts noted: “presenting gender in Yemen is like presenting an evil if you can see in local perception”.

All interviewees on both sides (Dutch and Yemen), identified the role of translation/interpretation within the process of interaction as a significant issue. For some interviewers, this issue was identified as one of the ‘most challenging to understand the local knowledge aspects.’ It seems there is a need to address the translation and interpretation barrier, to help provide locally appropriate context to the specific terminology used. Donor policy makers should understand that the challenge of the development terminology or jargon barrier could be solved through connections and relations, with local counterparts during non-formal activities such as dinners, Qat sessions and parties. In this way, the opportunities for informal verification mitigated this challenge\textsuperscript{18}. Researchers from the South may realize that more important than word-to-word translation of the development jargon, is the

\textsuperscript{18} - This factors are analyzed more in the coming sections of this chapter.
understanding of the meaning of what was used by donors, and ‘providing examples’ that would make sense in the local context to contribute to developing theories of change that are locally based.

There is no doubt that at the strategic/policy level, the recipient countries have nothing to say. Since most recipient countries lack information in practice and theories of change, in terms of capacity development, this situation is even more worrying (IOB, MinBuza, 2011:61). For example, in Yemen, there are few local researchers who have made publications on capacity development in the public sector. Even when local researchers are used, their publications rarely appear as independent contributions, but are integrated in the overall development approach. As such they lose much of their value. There is blame on the donor side here, as they did not create proper mechanisms to encourage research, select appropriate researchers from the recipient countries, or help to overcome the language difficulties in order to fill the knowledge gap in both its formal and informal aspects (MinBuza, 2001). There is a very rich literature on North-South partnerships in development, but it is very poor in including aspects of local knowledge (see e.g. Barnard, 2003; Drew, 2003; R. James, 2001 in Scarf, 2010). Most of the publications and information of donors still works with their certain sets of shared norms and assumptions. All new ideas are spread among the donors without taking into consideration findings from local experts and researchers.19

As we mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, mainstream research and practice for several decades, has operated with unjustified assumption that, Western formal institutions are universally applicable for recipient countries and that solutions should come from the north to the south, instead of normally being developed in south with the help of the north20. The leading bilateral donor organizations such as the World Bank and the UNDP, always articulate aid policies content and practices in the global context, depending on the ideas of consultants who are economists. Those economic consultants simply lack the relevant background knowledge and have nothing to say about behavioral issues, to understand the full complexity of the local

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19 - In addition, reports from donor organizations are hardly publicized. As a researcher, I spent more than four months to get the documents related to the NPT program. This process was so difficult with Nuffic. I got most of the documents via personal relations (informal process) from Yemen.

20 - It is also the case as anything coming from the north is acceptable within the recipient countries. In Yemen, for example, anything coming from outside is the magic solution for them, even if these solutions are not suitable for the symptoms of the disease they suffer from. Therefore, if they have realistic solutions, they are unaware of them and there is no recognition by donors for screening ideas and absorbed in their development policy. It is often a result of a ‘parent-child relationship’ whereby donor actors ‘teach’ recipient actors, rather than facilitating the access and impact of Southern voices in policy making process (one of the interviewees noted).
contexts in the recipient countries. “In 1999 an official of another development bank said, somewhat despairingly, it is essential that donors stop appointing untrained people (usually economists) into public management reform, social impact assessment and community involvement jobs. The reverse would never be tolerated (say, asking social impact experts to do economic analysis …)” (Westcott, 1999 as cited in Jenkins and Plowden, 2006).

Even where there was an ability of some local knowledge actors to contribute to the process of incorporating local knowledge, the dominance of the English language was a limiting factor. The policy makers are often non-English speakers and readers, and they depend on translations. This is also an obstacle to actively participate in the policy development process. Moreover, this factor is linked to the diplomatic factor as the translation is often made by formal language, which excludes the informal aspects of local knowledge. As we discussed above, during the policy development the time is often too short to make inventory of researchers in languages other than English.

Regardless of the English problem, there is a major reason for engaging local experts and researchers, as they can act wisely and try to fill the gap of human direct interactions, and incorporate the local expatriates. The benefits of doing so go far deeper, than merely satisfying a local desire to be involved or providing a fig leaf of ‘meetings’ in the strategic/policy level. Local experts can bring both understanding of the system and knowledge of current difficult realities. They can also have a role to promote the local knowledge, in non-human interactions, in the foreign aid arena, such as online networks; provide information to the macro-level decision-making processes about “subjective perceptions and opinions of the community members, their attitudes, mental models, cultural patterns and the informal institutions (semiotic context).” (Voten, 2013: 123). According to many of my interviews however, most online networks that have been established by donor agencies, or rely on their patronage, exclude local knowledge, experience, and ideas from the south. For example, the websites of MinBuza and Nuffic do not refer much to studies or reports developed by researchers from the south. Even if there are some studies, you will realize that the local knowledge with its “informal aspects” or the tacit component of knowledge is downplayed. Local knowledge is sometimes discussed or pointed out on the web, but it lacks the details to distinguish where it is different from one place, to another and from one time to another. Everyone who looks at these objects is familiar with the sensation of swimming, or even drowning, in an ocean of data and
information. There is ever-increasing complexity in finding consistent local knowledge, in areas where one really needs to know a little such of as informal aspects of the local knowledge (MinBuza, 2011). This partly explain why donor aid programs for promoting public sector reforms in poor countries, randomly jump from one reform wave to another, without analyzing and mapping the consequences of the previous wave, as was the case of the Dutch aid for higher education (see section 2 of this chapter). “This is in part related to the dramatic pace of change that makes earlier knowledge obsolete. One well-known expert argues that most of what we think we now know is just plain wrong” (Fukuda-Parr et al, 2002:239).

Another important causal factor is the institutional memory within donor policymaking levels. It is always very weak, as there is no a systematic method to attract consultants to systematically analyze lessons from the experiences and apply them to the proposed programs of reforms. Therefore, the official literature and reports are full of ideas on what should be done, but they have nothing to say about the actual implementation of aid polices based on lesson learned in the past. Unfortunately, there are no discussions amongst regulatory bodies such as parliament, chefs de cabinet, civil society organizations, related governmental and societal control organizations, within donor countries on why aid programs fail and how to propose programs that are more applicable. They have been even more silent about what should not have been done. Even when reform has been more or less successful, the reasons for these successes and the ways to further implement the aid programs, are not discussed with the responsible organizations and governments. Instead, the parliament and the chefs de cabinet receive another new proposal from a new minister and director with new directions, “leaving the field littered with the unanalyzed, unexplained wreckage of the earlier attempts” (Martens, et al. 2002:137). Even where those at the top genuinely want to take actions and change the aid system and process, advisers can be unrealistic about institutional realities, and too easily take assurances with little substance behind them at face value. The intermediaries of aid dominate the decision-making through the ambiguous information loop (Martens, et al. 2002).

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21 - When I was conducting my interviews with the donor actors who participated in the Dutch-Yemen NPT program, I asked whether Nuffic or MinBuza asked them to write a report about their experience and the lessons learned during their mission in Yemen. The answer was for all of them was a resounding no. Even the long-term expert or the local manager of the Dutch-Yemen NPT program who stayed in Yemen for more than four years was not asked. This is regardless of the formal evolution reports they normally conduct as a formal process in every project, which often show that everything is fine. The lack of the institutional memory can partially explain why MinBuza has implemented since 1960s program after program changing in the reform content, and still today they are following the same changes without a real learning of the local context.

22 - If you have a new mission there is much research done on the lesson learned from the past. For example, it was
In conclusion, the analysis in the above section was testing our underlying hypothesis number 2, stating that incorporation of local knowledge in policy design, integrating formal and informal institutions and organizations in host governments or organizations, increases the effectiveness of aid programs. Reduced incorporation of local knowledge increases ineffectiveness of aid programs. The above analysis may suggest that the policy making process of the Dutch-Yemen NPT program, might have not had the chance to incorporate LK with its informal aspects, leading to unsuccessful programs (see Chapter 9). The comprehensive, wide and social engineering development approach or top-down approach used by Dutch policy makers, could not detect the hidden obstacles or solutions of local knowledge. At the same time, the development associability approach that claims to make LK visible at policymaking level, failed to act towards the incorporation of the local knowledge, because of the six analyzed factors and the other related causal factors. Strikingly, anyhow, it seems that is difficult task to incorporate local knowledge at the strategic/policy level, due to hidden or normative nature of the local knowledge itself and the process adopted by most the donors countries, including The Netherlands in designing aid programs. As we explained in Chapters 4 and 9, this is also because of the rule of the game, as the information of the local contexts, is hidden information and not clearly identified. This information cannot be incorporated by holding some formal activities and by asking direct questions, because of its hidden nature. Instead this information has to be dealt with through interactions and the relationship during the implementation phase of a program.

Accordingly, the analysis of the casual factors at the strategic/policy level of aid interventions may help to address part of the question, of why LKS occurred. Dvir and Lechler (2004) suggest that “while policymaking has no value to incorporate the local knowledge, changing polices during the policy implementation is everything” (cited in Ika et al, 2009: 65). Therefore, there is a possibility for the inappropriate and original policy design, to be promptly corrected by incorporating local knowledge during the implementation stage. Information on the processes of design and implementation of the programs is critical for policy makers and analysts in conducting the analysis of the aid policies, and for successful outcomes. In our study, interesting to find that there was one proposal that has been handed by the Yemeni authorities to more than ten donor countries during the last 20 years and more than five donor countries had funded this same proposal. The only change made by the Yemeni authorities was to alter the title of the proposal.

23 - There are several recommendations for the policy makers of how they can overcome LKS at the policymaking level, presented in the summary section of this chapter and in Chapter 11.
the implementers (contractors) of aid programs and projects are “players at the heart of the aid intervention process”, because they are able to solve the knowledge problems through their direct and indirect interactions with all actors involved in the process, from both donor and recipient sides. In this sense, we should move to analyze the factors creating the LKS during the policy implementation, focusing on the factors related to the middle management level, which is responsible for conducting the plan of implementation.

Based on the associability development approach, we now test hypothesis number 3 which states that incorporation of local knowledge during the implementation stage leads to greater openness to local realities, not foreseen in the design stage, and reduces the probability that aid programs or projects need redesigning, increasing their effectiveness. The main intention is to explain why we have more and less successful projects related to the Dutch-Yemen NPT program, as presented and analyzed in Chapters 7, 8 and 9. Sometimes LK incorporated well in one region, may fall short in another setting. Finally, the findings from these two tested hypotheses allows us to propose a new practical model, that can ensure the process of incorporating LK at the policy implementation level and thus promoting public sector reforms in poor nations.

10.3 Policy Analysis at the Implementation Level (Middle Management Level)

Here we discuss the processes that affect the incorporation of local knowledge through the NPT policy implementation. However, prior to the discussion of these processes, I briefly link the aid policy implementation to the main theoretical debate of the policy implementation, reviewed in Chapter 3 of this study and the above section of this chapter. This is in order to give a practical definition of aid policy implementation. In practice in aid policy, there is still a separation in policy-making and policy implementation, following the synoptic approach or the top-down approach of policy implementation. Policy-making is mainly done by the donor organizations and contractors do policy implementation. For example, MinBuza makes policy under influence of the main multilateral donors, and then hands the policy implementation over to the middle management, in the form of programs and projects within a framework decided by MinBuza. Often this framework is too narrow for the middle management (and also for implementers who come at a lower level), to integrate lessons learned from projects where reference is made to LK, and so feedback which could have contributed to a more effective policy decision making
and implementation is neglected. The feedback from the implementers of their experiences in the field, is not much used in reviewing the policy-making of the donors. LK can only be collected through experiences in the field and if donors are hardly using the field information, LK will not appear in the policy-making.

This study theoretically argues against the synoptic approach, which is adapted by the donor organizations, as it did not and will not adequately address the problematic nature of LKS. There are many reasons for this. First, it is a challenge according to the current practice in the aid system to, incorporate informal information on LK of specific setting and time of aid project intervention, during the policymaking process. Second, the broken feedback loop from the field or the lower level to the higher level within the aid system, as we mentioned above. Third, the geographical separation of where the aid policy is formulated (in the capital of a donor country) and where the actual aid policy implementation takes place (in a recipient country).

In this study, we argue that there is possibility to incorporate information on LK during the actual policy implementation process. The implementation of an aid policy is the most vital phase, as it is at this stage that the success or failure of an aid project is determined. During the plan implementation process, which is the responsibility of the middle management level, there might be a chance of including LK if time and money are made available for doing research. Since there is often no time and insufficient money, this seldom happens.

Accordingly, I agree with Rondinelli that if we establish an effective model that ensures the incorporation of local knowledge, the aid policymaking and implementation must be more closely integrated or linked in order to reduce uncertainties and unknowns of local settings in the recipient countries (Rondinelli, 2003). However, I want to argue more that LK is only manifesting itself during the interactions at implementation level and that there are a number of processes, which prevent the plan for implementation conducted by the middle management to integrate LK effectively. Therefore, this study focuses on projects, because they are particularly designed to translate policy goals into actions. As we mentioned in the previous section, the implementers (contactors) of aid projects are “the players at the heart of the aid intervention process”, because their advantage is to solve the LKS through their direct and indirect interactions, with all actors involved in the actual process of implementation in the specific places and time. It may allow us to develop variations in the level of incorporating local knowledge across the selected NPT projects we quantitatively examined in former chapters. The quantitative analysis
showed varied results among the selected projects as we have more and less effective projects in terms of achieving their overall and specific objectives.

**Nuffic as Planner for Implementing the NPT program**

MinBuza designed the policy framework of the Dutch NPT program in 2001, with the overall objective to help developing countries strengthen their institutional capacity for post-secondary education and training, in a sustainable way that equips them to meet their own needs for training and manpower. The programme was targeted at post-secondary education and training capacity, relevant to the sectors targeted for Dutch bilateral aid and to cross-sectoral or supra-sectoral themes. More general support to the higher education sector was also a possibility (Aa, et al., 2007:11). The overall objective of the NPT program in Yemen was to strengthen the teaching learning conditions, the overall capacity of institutions, the higher education system, and the institutions which are part of the system. It aimed to raise the capacity and quality of higher education to provide services for promoting capacity development within the Yemeni public, private and non-governmental sectors (Visser and Almoassib, 2008:1).

MinBuza selected Nuffic to manage the NPT program over 15 participating countries, by following a tender process, where Nuffic had to bid against other organizations. MinBuza as the policy-maker handed over the policy framework to Nuffic, as the middle manager who handed on its turn this policy framework over to the contractors as the policy-implementers. However, as we will later see in the discussions on the project implementation, the framework set by MinBuZa and by Nuffic did not leave much room open to absorb LK, let alone integrate it in the decision-making process. Up to this point, an immediate question I asked the interviewees is ‘what is your opinion about the tender procedures on which Nuffic was selected to manage the NPT program?’ One reply was the role of the middle management level specified by the policymaking level (MinBuZa). One interviewee's

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24 - All the information presented in this section is mainly based on the official documents of the NPT program and the interviews that I conducted during the field study (1/6/2013 to 19/9/2013).

25 - For more details about the overall objective of the NPT program and the Dutch aid in the cross-sectoral or supra-sectoral themes in recipient countries including Yemen see Chapter 6.

26 - The countries that participate in the NPT have been selected by MinBuZa from among the countries with which the Netherlands has multi-year cooperation arrangements. The NPT programme is being implemented in the following 15 countries: (1) Benin (2) Colombia (3) Eritrea (4) Ethiopia (5) Ghana (6) Guatemala (7) Indonesia (8) Mozambique (9) Rwanda (10) South Africa (11) Tanzania (12) Uganda (13) Vietnam (14) Yemen (15) Zambia (see Nuffic website).

27 - As we mentioned before, Nuffic represents the middle management level of NPT program implementation process. The middle management level is defined as an actor practicing both a subordinate role and a supervisory role, located between the level of policymaking and the operational level (Floyd and Lane 2000). The middle management is also the integrative agent between the donor government or its direct provider and the recipient organization and its direct
profound statement was that:

The bidding criteria for obtaining the management of the NPT were designed by MinBuZa in such a way that only an administrative office could qualify. The bidders were not asked to bring innovative or development thoughts or actions, but stick to the NPT policy and implementation framework. When Nuffic won the tender it received this framework and aside from slight adaptations, Nuffic did not get the opportunity to bring in the knowledge and experiences the project managers had collected from implementing programmes in former Higher Education Development programmes, such as MHO and before PUO. With this framework, MinBuZa also lost its opportunity to collect LK within the Higher Education sectors of the different countries. This could have had a more positive effect on the policy-making and policy-implementation of the NPT program28.

MinBuZa could opt for an administrative organization or a development to implement the NPT It is not clear why MinBuZa selected an administrative organization (Nuffic) rather than opting for a development organization. Possibly it was the fear that working outside the already-existing templates would lead to more work. The main difference between these two kinds of organizations are that the administrative organization will carefully apply the framework with all its rules and regulations, trying to avoid exceptions, and the development organization will put much attention to practical solutions for problems arising from the implementation of the program, and analyze what patterns could be discovered to tilt the implementation process to higher levels. Thomas (2007) explains that there are specific questions concerning the development aid agencies to develop the ideas of ‘the right thing to do’ over local or national autonomy. It was clear for him that management of a development process involves challenges not only over what is the

recipient organization(s). Middle management links the donor government with the recipient government, and the donor contractors with their counterparts. Actually, any marginal role at this level will lead to a contradiction in ideas and expectations of the program among the respective actors. Moreover, in this level, there is ability to affect and change aid intervention directions, considerations, insertions, and objectives into direct recipient organizations practical perspectives and contexts (Rosalia Aldraci, et al, 2009).

28 - I asked the interviewees the following question: Do you see that Nuffic as an organization for development or is it focusing more on money moving? One interviewee said that Nuffic should be confined to learn more in what they do. Nuffic should be aware if it is an administrative unit and it is main mission is to distribute money based on their own administrative procedures. In this case, Nuffic should check if their administrative procedures are respected or not in doing their administrative duties. ON THE OTHER HAND, Nuffic can say that it is a development organization, which has its development vision and the institutional memory for learning from their experiences. Nuffic should develop along, if this project or that does not work, it should be there a more room to divide. Nuffic wants to be learned organization to have a lot of knowledge of the implementation process; but in the reality, it has many constraints. Nuffic is an administrative organization that often get money from the government, and this money should be distributed quickly under the conditions that there should be a high impact of the projects. Nuffic should bring to the surface some outcomes for the taxpayers and the parliament in The Netherlands. There is no a room to compromise quality. In this kind of approach, at the end after 4 years, the evaluation will take place, the same subjects such as gender is important, and institution development is important. So, the highest objectives are more moved to the background. “In reality, I see this in Nuffic very often that in one hand they have very beautiful words in their programs but in the reality they are an administrative office and not a real development agency”(it was noted).
right thing to do but also over what must be the guiding principles or values of development itself by explaining its own “normative stance” (2007, in Jaradat, 2008).

Let us now look at the role of Nuffic as an administrative organization, in managing the NPT program in the context of Yemen. It was pointed out by the interviewees that Nuffic has no specialized staff with knowledge in managing the aid projects in Yemen. The policy framework [MinBuZa] posted several lines of development, which needed different type of expertise that could not be found in one organization, and they needed an aid sector specialism within the organization or even a field management specialist.

After Nuffic won the MinBuZa tender evaluation, it started with a Plan of Implementation (POI), which according to the final evaluation document of 2012 of the NPT program conducted by Ramboll Foundation on behalf of the MinBuza, followed a linear process of four phases: (1) the demand identification, (2) the demand articulation, (3) the tender procedure and (4) the project implementation. Nuffic mainly conducted the first three phases and Dutch contractors who were responsible of the actual implementation process of the aid projects (the operational level) conducted the last phase.

Figure 10.1 The Linear Phases of the NPT’s POI in Yemen

The demand identification phase is the core of the planning process for implementation, which is aimed at identifying the possibilities of building capacity in reality. It consists of four processes: information and research, fact-finding missions, implementation plan and selection of partners (Raetzell, 2012). Nuffic started this phase by conducting a “desk research” for collecting and analyzing international and national information and data on the recipient countries. One interviewee expressed
doubts about the value of the desk research, as Nuffic was confronted with 15 NPT countries and with a short time schedule set by MinBuza. Hence, there was not much room for Nuffic to deal with the details of all those countries and to get information about the peculiarities of each country, thus developing a well thought of NPT program implementation plan. The main input in this desk research remained limited to available global and related donors’ knowledge, as we argued in former section, and little or no attention paid to informal local knowledge, such as “salaries are low, so there is little motivation among staff to do additional work” or “recruitment is based on relationships than on merits”.

It was mentioned by interviewees that for Yemen, the desk study was mainly limited to getting knowledge from existing information and data on Yemen in general and the Higher Education sector in particular. The basic document for Higher Education was the report that was developed for the Learning and Innovation Credit project of the World Bank. Time and money were not reserved for undertaking part of the desk research in Yemen itself. Experiences of other countries already engaged in the NPT or former Nuffic programmes were used as well. In this way, the fact-finding mission was organized on the available data and it was expected that during the mission itself and during implementation of the NPT projects, more information would be collected for further use. The question here is if more local knowledge was available, would the fact-finding mission and further implementation have differed from what actually happened? For example, informal local knowledge on the general lack of a scholarly approach among Yemeni university teachers, and an overall resistance to additional knowledge and skills might have stopped Nuffic or NPT investment in the Yemeni universities. If the formal local knowledge on the HE system, in which the university rectors are at the same level as the Minister of Higher Education and not in a subordinated position, was used, it might have been that the coordinator of the NPT programme would have been sought at the level of the Prime Minister’s Office; where the universities and Ministry of Higher Education meet each other through the Council for Higher Education and not at the level of the Vice-Minister of Higher Education. It was only during the implementation phase that this construction between Vice-Minister and Rectors was discovered. The choice for the Vice-Minister was a logical step, following the World Bank report in which the Vice-Minister had participated, and following the advice of the Dutch Embassy, that had good relations with the Vice Minister. Luckily the Vice-Minister was a charismatic figure. Yet the choice made in this period had repercussions during the implementation
On the other hand, it was clearly experienced by some interviewers that Nuffic just did quick desk research, which left it open to the “local knowledge syndrome”. The worst-case scenario is that the plan of Dutch-Yemen NPT program was based upon just collection of loose ideas, precepts and positions published in the online networks. One interviewed aid official commented: “Most of the donors’ agencies including Nuffic put the local knowledge incorporation process in its abstract level. This is because if they put the local knowledge in its real sense, it will work against their tender proposal for getting the fund from the policy making level. ‘Interviewers noted’ that conducting development strategy resulted from a process of rigorous research and an institutional analysis of the targeted organizations will show that their “tender proposal” will not work and it does not fit with the main intentions of the NPT program”.

Eshuchi (2009) evoked the same factor in his study about the donor programs to promote the higher education sectors in Africa. The author pointed out:

Most donor programs in higher education do not earmark funding for research on higher education in Africa. Policy and practice can be better informed by empirical data regarding various issues and success indicators in higher education such as graduate absorption rates in the labor market and labor market needs. Yet a lot of donors involved in the support for higher education either ignore research on higher education completely or mostly use data from the World Bank, which though being acknowledged as an authoritative source, is hardly up to data and most of its data is specifically tailored to its own needs. Thus, most programs are based on sketchy, or even wrong, data and this affects their viability and eventual success (2009: 42).

In the fact-finding phase, Nuffic held a meeting in Aden on 22 January 2003, with representatives of the MHESR, the Yemeni universities and Community Colleges and the World Bank, the Dutch Embassy, The British Council and the NUFFIC. The meeting marked the launch of the Higher Education Project (HEP), financed by a Learning and Innovation Credit of the World Bank. NUFFIC’s participation in the meeting was to achieve “optimal coordination and complementarity between the

29 The respondents of the Dutch interviews reflected their ideas on their role in the process of demand identification in their responses to the following questions: “what was Nuffic’s specific role during the identification process of NPT program in Yemen?” The role of Nuffic is limited in formulating the conditions, which would allow us [Nuffic] to set up the capacity-building program in Yemen. This role started by setting with the Higher Education sector in Yemen to see which inputs the NPT can contribute to improve the higher education system and the higher education institutions, which are part of the system. However, Nuffic program has certain futures that they should stick to, as the program is worldwide that operates in different countries and it was not only operating in the Yemeni context. However, the Yemeni context was unique in this regard [they noted]. Yemen was much unfamiliar case and no one basically knows how things are going in Yemen. The expiration of the special interests and the priorities of reform were determined only by the Yemenis. We set up the NPT program based on the information we got from two sources: the vice minister of the higher education ministry by personalized approach and the World Bank project as mentioned above about it.
various support efforts to Yemeni higher education.” Because it had already been decided, for undoubtedly good reasons, that the NPT effort would be an integrated contribution to, and in fact piggybacked onto, the HEP, the question of what needs ought to be served was no longer investigated in a manner recommended by the acknowledged literature on needs assessment (Visser and Almoassib, 2008:7-8). To assist in the HEP implementation the following NPT sectors were selected: Information and Communication Technology, Public and Business Administration at postgraduate level, Basic Sciences and Gender. Furthermore, it was equally determined during the same meeting that “initially all seven public universities and the three community colleges” would participate in, and therefore be the institutional beneficiaries of, the NPT effort. With this last decision made by the MoHESR representatives, the Selection of Partners phase could be shifted to a later moment during the Project Articulation. The Identification phase was closed with the handing over of the Project formats to the representatives of the universities and the Community Colleges. They were asked by the Vice Minister and Nuffic to submit proposals as soon as possible with the requested information.

There are many factors mentioned by the interviewees, which made the fact-finding missions ineffective in playing a role toward incorporating information on local knowledge. In general, it was stated that the fact-finding mission phase to Yemen was too short. The data collected during the desk research did not give members of the team sufficient knowledge to discuss NPT’s wishes, and wants with the Yemeni representatives. The time during the first meeting was merely sufficient to exchange the main characteristics of the NPT program with the main features of the HE sector. Time to do a more detailed study was not given and would probably also not have been welcomed by the Yemeni representatives. What remained, however, was that the Nuffic mission returned with a little further information and the Yemeni counterparts were left behind with a lot of questions on what should come, and only with the certainty that money would be invested in their HE system.

The interviews evoked several questions, such as, would more Local Knowledge have resulted in a better selection than the four areas and the Yemeni partners? For example, would information that in Yemen most academics and leaders in the Higher Education sector hardly read reports or literature have prevented Nuffic from taken actions towards this attitude in this stage? Maybe with this information more pressure could have been exercised on the Rectors to stimulate their staff, but that could have only been done at the project levels. This information would not have had any
influences on the documents to be drafted and signed by the leaders with regards to the Plan of Implementation and the respective Plans of Operations.

The second mission of Nuffic to Sana’a in May 2003, can be considered as the first step in the Demand Articulation phase, where the information packages were collected from the Yemeni partners, discussed and prioritized. Nevertheless, according to the Yemenis interviewed, Nuffic, in close cooperation with the Embassy, also decided to include two more sectors, namely Water and Health – two focal areas of the Embassy that got less funding through the Netherlands’ bilateral aid. One can agree with the statement that ‘in line with the Dutch assistance approach towards capacity building, the selected sectors dovetail well with the aims and basic principles of Dutch development policy, as formulated in the track of the international trends of education policy framework’ (Ruud van der Aa, 2007, 166). The NPT program was linked to the traditional bilateral sectors of the Netherlands’ development cooperation: (1) water and sanitation, (2) health and (3) education, and also focusing on crosscutting themes: (1) gender, (2) good governance, (3) institutional development and (4) ICT 30 (see Chapter 6).

The interviewees were also asked the following questions: Do you see a clear Yemeni expression of interest in the selected priority areas or did the Yemeni representatives just go along with the Netherlands’ priorities? Did the NPT program request that the projects should be integrated in the overall reform of the Ministry of Higher Education? Were the fact-finding missions effective to formulate development priorities that were sufficiently realistic to allocate NPT funding? On what basis did you make your judgment? It is worthwhile to reiterate here that many of the interviewees indicated that Yemeni partners had no a clear idea about what they

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30 - Good governance, for example, was developed through the MPA, MBA, and NIAS projects. One would have expected detailed analysis and reports on the selected priority areas. Instead, only outlines were proposed, like Christmas wish lists. In any case, fourteen projects related to the Dutch-Yemen NPT program were identified and implemented in different organizations within the higher education sector in Yemen to reform these sectors. These were: (1) Reform and Development of Problem-Based Learning Approach at Hadhramout Medical College (HUCOM) in Mukahla; (2) Strengthening the Higher Education Project Management Unit to Manage the NPT in Yemen/MoHESR; (3) Developing an ICT Policy for the Yemen Higher Education System and Master Plans for ten institutions of Higher Learning; (4) establishment of an MBA Degree Programme at Sana’a University; (5) Strengthening the Water and Environment Centre of Sana’a University; (6) Graduate Programme in Integrated Water Resource Management; (6) Women’s Research and Training Centre (WRTC), Aden University; (7) Strengthening Basic Science Education in Yemen/ Mathematics And Science Teacher Education Reform in Yemen “MASTERY”; (8) Establishment of an executive MPA Degree Programme at Sana’a University; (9) Strengthening the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research MoHESR in managing foreign assistance projects including the NPT and NFP in Yemen; (10) Strengthening the Ministry of Technical Education & Vocational Training (MTEVT) and Sana’a Community College and the Industrial Technical Institute, Muala, Aden; (11) Strengthening the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MoHESR); (12) Phase 1 implementation of the Yemen Foundation of Information Technology in Higher Education (YFIT-HE); (13) Phase 2 implementation of the Yemen Foundation of Information Technology in Higher Education (YFIT-HE); and (14) Training implementation of the Yemen Foundation of Information Technology in Higher Education (YFIT-HE Training).
wanted to achieve, and how. They were incapable of making a clear analysis of their situation at their respective universities since no strategies were available and reliable data could not be produced. It is therefore unlikely that they would be able to present strategic proposals for developing their universities. The Yemeni partners agreed with the Netherlands’ priorities, as long as the NPT would start. The proposals brought forward by the different universities and colleges were far from what Nuffic expected to receive. The proposals lacked most situational information, had no clear objectives and aims, or a sound work strategy. Most projects consisted of lists of equipment needed in the selected fields and training of staff.

Let us now analyze the second mission in terms of local knowledge. Many interviewees stated that, due to the fact that on request of the MoHESR all seven public universities and all community colleges could participate in the programme, there was no moment for Nuffic, and the whole selection process was a Southern affair. The complication for Nuffic and later the implementers was that they were not sure that they were working with the most capable institutions. The reasoning of putting one university in a better position than the other was never put on paper and discussed (see also Chapter 9). It was demonstrated that some projects were unsuccessful because of the selection of the wrong university, faculty and managers. Often during the implementation phase, contractors were confronted with university leaders who claimed that the selected sectors were not their priorities, but from the donors.

Another point is that Nuffic, not knowing the Yemeni HE sector, relied too much on secondary information and on contacts through third persons. In the latter case, the Dutch Embassy had good contacts with the Vice-Minister, through cooperation in Basic Education programmes. However, the Ministry of Higher Education is quite different from the Ministry of Basic Education. The fact that universities had their own financial links directly to the Ministry of Finance, and that they had their own responsibilities in defining their role, in the society, placed the Ministry in a more advising than leading role during the NPT development and implementation in Yemen.

The majority of rectors did not speak English and were dependent on the translation and interpretation, during the workshops where the NPT was explained and negotiations took place. The atmosphere set by the officials, was that everyone should be positive on the propositions from the Nuffic and the Embassy, because deviations would lead to delays in the implementation. The project jargon used was
totally unrecognizable by the recipients, for whom the NPT was probably the first time that they had to deal with foreign donors. The ‘open discussions’ did not invite university representatives to give much comment during the negotiations between the official representative of MoHESR, Nuffic and the Embassy. This was more or less in line with what I explained in Chapter 4 that in principle, the top men speak and decide and it is only during implementation that alternatives appear. The top-men at all levels of administrative hierarchy are looking towards their organizations, as they are their groups of families or tribes. Most of the top men always claim they know which is right and wrong to an organization business.

The aforementioned lack of reading capability (in English) among academics and leaders, meant that the project proposals with all the questions and explanations were quickly put aside or given to lower ranks, who tried to make the best out of them. Rectors and directors with the right informal channels to the top man profited, in presenting their proposals despite not having the information.

In responding to the time and finance pressures of MinBuZa, Nuffic behaved as a good administrative organization. Critics might question why Nuffic, confronted with a _terra incognita_, did not develop a more explanatory guideline without too much jargon, to make the counterparts more familiar with donor aid and expectations from the donor side once involved in the NPT program. A development organization would have made more effort to undertake a situational analysis, to know the in and outs of the Higher Education in Yemen. It would have taken into consideration that it would take time and also money, to get the trust of the interviewees to bring forward not only the formal, but also the informal information of the HE system and its structure.

Nuffic followed different steps to come to a Plan of Implementation. It answered to the wishes of MinBuZa to get the programme in Yemen started within a short period. For that reason, the time between the first identification mission and the second articulation mission was only three months. Due to the lack of local knowledge, it was confronted with selections of persons and institutes by the Yemeni partners, but not on clear criteria. This required NPT Country Managers in The Hague to solve problems at a later stage that could have been foreseen if LK, and in particular formal LK, had been available from the beginning.

Instead of organizing a thorough situation analysis of the higher education in Yemen, the three parties found the solution to give the developmental role to a Yemen NPT Project Coordinator through a NPT project, helping Nuffic to regain the
administrative role again. Most problems arising from informal and formal LK could be solved through the Vice-Minister of HESR and this Project Coordinator.

The question then becomes: what is a practical method to incorporate LK during the process of demand identification? To answer this question, the respondents indicated that to deal with countries which have a “weak capacity” like Yemen, Nuffic should have first of all conducted rigorous research and consultation and a thorough institutional analysis of the targeted organizations. The institutional analysis is essential, because of many reasons. The first is the inexperience of Nuffic, regarding different aspects of Yemeni higher education system and the ignorance of the Yemeni higher education system with the NPT program. It was the first program for Nuffic to deal with in the context of Yemeni higher education sector. Moreover, it was the first reform program to be implemented in the Yemeni higher education’s system by a donor country. Therefore the NPT program in Yemen was a new experience for both sides. The second reason is that institutional analysis will be used as basis or backup for the future implementation processes of the NPT program in Yemen. The third is the local knowledge in the secondary resources from the experience of projects in other countries, which are just assumed to be similar for Yemen under the argument that all developed countries have more or less the same characteristics. Many interviewees expressed that taking information from different settings and trying to adopt it, for example taking information from Uganda to Yemen, is an abstract action toward incorporating local knowledge because every country has its own set of circumstances.

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Demand articulation is composed of three processes: information packages for the requesting organizations, project outline, and capacity self-assessment (Raetzell, 2012). A relevant question here would be, whether there is any relationship between the LKS and the other variables related to the aforementioned processes. Surprisingly, the interviewees’ responses were clear that the lack of information on local knowledge collected during demand identification, repeats itself during the demand articulation. Nuffic requested the national NPT program manager in The Hague, to propose local experts to assist in the development of the project’s terms of reference. Together with a Northern partner the projects outlines were developed. The Yemeni interviewees noted that the information packages sent to the participating institutions were for many Yemeni managers, their first experience with foreign aid programs. They faced problems in the assessment and analyses requested. They could not understand the
Chapter 10

Project jargon and it was difficult to collecting certain data, as it was normally produced by their institutes. For many institutions a development policy was not available, and staff development plans, teaching skills assessments, and descriptions of functions, faculties, departments and units were non-existent. Some used the national coordinator as the middleman, to be on the list with a minimum of deaf requested and make of the analysis leaking. This also gave the national coordinator the power to assist those requests were familiar to them. It not surprising then that the University of Sana’a participated in five projects out of 15 projects allocated in Yemen as part of the NPT program.

The most interesting comments were related to the project outline, it was difficult for the selected institutions to develop and they got assistance from the NPT program coordinator. Since neither the Ministry of Higher Education, nor the national NPT program coordinator would come up with the needed assistance, the Dutch Embassy and Nuffic decided to develop a project in which the Dutch consulate, would help in collecting the formal data, mainly for the projects’ terms of reference. Even with this assistance, it was difficult to get the requested SWOT analysis. The Yemeni partners were supposed to give the local knowledge to make the project implementation visible; however, they could deviate from the formal information. Since each piece of information about the staff, curriculum, courses and equipment had to pass all through all levels—the head of sections, the faculty council, and the university council—each weakness and deviation from the legal processes were heavily sanitized, and not stated in the final version. The possibilities to integrate local knowledge diminished greatly through these exercises.

We can make several observations here. The first is that actors from both the Yemeni side and the Dutch side were incapable of including information on local knowledge. It was there a clear lack of formal and informal data on the structure, organization, management and staffing and the censorship at the various levels did not provide a good picture of the targeted institutes31. The second is if we consider all

31 - It is so important to incorporate informal information about the social dynamics of the organizations with which you are dealing with. We argued in Chapter 4 of this study and confirmed it by the practical examples discussed in Chapter 9 that the functioning of the higher education institutions in Yemen is affected by many administrative and social dynamics and deeply-rooted values and patterns of behavior. These include attitudes to hierarchy and seniority (top men), to tribe and family, to ‘political’ and to ‘appointed’ staff, to political party and to personal gain an advantage as compared with any sense of the public interest. Other relevant issues include the significance of money as a motivator, or of formal rules, compared with the informal expectations and self-policing patterns of behavior of those who work in the system and who have accepted its norms. For example, it was found in Chapter 9 regarding curriculum design and teaching that in a situation where northern staff are seen as external experts whose inputs needed to be paid for, but southern staff’s inputs are seen as counterpart support that cannot be paid from donor funds, there is always the possibility of tension developing in the partnership. It worsens in countries like Yemen where a local salary is about one-tenth of the external experts.
the processes initiated by Nuffic to plan for implementing the NPT program in Yemen, one can find that there is academic planning with little mention of the reality of having little time and limited funding. The linear academic planning is often traversed by perilous planning skipping different stages (see figure 10.2 below). The other interesting result is that, the demand of identification and articulation processes about the higher education system in Yemen was not understood. The information provided was short, even on the formal aspects of the Yemeni higher education system.

The third observation we can make is that the information in the project outlines, did not give the Dutch contractors the information to prepare for problems, they could face, confronted with the local situation in the actual implementation. It may be the case that the actual implementation of the projects became just a lottery if they were succeeded or not. This systematic observation leads us on to discuss the last process, which is the actual implementation of the selected four NPT projects in Yemen. This is to see if there is variation among the selected aid projects in level of incorporation of LK in the specific place and time, in a way that can explain why we have more and less effective aid projects.

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Before turning to analyze the actual implementation of the NPT projects and their relation to the LKS, I wish to discuss the last phase of the Plan of Implementation, the tender procedures with a focus on the evaluation grid and tender evaluation and their relations with LK. The debate in this section is based on the answers to the following questions to Nuffic, tenderers and Yemeni partners: Could you explain your evaluation grid for tender proposals? Was this grid used for all NPT projects or was it adapted to the individual projects? Why was only a minor percentage given for local expertise? With increasing local knowledge, is it to be expected that this percentage will increase as well? What were the main comments and concerns of these teams (tenders) in the project proposals, with regard to local knowledge? What were the main issues discussed during the contract negotiation? Did you introduce the winning contractor to their Yemeni partners or was it left to the contractor him/herself? Was there special introduction program for contractors on how to work in a Yemeni context?
I use the answers to these questions to highlight my argument why LK is hardly or not measured in the evaluation of the tender proposals. Our aim is to highlight some notions, which cast serious questions on the relation between the tender procedure and the LKS.

Let us now turn to the first point which provoked the interviewers. The tender prescribes several criteria, but within these attached criteria to select the bidders (the contractors) in competitive process, there is no criterion related to the experience within the country concerned. That shows how LK was downplayed in the first place. According to some interviewees, Nuffic was simply following the European Commission approach, which as Jenkins and Plowden (2008) explain includes categories such as organization and methodology (rationale 20%, strategy 20% and timetable 10%). The other 50% is divided according to qualifications and skills, and general and specific professional experience.

In this project, Nuffic adapted the EC criteria as follows (Nuffic, TEC reports, 2003):

1. Capacity of the applicant organization/consortium. This includes several categories. The applicant organization/consortium has to show that it has knowledge and experience of education and training in the subject area of the project in question. The applicant organization/consortium has specific project implementation experience in the region with the subject matter in question.

2. Substantive quality of the proposed project that includes items such understanding of the needs and problems (quality of the analysis of the problem and its context).

3. Technical quality of the proposed project that includes items such as logical coherence between objectives, planned results, activities, required resource, indicators and sources of verification.

4. Quality of the team members that includes experience and expertise
of the project director and team members.

(5) Use of regional capacity that includes the degree to which possibilities for education and training which already exist in the region (not belonging to the counterpart sector and its organizations) will be used, and the degree to which local or regional expertise (not belonging to the counterpart sector and its organizations) will be enlisted for the project.

(6) Price: one point for each 1.5% the budget falls below the maximum possible amount of the project.

The first two criteria are not requesting specific knowledge about the recipient country or region. The tenderer can use experiences from other countries to show they have sufficient organization and substantive quality. Furthermore the technical quality criterion does not necessitate a visit to the recipient country.

With regards to criterion 4, most bidders know it is good to have a Team Leader with experience in the region. For example if someone is working for a consultancy agency in education reform in Saudi Arabia and that firm is going to bid for the proposal, the bidder is lucky, because it will get points for the experience of the company and additional points for their expert. Regarding the use of Regional Capacity, again a trip to the recipient country is not required, as information can be garnered on the internet or through connections from former projects, and intentions exchanged with future institutions in the region once the bidder has won the contract. According to interviewees the only opportunity to put in LK was when the strategy and workplan were developed.

It is however not wise to put too much LK in the proposal, in order not to confuse the partner organization in Yemen with information, that might give another interpretation of the situation than they perceive themselves. The same was experienced with innovative proposals, where the Yemeni partners no longer recognized what was being discussed during the writing of the Terms of Reference. The consequence was that the scores decreased from the Yemeni side. One contractor mentioned that he always paid a visit to the country, for which he was going to bid in order to see the future setting. He acknowledged that three or four days were not sufficient to analyze the total situation, but he said that showing his face was appreciated by the counterparts. He mentioned that actual meetings with the counterparts, were officially forbidden during the development of the tender proposal, but he did not want to make the decision to bidding only from his desk in the Netherlands and present ‘best practices’ from experiences in other countries. It was
mentioned that it was not LK that gave you high scores, but the use of words that were in fashion, such as gender, marketing strategies, ownership, and sustainability. The safest way was to stick close to the Terms of Reference without too many details.

Therefore, concerning the evaluation grid, the interviewees observed that there is actually no criterion directly related to local knowledge. Is local knowledge stimulated by inviting a Southern evaluator in the tender evaluation committee? The tender evaluation committee, consist of three evaluators: the first, in most cases, the Nuffic programme coordinator for that particular country; the second, a Southern evaluator, in most cases someone who was closely involved in the development of the proposal; and a third evaluator, an external person, in most cases an expert in the area of the project content. One of the evaluators acts as the chairperson. It is assumed that Nuffic and the Southern expert will cover the ‘specific country or regional experiences’. The process of evaluating is transparent: each evaluator will receive a grid in which they have to fill in their own assessments of the proposals. The scores are discussed within the team whenever there are differences in opinions. Together they come to a final score.

Although the processes are transparent, one of the major problems found is that the assessment of proposals is totally new for the Southern partner. They are suddenly bombarded with four or five negotiations and no guidelines are given on how to read these proposals, how to translate the project jargons, and how to quickly read the skills and knowledge from the presented CVs. As long as the background information and workplan is recognizable, they feel safe. Deviations from the original plan, such as details on the environment the bidder intends to work on with, or innovative approaches are not very much appreciated and as already mentioned will lead often to lower scores. One of the main difficulties mentioned is the assessment of CVs of the expert team. A checklist on how to read them was not given and for that reason the Yemeni evaluators focused more on the importance of the institute they were going to work with. Was it on the list of the 200 best universities? Did the degree give access to European universities? All other information became more or less subordinated to these questions. Although it was supposed that the evaluator would work individually, the scoring decisions often became a shared exercise with a small group, since the evaluators wanted to avoid potential individual blame later on. Often the Yemeni evaluator went along with the scores of the Northern partners. The focus of the Yemeni partners on the status of the Netherlands’ institute gives more problems in the extension of the project. The Northern concept that, every three or four years
a company has to go through a bidding process is a strange process for the Yemeni partners, where long-term commitments are more important than quick solutions by each group. The whole exercise is seen as something which is not in the interest of Yemen, but that belongs to the Northern games. The main issue for the Yemeni partner is that it can keep the Netherlands’ institute that they are increasingly acquainted with. Until present, most of the projects, which got a second phase show that trust in the partner that offers quality, is highly appreciated. One of the Yemeni interviewers asked if in the Netherlands, a new university would be selected to conduct a Management program every four years\(^{32}\).

In brief, the data presented, indicates that the tender procedure is not very much inviting for presenting LK in the bidding proposals. The trend is to keep the information as short as possible (limitation of pages is even requested) and not to propose innovative approaches, because that might not be understood by the Yemeni evaluator. The bidding proposals are for that reason more or less a copy of the Tender proposal, which is again based on the data and information collected during the identification and articulation phase. As already concluded, much LK is not collected and assessed during these phases. It means that the contractors have shifted the confrontation with the Yemeni society from MinBuZa and Nuffic towards the implementation phase. This is especially, as Nuffic has not yet established clear methods to prepare the selected Dutch organizations for the actual implementation about the local knowledge aspects before sending them to the field.

On this point, I asked the Dutch contractors and their experts who went to Yemen the following questions: What was your preparation for implementing your project in Yemen? Did your Project Director brief you about the whole situational framework of the project and what they could expect in Yemen or where you gotten the job descriptions only? What was the role of your International Department and Nuffic in this regard?\(^{33}\) One Dutch interviewee replied that:

\(^{32}\) - One interviewee suggested that the tender procedure as such is a Northern demand. Where would you see in Europe that in higher education technical assistance a totally new team with new approaches appears every four years? Especially in the Arabic world where trust is one of the main features for cooperation, this Northern concept is destroys any mid- or long-term policy, strategy and implementation. Aside from the three or four year tenders, the Southern policies are also disturbed by each change of a Northern Minister who likes make their mark on their government period by changing (among other things) the education experts within the Embassy. Where in Europe do you see an education system where every three years a completely new team of teachers comes to the schools to present their new methodologies and approaches? Another point made by another interviewee is that if a project has to get an extension or a new phase and the Southern partners are happy with the Dutch implementers, they will abstain from information that will be counter-productive towards this extension and towards the implementers. So even in a second phase, only the present team will know the LK and a new winning bidder will start all over again, losing time, trust and money.

\(^{33}\) - There is other opinion we got form the interviewees which is that the briefing is not problem by itself. They argued that the problem is much more in the project identification phase as we mentioned before, which it did not address all the local issues. Nuffic just picked plural **low-hanging fruits**. Nuffic confirmed, as no problems will appear during the
It would be good if Nuffic or at least the Contractor would have briefed us before going to Yemen on what to expect. During my time, I was regularly in troubles. Many of these troubles arose from the interpretation of the aims and objectives where most of my Yemeni colleagues were not aware of even with the person appointed as a counterpart, we had on-going conflict situations, which made work very difficult. Discussions on the way the project goals, objectives, logical framework had to implemented, were hardly held.

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Throughout this section, we have seen the pervasive evidence that the process of POI includes little local knowledge and also little understanding of the detail of the technicalities, of reforming Yemeni public administration. Our approach has been to look at the ideas of the Dutch and Yemeni interviewees, who were part of the plan of implementation of the Dutch NPT program in Yemen of how the LKs was downplayed. Following the linear process of three phases - (1) the demand identification, (2) the demand articulation, (3) the tender procedure adapted by Nuffic for POI – we have seen many factors preventing the incorporation of LK. Time and money pressure prevented the demand articulation phase from being thorough. Moreover, the demand and articulation phase were more or less done in parallel, not giving sufficient time to the Yemenis to chew on the newly acquired information on NPT and coming back with their feedback. Both Northern and Yemeni parties trusted information, given by a small group of top men claiming to represent the whole HE sector. From their side the Yemeni top men trusted that the Northern partners would be sufficiently flexible to permit all kinds of changes in aims, objectives and activities during the implementation. It made the whole exercise of the Plan of Implementation an adventure where from both sides actually no one knew what to expect. Before the implementation, Yemen remained a terra incognita for the Nuffic and the winning contractor, and for the Yemeni partners there was no preparation to get knowledge about the winning team either.

If so many activities are requested to start the real implementation of the projects and, at the same time, so little is known before the project starts, one could question if with more pressure on time and money, it is wise to spend so much effort at the start of the projects. If LK is not considered to be important in the first phases, why not take the gamble just to start with formulating projects in those areas where the implementation process of the aid projects, as there is already agreement with the local counterparts. Then, the contractors came to the country itself; the agreement pared which Nuffic made. It was completely different understood. The contractors have to re-discuss many of the themes, which was a bothering approach. That Nuffic did the project articulation not well and too often like “a dead body is coming out of the closet”.

Netherlands’ suppliers are best in. Why spend so much money on organizing seminars or workshops to get LK on the sectors most in need, only then to select the Netherlands’ favored sectors? Why not collect all ‘lessons learned’ by Nuffic from each project and use that as the framework, against which the project Terms of Reference will be developed? Why not ask the contractors to bring forward the LK specific approaches in their bidding proposals? This approach would however, require that MinBuZa allows Nuffic, to become a development organization with the capacity to assess each project proposal on its own merits. In the case of Yemen, with an Arabic culture where long-term relations are a basis for trust and cooperation, Nuffic would have to take up the struggle against MinBuza’s EU policy of tendering every four years. By long-term cooperation, LK will increasingly establish its role and the ‘lessons learned’ will become more a learning experience for Nuffic, the contractors and the Yemeni partners. The steadily increasing LK by Nuffic on the Yemeni HE would not only help the contractors in HE, but since the sectors are based on bilateral assistance, it would also help the Dutch bilateral contractors. Increasingly, time-consuming and costly seminars and workshops on the identification and articulation phases would become less important and needed.

Nuffic just did quick desk research which left it open to the “local knowledge syndrome”. The worst-case scenario is that, the demand articulation of Dutch-Yemen NPT program was based upon a collection of loose ideas, precepts and positions published on online networks. One of the main difficulties in collecting informal data during a short span of time is that the members of the mission are not fully trusted, the local leaders are not even aware of their social and cultural environment they work in, and the interpretation of local informal words into standard English could already give a wrong impression of the situation. Like most desk studies of other donors, the NPT desk studies were created in the donor country. Generally, national researchers or consultants provided little up-to-date input. In addition, here the time frame and financing played a major role in the decision to use local expertise. Thus the study often consisted of Nuffic representatives with information about the NPT programme and not much about the particular history, culture and politics of the country. The products were desk studies written in name of the recipient countries, but in reality not ‘demand driven’.

To summarise, demand articulation was composed of three processes: information packages for the requesting organizations, project outlines, and capacity self-assessment. The Yemeni interviewees said that the information packages sent to the
participating institutions were for many Yemeni managers, the first experience with foreign aid programs. They faced problems in the assessment and analyses requested, in understanding the project jargon and in collecting the data. The information in the project outlines did not give the Dutch contractors, the information to prepare for problems they could face confronted with the local situation in the actual implementation. In the tender process there are no criterion related to the experience within the country and sector concerned, thus downplaying LK from the off.

In this situation, during the actual implementation of aid projects, contractors can find themselves dealing with a difficult road of reform, trying to understand how to overcome the difficulties to achieve realistic results. They may also find themselves pressed to pass the difficult road of reform and to deliver results in timescales or in forms which they find completely unrealistic. Partly, the effective incorporation of LK occurs as a result of planning appropriate implementation plans.

One of the main arguments of this study is that to work towards the ideal of incorporating local knowledge, we must be aware of the importance of the informal interaction with individuals, as it is more significant than formally structured meetings with high policy makers or the top men. Individual interactions are identified, as a significant factor in the creation and sharing of knowledge within organizations in traditional countries (Cross, et al. 2001). Effective individual interactions need time for building trust and mutual understanding between the respective actors. Trust is an important factor in the creation of desired interactions and cooperation. Furthermore, it reduces uncertainties about the behavior of the other actor. In reality however, the middle stage of the voyage of aid program implementation is very short, mostly about three weeks. There is no room for building trust as a (stable) perception about the intentions of other southern actors. However this might be done during the actual translation of an aid program into projects, which can take more than five years (Jenkins and Plowden, 2006). To elaborate this argument, we now review the implementation of the four development policy areas (cases).

10.4 Policy Analysis at the Implementation Level (the Operational Level)

As we discussed before, at policy level the implementation of more or less international standardized programmes makes LK a footnote in the different country programmes. For the middle management, focusing on one or two sectors, and in the

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34 - In the coming section, the processes of implementation vary across the projects in a way that can explain why some projects were more successful than others were, as shown in the former chapters.
case of NPT on the Higher education sub-sector, LK should have become more important, but they relied on international reports and censured workshops so failed to take LK was not taken into account. In effect, all experiences with LK were pushed to the operational level of implementers. The ‘change’ that has been so far on paper and that did not affect the recipients becomes reality when implementation starts. Pros and cons that could have developed during the paper period appear during the implementation, through the work of the contractors and their consultants.

It could be the case that the information on LK can be incorporated at the grassroots level. The information on local knowledge remained unopened and an invisible black box until the operational level. The main argument of this study is the problematic that “Local Knowledge Syndrome” can “only” be solved during the actual implementation of the aid project. Decentralized agents such as contractors of aid projects, are players at the heart of the aid system and they can potentially close the local knowledge gap through their interactions with the beneficiaries. This is because LK is much linked to context and is time specific. Dealing with the LKS at the operational level leads to greater openness to local realities not foreseen in the design stage and reduces the probability that aid programs or projects need redesigning. However, contractors confronted with the black boxes, could either open them or keep them closed (or be unable to open them). This is reflected in the quantitative microanalysis (see Chapters 7, 8 and 9 and the below summary of the results) based on the “development validity approach”\textsuperscript{35}, where we revealed different results, i.e., projects had varying levels of effectiveness in achieving their overall and specific objectives.

10.4. 1 Summary of the Overall Results of the Quantitative Analysis

The overall objective of the Dutch NPT in Yemen was to promote the public sector reform process in Yemen. It did this by outlining specific objectives: building and strengthening the institutional capacity and capability for post-secondary education institutions in order to meet their own needs for training staff in the public sector. By using the “development validity approach”, the level of effectiveness of the selected NPT projects in achieving the above overall objective was measured ‘explicitly’ by using indicators as proxies that have been quantitatively analyzed in Chapters 7 and 8. The main source of evidence in this part of the quantitative analysis was the

\textsuperscript{35} - As we argued in previous chapters, the development validity approach is different in the case of measuring the success of the aid project than by linking between the objectives of the aid project and the level of effectiveness in achieving these objectives.
questionnaire and the unit of analysis was the students or the participants of the different selected projects from different organizations within the private and public sectors in Yemen. This population has three levels: the ministerial level (ministers and deputy ministers), the managerial level (general managers) and the unit level (department heads and employees). The sample size was 325, 65% of the total participants of the selected four projects\(^{36}\). The overall response rate was statistically acceptable, and a total of 227 (70%) questionnaires were returned acceptably answered and usable for the analysis. This is because we used the drop-off delivery where the typical response rate is around 70%.

Based on practical knowledge aspects of the Yemeni respective sectors provided in Chapters 4 and 7, five variables (indicators or measures) were developed to conduct quantitative analysis, to measure the level of effectiveness of the selected projects in achieving the overall objective and specific objectives of the NPT program in Yemen. We followed this methodology to first vary the results among the selected projects and second to work backward to analyse LKS, as the causal variable of having different results, as we reveal in this section. To conduct the first step of our enquiry, the first variable was the demographic profile and work background of participants. This variable reflects local knowledge facts and includes four measures or criteria that assumes that the project will be more successful when (m=1) there is orientation towards the promotion of female enrolment; (m=2) when there is a geographical and an organizational prevalence in the participation process throughout the different organizations and cities in Yemen; (m=3) when the enrolment of the participants focused on the age group 30-35 (and lower) more than other age groups, especially the age group 45+, and (m=) when the enrolment of the participants is focused on the low-level and (mid) level civil servants. The results based on a cross-case/measures analysis suggests that the WRTC (mean = 2.00, in the first position) and WEC (mean = 2.25 holding position 2) are more successful than MBA (mean=3.50 holding position 3), NIAS (mean=3.75 holding position 4), and MPA (mean=4.75 holding the last position 5), in selecting appropriate participants for attending the training process for capacity building process (see Chapter 7):

\(^{36}\) MPA and NIAS were established by one project, implemented by the ROI/Leiden University as a Dutch contractor. For more information, see Chapters 5 and 6.
Based on the ‘ideal model for capacity building within public sector in Yemen’ presented in Chapter 4, the second variable reflects the essential needs of training and capacity building of the Yemeni public sector. We assumed that any aid program like the Dutch NPT program, must develop the following managerial skills, dividing into four main skills categories: (1) the strategic management skills (2) the human resources management skills (3) the managerial communications skills; and (4) the leadership skills. Under the heading of these four main categories, we derived 32 indicators [measured items] from the literature reviewed in the former chapters, used as proxies to implicitly reflect the current needs for reforming the public sector in Yemen. The cross case/measures analysis results suggest that there is consensus among respondents in MBA (mean= 2,019 holding the first position 1)\textsuperscript{38}, as effective in developing selected managerial skills. On the other hand, there is clear consistency among respondents at NIAS (mean= 2.857, holding the position 3) and MPA (mean= 3.12, in last place) that MPA-NIAS were less effective in developing their selected managerial skills.

As the ideal model for capacity-building within public sector in Yemen argues, that capacity building processes will not be complete until the transferring process is achieved, the third variable was the process of transferring knowledge and skills

\textsuperscript{37} - For the purpose of this study, two steps were used to rank the selected projects on the basis of the selected variables and the results of the overall mean scores. First, we calculated sample mean for each project based on the used criteria following the mean formula: $x = \frac{\sum x_i}{n}$. Second, we used the mean score values of the selected projects or case studies and ranked them based on the “rank order method”: as mean score 1-2(++) = the highest level of success and mean score 4-5(--) = the lowest level of success.

\textsuperscript{38} The calculation of the means scores of the four indicators for MBA = (2.064+1.835+1.909+2.271) =8.079*4=2.019 as an overall mean score among the four indicators. The calculation of the means scores for NIAS at the same indicators= (2.853+3.016+2.843+2.719) =12.48*4=2.857 as an overall mean score among the four indicators. The calculation of the means scores for MPA at the same indicators= (3.297+3.099+2.932+3.152) =12.48*4=3.12 as an overall mean score among the four indicators. The results of the mean scores were interpreted per indicator and by using ANOVA tests, which confirmed the variation among the selected projects (see chapter 8 for more information).
learned back the work settings. To analyze the third factor, we developed different indicators used as proxies that implicitly reveal the variation in the level of effectiveness among the selected projects in conducting this role. These indicators are: (1) the selection process of participants, (2) the teaching methods used, (3) the quality of the curriculum and courses, (3) the quantity of training efforts, and (4) the coordination between the selected projects and the respective organizations. This is especially relevant as one aspect of the civil service in Yemen is that there is no strategy for management and development of the Yemeni Civil Service corps. Currently there is no vision on how the civil service should be organized and according to what model. Respondents’ opinions revealed that the MBA (position 1) and WEC (position 2) were more effective than MPA-NIAS (positions 5 and 3 respectively) and WRTC (position 4) in transferring the developed skills and gained knowledge to the work settings. For MPA-NIAS and WRTC, the respondents reveal widespread displeasure of the methods adopted by their organizations and the process of selecting the students to attend the training process. It appears that targeted or direct beneficiaries of such projects have no recognition of these training services and objectives. The selection process was based upon a voluntary method, so the decision on participants was very haphazard.39

The variation in the results based on the efforts made by the selected projects in the way of achieving their overall objectives, led us to examine the level of effectiveness of the Dutch projects in achieving their specific objectives—building the capacity and capability, of the higher education organizations (see Chapter 9). Based on the documents and reports of the Dutch NPT program in Yemen, all the selected projects were aimed at: (1) building the organizational and administrative structures; (2) increasing the quantity of staff at the selected HE institutions, and (3) developing the quality of the staff members at the said institutions. These three variables provide explanations why some of the selected projects were more effective in training their participants than others. It seems that some of the projects of the Dutch-Yemen NPT program did not provide all necessary conditions for effective capacity and capability building process within some of the Yemeni higher education contexts. The same capacities and capabilities which the NPT ought to have reformed or developed still represent the obstacles and weaknesses facing some of these organizations. In Chapter

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39 - These four indicators included more than 20 measured items. Because in this section, we used questions without multiple answer just (Yes or NO), it is impossible to conduct calculation of the means scores. We specified our conclusion on the positions of the selected project in the level of effectiveness by systematic method, see chapter 8 for more information.
9, we conducted quantitative analysis of these three variables. The first variable includes 9 measured items and the results of revealed that respondents perceive MBA (mean=2.0981, position 1) and WEC (mean=2.5427, position 2) as having more effective organization and management and qualified leadership more than the NIAS (mean= 2.8997, position 3), WRTC (mean=3.3086, position 4) and MPA (mean= 3.3148, position 5). The second and third variables have been analysed together as relate to the quantity and quality of the teaching staff within the targeted organizations. 12 measured items included in these two variables and the results suggest that the respondents perceive that MBA (mean=2.3710, position 1) and WEC (mean=2.8782, position 2) as having more sufficient and qualified teaching staff than NIAS (mean=3.3089, position 3), WRTC (mean=3.4907, position 4) and MPA (mean=3.3168,position 5).

After exploring the results and the positions of the selected projects based on the single variable, we have explored the pattern of responses based across case and variables analysis method in order to provide overall results of the quantitative analysis. In Table 10.1 above, we calculated the frequencies of positions which the single project had in all five variables. We used the following the mean formula= \( x = \frac{\Sigma x_i}{n} \) and “the rank order method”. For example, the MBA with positions in 3 (v1), 1 (v2), 1 (v3), 1(v4), and 1 (v5) =7, divided by 5 (the number of the variables), gives a mean score of 1.40, thus occupying highest level or rank of effectiveness in achieving the overall and specific objectives of the NPT program in Yemen. Based on the seam formula and order ranking method, the mean score of the other projects is as follows. WEC scored 2.00 making this project to occupy the second rank of effectiveness, NIAS and WRTC scored 3.20 and 3.25 respectively (above the neutral point 3.0), coming in the third and fourth ranks of effectiveness. The lowest level of effectiveness is for the MPA project, with a mean score of 5.00, which is very high compared to the neutral point 3.0.

The overall results of the quantitative analysis are a response to the public choice approach (PCP) and its main argument that aid project does not work in a poor policy environment. We have presented sufficient empirical evidence that some aid projects can work even in poor policy environments. However as we hypothesized in this study, we need to be careful to incorporate the local knowledge with its informal aspects during the actual implementation of the aid projects.

40 - The mean scores below 3.0 suggest that the respondents perceive that the selected project effective and above the 3.0 the respondents perceive that the selected project less effective. The results of the mean scores in the above stated variables were interpreted per indicator and by using an ANOVA test, which confirmed the variation among the selected projects. See Chapter 9 for more information.
We now turn to the factors that reduced the incorporation of local knowledge in some of the selected projects, and the factors that led other projects to be more successful, as they succeed in incorporating local knowledge. To do so, we employ the ‘associability development approach’, divided into two models. The first is the associability harmony model, which reflects the actual implementation process of the more effective projects based on the quantitative analysis (MBA and WEC). The second is the associability conflict model, which reflects the implementation process of the less effective projects (MPA-NIAS and WRTC).

10.4.2 The ‘Associability Development Approach’ and the Aid Projects’ Success and Failure

Here we employ the ‘associability development approach’ based on the main ideas of the actor-network perspective that we reviewed in Chapters 1 and 3. The core of this theoretical tool for analysis is that interactions and association between actors involved in specific foreign aid intervention can incorporate the local knowledge aspects. Actor-network perceptive offers an alternative methodology to address the LKS as explanation for the success or failure of aid projects during the implementation process. This method is “particularly useful for describing how networks emerge and how interactions among the actors involved in innovation take shape; it is not a static description of nodes and hubs. Actually, actor-network perceptive is not a theory; rather it is descriptive and explanatory as the development has to be studied in action, focusing on the dynamics rather than on the stability of the relationships” (Voeten, 2013:112). What makes it particularly relevant for our analysis in this section, is the actors around a single aid project from the two worlds, donors and recipients have different managerial styles and systems and cultural differences, which can lead to harmonized or conflicted associations and interactions.

The associability development model derived from the ANT ideas suggests two models to explain the success and failure of aid projects: (1) The associability harmony model and (2) The associability conflict model. The first model reflects the process of actual implementation of the aid project through harmonized interactions, which led to the incorporation of the informal information on local knowledge. The second model reflects conflicting interactions between the contractors and their counterparts. If there are conflicts that means we have different visions, expectations, objectives, and understanding of the projects.

Actor-network perceptive uses the term black boxing to define the creation of a
network and how the alliances and interactions between actors are established. A black box is created when “all the underlying human interactions are clarified and there is a shared common understanding of the identity and role of each actant. This black boxing process being achieved through the translation moments… The Actor-network perceptive methodology focuses on describing how actors enroll to the network, agreeing that it is worth building and defending the sociology of translation” (Voeten, 2013: 115). Different studies (Faulkner and Rond, 2000; Vartiainen, 2002; Sako 1998 &1992; Kanter, 1989; Isabella, 2000; Putnam, 1993; Klitgaard, 1998; Board, 2002, Joop Koppenjan, and Erik-Hans Klijn, 2000; Dasgupta, 1988; Burns and Flam, 1987; March and Olsen, 1989; Jenkins and Plowden, 2006; Olsson and Wohlgemuth, 2000) consider many factors that can influence human interactions, leading either to the conflict model of networking or the harmony model of networking. The most important of these factors are: building trust and openness; commitment; mutual understanding; cultural differences; unequal representation; the rapid rotation of staff, and the number of actors involved around the aid project during the actual implementation process.

To measure the factors of harmony or conflict, based on the Actor-network perceptive ideas, we asked interviewees about the main problems in the organization and management of the ECs between the Dutch and Yemeni counterparts and amongst Yemeni staff themselves. This refers to the structure, organization, financing, responsibilities, management, and also in terms of: (1) mutual understanding and putting things into action; (2) respect, openness and trust; (3) absence of conflicts and cultural clashes; (4) communication (formal and informal) and reaction; (5) common vision and integrating the way of working on both sides; (6) flexibility; (7) adaptability of the work environment (e.g., work and personal style and time management); and (8) interpersonal relationship between you and the staff in the host organization. It is worth noting here that the above-mentioned factors cannot be investigated separately in every case but I try to make use of them as much as I can during the analysis of the cases.

Based on the structure of the NPT program and its objectives, the groups supposed to be involved in the implementation process of the NPT project are as follows:
The above figure shows that Nuffic was the bridge in the web of the management and monitoring of the NPT projects, linking the Yemeni and Dutch actors. As we have seen in the above section 10.3 Nuffic has its own administrative process of top-down approach, in implementing all projects in all recipient countries. In this section, I focus on two other aspects of Nuffic’s role in the monitoring process. The interviewees provided us with clear information about the monitoring role of Nuffic and argued that the monitoring process maintains the implementation process itself, and that there is hope that this role can have the advantages to manage the interaction; between the actors during implementation in order to incorporate local knowledge. However, because of the short distance from contractor to Nuffic, Nuffic gets information on a conflict situation easier about how the Yemeni are performing than the other way around. Only during the yearly monitoring missions, can Nuffic learn from the Yemeni side. There are possibilities for requesting Nuffic interference, in case there are main differences between the Dutch contractor and the Yemeni partner. However, there are no penal sanctions for the Dutch contractor in case the conflicts cannot be solved. The only possibility seen, so far, is that the project stops, thus also punishing the Yemeni partners. Cases where there was a new tendering of a Dutch contractor, because of bad performance are not known. In most cases, the Yemeni partners were asked to adapt.41.

41 The interviewees pointed out that Nuffic should be more effective when they deal with the contractors, as they are not part of their administrative body. This is because Nuffic has no a clear and strong control mechanisms if the contractor is making many mistakes. Normally they just send a short letter or email to bring attention to it, and take no more action. Conversely when the local counterparts make small mistakes, Nuffic tries to take strong action. Especially in the conflicted associability model, there is no trust in the relationship. Nuffic trusts the Dutch contractors but does not trust the local managers or the local counterparts, even though these latter groups have local knowledge on how the rule of the game is running within their organizations. If the local partner objects to a case, the threat coming from the Nuffic is that they are looking to stop the project. Since the local counterparts fear they may lose the project, they continue with the Dutch contractor organization even if it is not the right organization to implement the project. Thus the contractor is the strong party influencing the weaker recipient party.
Further data from the interviews, strongly pointed out that progress reports are another mean of letting Nuffic know about conflict, but this tool is not very much used by the Yemeni partners. The Dutch contractor writes the reports and requests the Yemeni partner give comments on the texts. As reading is not very much a cultural trait, the reports are only signed without mentioning differences in opinion. These differences are left for the Nuffic monitoring missions where the Yemeni partners can orally put their issues directly. Based on the local facts, the Yemeni people do not have a cultural of writing, reading, listening, but only talking. The question then is what is the value of following the western style of management and asking the counterparts to write reports? If this was known in the beginning, Nuffic could find a method of oral mentioning. The problem is that Nuffic continues in ignoring the local information and relying on the Dutch contractor’s written reports.

In the harmonized associability model, it is generally believed by the interviewees that there is a trust from Nuffic towards the contractor, who has trust from the Yemeni partner that the activities performed through social exchanges and events will be for their benefit. Trust is a very important element within Yemeni culture. Without having this trust, it would be difficult for the contractor to implement the project smoothly. The trust of the Yemeni partner towards the Contractor and the trust from Nuffic towards the Contractor make Nuffic influential in terms of flexibility, with solid commitment from both sides needed to allow the contractor to adapt with the local context during the process of implementation.

10.4.3 The Patterns of Associability in the Project Level

The main observation when we analyzed the interviews is that the patterns of associability and interactions, between the actors at the beginning of the implementation process of all selected project were full of cultural shocks, clashes and conflicts. As we mentioned before, this is because the incorporation process of local knowledge was left to the implementation stage of the contractors and their teams. Depending on the expertise of the contractors and the long-term expert, these cultural shocks and clashes could turn out to positive or negative. The foreign team was confronted with its own culture, as they have to change the local environments. The local team was also in shock, because they were requested to change their work environments and the rule of the games. This is particularly true where the contractors came with reform ideas and assumptions, to change the local institutions not really supported by the local actors. If both foreign and local teams were able to establish a
common goal taking into account the needs of the clients who wished to get better services, if both teams could establish a plan of steps, where both felt they could profit from cooperation, and if the project was led by respected leaders, trust and commitment were given. This harmony model of associability among the actors occurred in the MBA and WEC projects.

On the other hand, where the teams were not able to overcome the difficulties, this led to the conflict model of associability among the actors around the projects. This was the case for the MPA-NIAS and WRTC projects. If both foreign and local teams were not able to define the reasons why the final clients would like to improve the services, it also became difficult to use these arguments to set common goals and to convince the local teams to accept the assistance of the foreign teams. Although the top men contracted the project aims and goals, the local teams felt that they had to implement a programme of change that did not lead to both parties winning. The winner would be the contractor and for that reason the local teams disapprovingly followed all steps of the contractor and no trust and commitment was reached.

Table 10.2 The Patterns of Associability in the Project Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Projects</th>
<th>Contractors</th>
<th>Local Project Manager / Department Staff</th>
<th>Consultants</th>
<th>Dean /Faculty Staff</th>
<th>Aden/Sanaa Universities</th>
<th>Nuffic</th>
<th>Clients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MBA</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WEC</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPA-NIAS</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WRTC</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

+ Harmony patterns of associability  
- Conflict patterns of associability  
N.A. it was not clear at the beginning

Based upon the above table, the analysis in the coming sections, deals with certain patterns of behavioral interactions among the actors at the level of the single project. After that, we put the selected projects in a comparative setting. As we mentioned above, this is will be done in line with the two models of associability and focusing the analysis, on how such as different patterns of interactions influence the process of incorporating local knowledge.
10.4.3.1 The Associability Harmony Model (MBA and WEC)

Based on the main results from the analysis above, the harmony model represents two projects: MBA and WEC. We will look at each in turn.

MBA project

Several actors from the Yemeni side were responsible for the implementation of the MBA project: the private sector (clients), the Rector of Sana’a University, the Dean of the Faculty of Commerce and its staff members, the Department of Business Administration and its staff members, and the Yemeni local manager. For the Dutch side, the main actors are MSM and its international project manager and consultants.

In the view of the interviewees, the implementation process of the MBA project followed two different paths and human interactions, eventually led to the creation of contradictory actor interactions. The first phase, of three years, was characterized by a conflict model of interactions, which actually neglected the LK. When Nuffic and its MSM contractor announced the MBA to the department staff, it was expected to be based on the Western style of management, as there was communication capabilities between the different levels within the higher education sector, and the staff of the department had already and collectively consulted and been informed by the policy making level about the coming project. Assistance was not expected for the academic Master programme of Administration Sciences for regular students, but for the Yemeni private sector and for professional BA students with 3 years’ experience in the private sector.

The interviewees raised critical points about the first stage of implementation of MBA, as well as in MPA project. They argued that in the Yemeni public sector, the interpersonal relationship is the main mechanism of communication between and among the different levels and leaders and their subordinates. Moreover, the decision making process is always made by the top men without consultation of their subordinates. Accordingly, the department staff was not well informed about the nature of the project. Just two people from the department, who had strong personal ties with the higher level were well informed, one of whom became the Yemeni local manager of the MBA project.\(^{42}\) The staff of the Department of Business Administration surprisingly discovered that the Nuffic MBA project focused on a professional business administration master, which meant for the department staff (1) another

\(^{42}\) According to an interviewee who was a member of the selection committee for the local project manager, eight department staff members applied for the job, but from them only two took the trouble to read the job description and background information of the project. For this interviewee the excuse of ‘not being informed’ is one of the most used expressions among academics, meaning that they did not read information send by e-mail or fax.
teaching methodology (adult education), (2) case study development, and (3) interactive teaching instead of just classrooms and reading. They were not very keen on changing a regular Master Programme they had developed into a professional Master programme. However, this was never put on paper. Those staff members who did not have much experience with the world of work outside the university started to create an anti-change climate to which the Dutch project manager, who had little experience of working in the Yemeni environment, fell victim. The Yemeni project manager could not fully support the Dutch manager, because he was under the scrutiny of his colleagues and also he had open cultural and managerial conflicts with the Dutch manager himself. The local project manager counted on the full support of the Dutch project manager in getting a team formed, but confronted with a lot of animosity from the department staff, the Dutch project manager hardly dared to move anymore. One of the interviewees noted, “The Dutch project manager had no detailed local knowledge in his mind, and then he treated the local details by lack of respect or contempt, creating some sort of conflict and thus this led to a lack of harmony in all aid project activities”.

This conflict situation as many interviewees confirmed, lead to a lack of respect towards the Dutch project manager and in turn a lack of respect towards the local project manager, who was seen as an accomplice of the Dutch team. Not much of the conflict dealt with the content of the project, but had to do with personalities and perception about people. During the first three years of the project, the Dutch contractors and its counterparts failed to develop mutual trust to get to know each other’s approaches, capacities, and interests. Nearly all actors around the project had no or minor commitments toward the activities of the project, particularly in how to involve the private sector in the process of implementation and how to incorporate its needs in the training courses. It is very strange that the clients were not consulted even by the policy making level or by the operational level at this stage. In the context of the needs of the Yemeni private sector, this decision should have been seriously considered. Yet this proved difficult in the climate of interpersonal conflict (MSM, 2009).

When analysing the role of the contractor to solve the conflicts, the final evaluation report of the MBA project (MSM, 2009) shows the Dutch consultants attempting to impose their Western managerial cultures, following Western rules of solving problems in a direct confrontation between managers and subordinates or between employees of the same level. Furthermore, in the conflict, the Dutch consultants did
as they always do, and turn to what was originally agreed on paper by both parties. However, this might have been too western for Yemen, where conflicts are only discussed orally as well as by mediation (Al Wasta), and solved by interpersonal interactions. In such cases, these interactions do not always lead to direct changes because the top man in the organization has the first and the last word to make or break things. What happened was that the Dutch contractor and the Dutch project manager went to the Dean of the faculty and the faculty board in order to solve conflicts between the Dutch project manager and the Yemeni project manager, between both managers and the Yemeni staff members or conflict among the staff members themselves. The Dean of the Faculty was in favor of finding ways of ending the conflicts. However, he had to deal with a strong opposition power from some staff members (politically well-connected) and so he did not take a clear decision.43. Besides, the Faculty Board consisted of members who were the same faculty staff members opposing the project. The result was that no authority of the faculty level wanted to deal with these problems. The Rector of Sana’a University or the top man of the organization was the right person to deal with.

Thus there was a very difficult first three years in the implementation of the project. This resulted in the replacement of three Dutch project managers. The interviewees commented that it would have been wise if the Dutch contractor had sent a project manager with experience in the Arabic region from the beginning. This could have helped in reducing the lack of shared vision and values of the project, and to facilitating work based on shared agreement and cooperation.44

The second phase of the process of implementing the MBA project, which represented the harmony stage of implementation, started when MSM conducted in June 2007 a “vision & mission” workshop in Maastricht, to redefine the values of the Centre and look again into the vision and mission and specifically how to translate it into strategy and action to be taken by management (SU & MSM 2009). According to the interviewees, this workshop was very confronting, but was also at the same time opened a window for transparent communication and interactions between all the actors around the project. The contractor team mobilized the top-man of Sana’a

43 - Some of the interviewees noted that behind these conflicts or above them was the board of informal association. Staff and board members of the faculty had their own goals because they were related to different informal ties and thus wanted to get something out of the project for their own, or had their own ambitions for their other departments within the faculty. One of the consequences was that some of those involved lost interest in the project because they saw no benefit for themselves. They were not informed well about the aims and the objectives of the project. The Dutch consultant could not mobilize them because of the continue conflicts of interests within the faculty and no power above them to end these conflicts.

44 - As we noted in section 10.3, there is no preparation of the Dutch contractors and their experts about the local environment before sending them to the field.
University (rector), to be part of the workshop in order to have support from the higher level of decision-making within the recipient organization. It was decided after the workshop to give all the management activities to the Yemeni project manager with full authority, which resulted in more respect and trust and avoided all kinds of conflicts between him and the Dutch project manager. The Yemeni project manager was in favor of establishing the professional MBA, had well-established contacts with the private sector and the higher level with SU structure, and had academic qualifications as he hold a Ph.D. in business. Furthermore he had a good family capital. According to the interviewees, from this point the Yemeni project manager had the support of Nuffic-MSM and the SU rector personally who was fully committed to run the project successfully. The rector saw in the establishment of the professional MBA a good opportunity to make Sana’a University known in the region.

The other positive shift in the MBA project implementation process occurred, when the Dutch contractor sent a Dutch project manager assistant, who had the local knowledge of how to deal with Yemenis, as she had worked in the Arabic context before. She played a major role in mobilizing all factions within the department staff. It was confirmed by the majority of the interviewees that the new Dutch assistant project manager inspired respect and trust, and there were commitments from her as long term assistant manager to work together with the local Yemeni project manager to bring the commitments to all levels.

The interviewees added that all of them have been working and putting effort into the project that goes beyond standard work. Many more working hours and many more new local ideas have been implemented than stipulated by the original terms of references for this project. Moreover, the interviewees believe that is also a reason for the success of the project. Everybody was enthusiastic about working on the project, respected each other and learned from each other, exchanging knowledge and ideas. They were all excited about the bigger goal, which was to establish the MBA center in order to build the capacity of the business sector in Yemen.

During the project the implementers became increasingly confronted with unexpected situations that asked for networking and management actions. The interactions among the actors were changed, as before there was no affective networking among the related actors of the project, and the implementers were confronted with the situation that everybody acted according to what they thought was best, rather than on corporate (mutually agreed-upon and understood) frame of references. This is the point where clashes and conflicts are inevitable.
According to the Dutch project assistant manager, at a certain point in time the workload became bigger and immediate actions were always needed to solve problems. She got involved as a consultant to identify the clashes and to develop corporate values that were clear for everybody around the project.

Let’s look at two examples of how the Dutch project assistant manager mobilized support around the project by understanding the local knowledge environment. Firstly, because in Yemeni administrative culture problems cannot be solved in group meetings, and such meetings in fact lead to conflicts among the staff members, the Yemeni and Dutch project managers stopped having faculty meetings but just had small discussions with faculty members face-to-face or they had very small group meetings with a maximum of 3 people. It was further decided to split up the Inservice-1 training into small groups of faculty for a maximum of 3 people. Care was taken to form these groups based on common professional grounds rather than personality. For example, they formed a group of three by having an accounting professor, a financial professor and a statistics professor. Those subjects have some overlap and there needs to be a discussion on who is teaching what.

The second example is that the Dutch assistant project manager was really aware that in Yemeni culture “flexibility” and the so-called “just in time management”, is one of the most difficult issues to deal with when coming from a western society. Planning far in advance like the people do in the western world does not work in Yemen because the whole society does not work like this. The Dutch assistant manager was more flexible in having many scenarios and going with the flow. At the end, she found that the nice aspect of the flexibility of Yemeni society is that whenever something is not working you find all sorts of unexpected support on the spot. Yemenis are very good in firefighting. Moreover, because of their advanced capabilities in firefighting they are able to finish things at the last moment.

According to the Dutch assistant project manager, the MBA project was mainly guided by short-term amelioration tasks rather than long-term transformation options. Exchange of experiences and network building, were more important than any consideration about changing attitudes and transforming the department. In this sense, the contractors did not behave as missionaries, but rather as potential partners for future co-operation. Getting to know the different approaches, capacities, and interests was considered as the first step towards mutual trust and long-term co-operation. All of the above efforts led to the establishment of effective organizational and administrative structure of the project and also promoted the quantity and the
quality of the staff within the project. Thus the specific objectives of the MBA project were achieved within its specific place and time.\(^{45}\)

The policy of the NPT program was formulated in cooperation with the higher education ministry, one can assume, as there was coordination between the Ministry of Higher Education and the private sector in order, to ensure the coherence between topics as well as the same approach towards developing training materials and discussion about what is needed by the business community in Yemen. This represented the overall objective of the NPT program. As we mentioned in Chapter 4, in Yemen the ministries and government agencies usually issue decisions and policies without prior consultation or in coordination with the concerned sectors, both within their organizations and with other relevant institutions. This lack of coordination leads in many cases to a freeze on the implementation of such decisions and policies, because of the potential differences that could be created. The Ministry of Higher Education and the universities are not output related. The main emphasis is on training students, but not specifically for the market. So consultation of what the society expects of a graduate is not considered to be a necessary step. As long as there are sufficient students to give work to the lecturers, the university will offer the curriculums as it did before. The focus on professional students with a working experience of 3 years forced the universities to go beyond the input-related focus. The Yemeni staff members in the projects witnessed a totally different style of teaching by foreign teachers, and a group of students who expected to be treated as a party with whom the teachers could communicate and exchange experiences in an interactive way. The classroom style of teaching normally applied for the regular students could not be repeated here for the professional students.

The interviewees saw the network building within the MBA emerging over time, as it became part of the culture of the network to find ways of growing its substantive activities and its resource base by associating itself with other actors. In this current policy environment, the project could establish active involvement of the Yemeni private sector or the business community with the project. This took place not based on strategic formal approach but based on informal approach and strong personal ties with the business community\(^{46}\). As we mentioned before, the efforts made by the

\(^{45}\) It was noted by other interviewees that actually staff members could slowly be included in the MBA program. The main lectures were conducted by Dutch or MSM recruited lecturers from other countries. The Yemeni staff saw that the students, who were able to speak and write in English, were raising issues that went beyond their skills and knowledge. This confrontation also meant that a number of initially critical staff told the project manager that they were willing to participate in the professional MBA program.

\(^{46}\) The first intakes on a personal and informal basis, however, increasingly adapting to the western-style of advertisements in Yemen and Arabic papers.
Yemeni project managers - the first one a big business man and the second from the private sector - confirmed the effective involvement of the business community with the project. These two Yemeni project’s managers mobilized all the related business organizations and incorporated information on their needs, by getting their opinions, surveying their attitudes, and informing them about the project. Consequently the main managerial skills for promoting the capacity and capability of the business community, were specified and many local case studies were incorporated in the training course. The other main issue is that the main stakeholders were part of the process from the outset, which ensured strong commitment to transferring the skills developed to the work setting. The businessmen and companies trusted the local managers personally more than the SU as an organization. They sent their employees to be trained in the project, but also to hold many workshops in cooperation with the EC, to map the opportunities and the distinctive characteristics of private sector, the extent of the differences in workplace behaviour or professional behaviour, and the chances to build the capacity and the capability of the private sector in this regard.

**The WEC project**

For WEC, the main responsibility for the implementation on the Yemeni side fell to the director of Water and Environment Centre of Sana’a University (WEC) and the staff members, the Rector of Sana’a University, the Water Sector and its different organizations in Yemen. From the Dutch side, Wageningen University (WAU), the department of Irrigation and Water Engineering of Wageningen University and the Dutch project manager were responsible for implementation.

In view of the interviewees from both sides (Yemeni and Dutch) and at different levels, it is clear that conflicted interactions between actors were never an issue in the WEC project. The intervention was designed in a way that the kind of conflict seen in the first stage of the MBA implementation process, could not arise as the networking of all actors around the project was created with harmonized and co-operative interactions. The conflicts arising at the beginning of the implementation came about, because the WAU project director was not able to overcome the cultural shocks in working in Yemen, but such as conflicts were logistical and not about the content of the project. The other positive issue is that WEC and WAU decided, due to differences

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47 - While conducting the interviews with the participants from the MBA project, I discovered that more than 15 of them have established their own business as a result of attending the training course of this project. Furthermore, some of the participants were big business men in Yemen who saw the project as an important chance to increase their capacities in running their business effectively, and systematically changing their attitudes from the traditional approach of running business to a more modern approach that meets international standards.
Chapter 10

In management styles, to have only a part-time Dutch project manager. The Dutch Project Director did not have much experiences working in developing countries, while the Yemeni Project Director had years of experience working with Dutch partners. The latter knew informally how to find the right people to get his complaints heard at highest levels. The Dutch project manager had the right qualifications (PhD) to get the respect of the Yemeni co-workers (see discussion of the seniority problem within the public sector in Yemen in Chapter 4) and together with the Yemeni Project Director he was able to create an atmosphere to establish a new programme. The expertise of the Dutch project manager was recognized by the WEC staff. At the same time, the WEC director was able to convince his staff to change the environment. His staff accepted the new structure and organization without comments once approved by the Director as he was well connected politically and socially.

In this sense, there were all kinds of strong interactions and the WEC project thus had strong support from product of the alliances, that mobilized around the project: the WEC and its staff as one team, the WAU and its team, and Nuffic which trusted the Dutch contractor WAU which in turn was trusted by the Yemeni partner (see section 10.3.2.1). From the beginning, the two parties summed up the major challenges by providing a locus to explore the problems involved, transferred information, communicated effectively and acquainted themselves with one another and with each other’s needs and interests.

The interviewees acknowledged that the IWRM was new for both WEC and WAU, new, but World Bank and IMF programs heavily stressed it, so the integration of new disciplines like economics, sociology, gender etc was new. The common experiments also led to better cooperation. The initial steps within the project development were taken with enormous enthusiasm from both sides. In particular the Dutch team was willing to help and eager to experience the historic challenge of Water management in Yemen. For the Yemeni partners, the project came at the right moment, because the WEC was founded in 1999 as a small unit within the Faculty of Engineering, SU, and had recently (in 2003) moved into a newly constructed building provided by Sana’a University. There was also full support from the organizational structure of SU and the top man of SU as he had strong personal, political and social ties with the director of WEC. The top man of SU also had his own agenda to build the capacity of WEC, to save the university the time and money to do it itself. Moreover, when the NPT project started in 2003, there were no formal institutions, no support programs,

48 The Faculty of Engineering was not part of the project implementation process, so it is not part of the actors associated around the WEC project.
no formal policies, and the administrative system of WEC was very weak. During the implementation of the WEC project, local counterparts started to collaborate to build the capacity of WEC. In the end, a successful network emerged with a good plan for implementing the project and with solid commitment from both sides.

In the MBA project, there was no strategic planning in the governmental and sectoral levels and no development of a plan of actions for implementing the policies. They just formed policies without even consultation with the respective sectors. This was also the case for the WEC project as the water sectors and its institutions were not consulted during the policy making process either by the donors (Nuffic) or by the higher education sector. To overcome this, the actors at the operational level were forced to conduct this role. The interviewees confirmed that the Yemeni director of WEC used his strong personal and social ties with the water minister and institutions to informally mobilize them. This is especially as most of the top men in the water sector were former followers at the Dutch international institutions or universities, which have previously implemented projects in the unit of water management and engineering within the faculty of engineering, SU. In other words, WEC has support from the water sector and its leadership. The Director of WEC was a leader with a good support network within and outside the university in the Water Sector. He could mobilize staff to be integrated in the WEC project without causing conflicts. And the views and the problems and skills need to be developed needs of the water sector have been incorporated easily in the course of training, which made this project more successful.

The director of the WEC project pointed out that project tried to organize its activity though a full supportive network with the water sector and its leaders, creating a network among the different government organizations located in both the main cities and in the countryside. This helped to incorporate ideas about the problems facing the water sector, to motivate, and to exchange experiences and knowledge on water sector organizational structures and the specific transition problems of their legal role, as well as their role in the countryside areas.49 The director added that there was also a common attitude among the WAU and WEC staff towards the training modalities of the Water Sector. Due to high engagement of WEC staff in projects outside the university, and the relatively small number of lecturers and limited availability of WAU staff, both partners arranged the training courses at the times they were available. Originally, this created some problems with the professional

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49 - There were available and rich studies and publications, and institutional analysis in English about the water management problems in Yemen as a result of former aid projects.
students who wanted to concentrate their studies in the evenings and weekends, but due to the high quality of training, the students adopted.

10.4.3.2 The Associability Conflict Model (MPA-NIAS and WRTC)

The conflict model represents two projects: MPA-NIAS and WRTC. Again we will look at each project in turn.

MPA-NIAS

Several actors from the Yemeni side were responsible for the implementation of the MPA-NIAS project: the Rector of Sana’a University, the Dean of the Faculty of Commerce and its staff members, the Department of Politics and Administration the Yemeni project manager, the Yemeni National Institute of Administrative Sciences (NIAS), and the Yemeni public sector. For the Dutch side, the main actors were Dutch Institute of Public Administration (ROI) and its staff and experts who linked to the project directly and indirectly, and the Dutch project manager.

To interpret the information we received from the different interviewees, we can observe that the implementation process of the MPA-NIAS project failed to create durability in the alliances created around the project. There was open conflict and the project experienced serious turbulence between actors as they tried to get off the ground. The conflicts in this project were manifold. The first conflict was between the Dutch project managers and the Yemeni project managers on an individual basis. The second was between the Dutch contractor and its experts and the Yemeni counterparts as a collective. The third was between the Yemeni staff members of the faculty and the Department of Politics and the few members of the Unit of Public Administration within the Department of Politics. The fourth was between the Unit of Public Administration within SU and the Yemeni National Institute of Administrative Sciences (NIAS). Finally there was a conflict between the project as a whole and the direct stakeholders within the Yemeni government, especially the Ministry of Civil Service.

When the Dutch contractor came to implement a readymade professional master in public administration, the department staff were very opposed, creating an anti-change environment as they already had a master of political and public administration for the regular students. The MPA-NIAS project came from the highest authority from the higher education ministry so that meant the top man had decided upon it already, irrespective of whether it represented a priority of the department or not. The same problems mentioned in the MBA project associated with the requirements
of a professional master in public administration reared their head again within the MPA context.

There is a widespread view among the interviewees that the formulated policy of the MPA project came without a clear explanation about the rules of Nuffic in such capacity building projects. There were conditions put in terms of financial and human resources commitments by the recipient department. This decision created resentments in the southern partner, exacerbated existing factionalism and caused frequent open conflict in departmental staff and project meetings. This is because; there was no financial reward for taking up project activities. The Dutch contactor argued that there was a lack of understanding among Yemeni project personnel of the Nuffic guidelines for financial management, leading to diminished Yemeni involvement in decision-making. This is a particularly sensitive matter in a situation where, as a norm, project implementation is subject to bipartite contracts with a Dutch contractor. One of the Dutch interviewees argued, “It may be very blunt but the counterparts of MPA look at the project as opportunity to get resources like computers, to get stuff”.

The above situation created resentments in the southern partner. The department staff did not respect and trust the coming project, which resulted in very weak commitments from them to achieve its objectives. What the Dutch interviewee noted is part of the rule of the game in most Yemeni organizations, and the fact that this occurred was also due to a lack of understanding among the Yemeni counterparts about the content of the project itself and the organizational culture of the donor side. The Yemeni Project Director was selected without a transparent procedure and without any involvement on the part of the contractor. To deal with this internal conflict, the Yemeni Project Director used his strong social ties and support from the highest levels to neutralize the department staff, especially the political science specialists, which he claimed were not related to the content of the project, and were thus excluded from the human resources development plans. The project then faced more severe attacks from the department staff and none of them were supportive of the project. In the end, the MPA, as one of the interviewees said, is “familized”, as just the director and the individuals who belong to him by family or social ties were active in the project in training and teaching. Some of these people were not part of the

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50 - One of the Dutch interviewees argued that the curriculum was actually immediately a problem area in the project. The agreement made by Nuffic with the SU when they designed projects was that the university would make professors available as part of the projects, who would then develop the curriculum as part to their normal activities. When they started preparing the curriculum, Yemeni professors said they would not do anything until they got paid. Unfortunately, because of the financial rules of projects that Nuffic has for such projects, under no circumstance could professors be paid. This led to an impasse.
capacity building process.

The interviewees added that from the very beginning it was discussed that the project should make a degree program and get NIAS together with the SU. Nevertheless, the Yemeni counterparts were not very interested in working together with NIAS. There was vision that NIAS was not qualified to collaborate with SU, as it was created just for students who scored very low in secondary school exams and who do not meet the qualifications to enter university.

Another problem identified by the interviewees was that the Dutch contractor could not understand the above patterns of conflicts, and failed to overcome such strong opposition from the different actors around the project. The (usually relatively inexperienced) Dutch project directors and manager as well as the experts were inadequately prepared, resulting in poor communication and avoidable conflict. There was a lack of flexibility and willingness to negotiate roles and responsibilities among partners. Because of these conflicts, three Dutch project managers were replaced within a short time, and none of them had experience of how to manage projects in the Yemeni environment. They did not know how to act at the level of the center or the university level. They just followed the orders from ROI (top-down policy implementation). Further to the fact that Dutch experts did not trust the local counterparts and they did not have experience in professional management, they acted in a superior manner. The Dutch project managers were very busy managing the financial resources and funding instead of trying to understand the local environment and overcome the difficulties.

One of the interviewees argued that, because of the conflict and the absence of the trust between both sides during the course of implementation, both of them lost the chance to learning from each other. It was assumed that the Dutch project manager would try to train the Yemeni counterparts and especially the Yemeni project manager about the organizational cultural of the donor side, and similarly the counterparts would inform the Dutch project manager about the organizational cultural of the recipient organization, thus incorporating local knowledge about what needs to be done to make the project a success. Once more, the presence of conflicts between the management with regard to the common vision and strategy of the recipient and the contractor meant that there was coherence in the implementation process of the project. Additionally, the recipient organization did not possess a shared vision and a set of principles which govern the organization, as we saw in Chapter 4. The majority of interviewees argued that if both foreign and local teams were not able to define the
reasons why the final clients would like to improve the services, it became difficult to use these arguments to set common goals and to convince the local teams to accept the assistance of the foreign teams. Although the top men signed the project aims and goals, the local teams felt that they had to implement a programme of change that did not lead to a win-win situation. The winner would be the contractor and for that reason the local teams criticized all the steps of the contractor and no trust and commitment was reached.

To the extent that strife resulted from the above situation, the Rector of Sana’a University has shown great understanding for the fact that this is a natural occurrence in an environment where pioneering work is being undertaken. The interviewees asserted that the Rector of SU or the top man within the recipient organization tried to play an important role in resolving conflicts. Furthermore, the mediating role in many such situations of Nuffic and the NPT long-term manager Han Blom is well recognized and appreciated across the board. However, conflicts continued to take place until the project closed. Nuffic’s role was limited to trusting its Dutch contractor (ROI) and distrusting the information coming from the local counterpart. Then there was de facto selection of the Yemeni Project Directors during the formulation stage of the project. The first Project Director was selected by strong family and social ties, and the second selected by strong political and social ties with the highest level of authority in Yemeni state, far higher than the power of the rector or the top-man of SU himself. In this sense, the MPA Yemeni Project Directors had stronger informal power within the SU’s administrative body than the top man of SU or the direct recipient organization. No one could influence them or change their beliefs.

Regarding the clients here - the public sector and especially the civil service system - the interviewees confirmed that incorporating their capacity and capability building needs, is a decision that required serious consideration and strategic approach in the policy making level. Yet this proved difficult in the climate of conflicted development processes within MPA/NIA S, lack of vision, and mission and unusual understanding. ROI and its partners, as Leiden University or the Yemeni counterparts could not deal with their beneficiaries. The beneficiary government sectors were not well informed about the objective of the project because the Yemeni counterparts were focusing on the personal interests and not on the collective interests of society. ROI attempted to bring beneficiary government sectors to the table but failed to do so. This demonstrated their lack of local knowledge, as Yemeni organizations are instead mobilized by the informal approach, as happened in MBA and WEC. The networking between the
project and the beneficiary government sectors was not strongly built by either by formal or informal methods, and thus the relationship was strained.

As we saw from results in the previous chapters, what is missing in this situation is a rational and strategic approach that could be established by the efforts of the project to direct and guide the government of Yemen and the behavior and choices of its organizations in capacity building process. One issue that could be a particularly important result of the project efforts is effective and efficient development of Yemen’s civil service. The country suffers from the absence of a strategy on the management and development of the Yemeni civil service corps. Currently there is no vision of how the civil service should be organized and according to what model. Nor is there a strategy outlining the model to be in place for decentralized government. We found also that the MPA/NIAS could not help the Yemeni government in deciding the approach to the participation process in the training efforts of the civil servants, to work out whether it wants to allow public organizations to freely contract or if there should be a centralized approach. Most of the interviewees pointed out that the enrolment in the training process in MPA/NIAS project was based on decisions that were not organizational decisions. It is hardly ever a ministry of civil service that decides on the organizational goals, which particular staff requires additional knowledge or skills. Also there is no strategy of how to transfer the skills and knowledge developed during the training process to the work setting. Instead, the decision to take training is made by each individual civil servant on the basis of their own interests, such as getting a diploma in order to get promotion, or whether they can get the Ministry or employing organization to finance the training is dependent on personal standing and clout.51

The WRTC project

For WRTC several actors from the Yemeni side were responsible for the implementation of the WRTC project, but the central actors are the Women’s Research and Training Centre (WRTC), and its director and staff members and Aden University (AU) rector. From the Dutch side, the actors were the Wageningen University Department of Social Sciences, Rural Sociology and its staff and the Dutch project manager. The clients were women from Yemen.

The WRTC project was not a development priority either for the policy makers within the higher education ministry or within AU. Based on information collected

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51 - There are many elements of local knowledge reviewed in previous chapters. The policy recommendations in the coming chapter will include some of them.
during the interviews the request for setting up this project was through the embassy of The Netherlands in Yemen, and thus an outside request. There a personal tie between the embassy, especially the gender specialist within the embassy, and a person in Aden University who became the Yemeni project director at the same time, who was the director of the WRTC.

The majority of the interviewees declared that most of the conflicts that took place between the actors around the WRTC project and during the policy implementation were because of a lack of mutual understanding about the theme of “gender” in the Yemeni team and the Dutch team. In tribal and traditional countries, the topic of gender is seen as horrible, irrelevant and unnatural topic. Thus there was no respect, trust or commitments to the project from AU, the top man of the organizations and from the targeted community or organizations. It was a struggle to change mentality inside the AU. One of the interviewees pointed out the opposition against the center. When they presented on women’s rights they received emails with the threats. “We will go to kill you if you continue with the center (WRTC)”…it was a threat from the society”. For the AU, presenting the gender theme was like presenting an evil to them. As we mentioned in earlier chapters, it was associated with a feminism theme in a negative sense, such as aggressive women, free women, promiscuity and homosexuality. One can recognize the complexity involved in changing forcefully established cultural patterns of how women and men perceive each other’s roles in public sector or in wider context in society.

It was noted by the interviewees that the Dutch contractor and the Dutch project manager could not understand the local environment and the informal institutions around the theme of gender. They could not create a positive environment of change at all levels, as they were not able to bridge the cultural clashes on the gender issues. This is especially true at operational level, as none of the staff at WRTC specialized in gender, so the set up of the training course depended on the input of the contractors and the Dutch project manager. As long as they lack local knowledge, they were trying to imposing Western values of gender. They were not supported by the director of the WRTC as she was told by the top man of the AU that if she supported them she would lose her position. One of the Dutch interviewees notes that there was a conflict in the gender approach among the Yemeni staff members of the WRTC. Some of the staff were traditional in terms of women rights and were against the western values, and other staff members were more advance and progressive.

The emergence of different factions within the WRTC led to many administrative
conflicts that also affected the process of implementation of the WRTC project. One of the interviewees argued that the conflicts took place among the WRTC staff members, as the Yemeni director of the project distrusted the advanced and progressive women within the center. The director is said to have claimed all the power, monopolized entire decision-making within the center tried to force and control every single activity. The contractors were not able to resolve the conflicts between the center staff and the project director.

The above situation was enough to show that the WRTC project had no respect and thus no trust and commitment from different levels such as wider society, the university level, the center level and the operational level. At the same time, the Dutch contractor and project manager made the process of implementation very difficult, as they did not fully acknowledge the local policy environment to overcome the difficulties and failed to introduce the theme of gender in a way that would have been acceptable to all stakeholders. Moreover, one of the interviewees noted that in such conflicted situation the attention of the actors and the interaction between them, was not about the LK of how to do this project and the challenges in gender in Yemeni public sector. This interviewee confirmed, as occurred in the MPA project, that the main attention of the actors around the WRTC project was about side-problems such as money distribution. There were no effective efforts to bring about change in approaches towards teaching, curriculum design, and attitudes towards learning. The shortage of staff members was not effective solved. As we saw in Chapter 9, there were many problems related the quality and the quantity of the staff members within the WRTC.

We have argued in the above projects that the top men in Yemen usually formulate public policies or accept policies coming from outside as donor efforts without consultation of their followers, administrative bodies or other bodies within or outside of the government. The consultation and coordination is just left to the implementation process stage.

The WRTC project represented the conflict model of interaction between the Yemeni counterparts and the Dutch contactor organizations and its experts. This led to weak coordination between the WRTC and the other stakeholders such as the government organizations, NGOs, women’s communities and women’s unions, as well as other donors working in the same field. The argument here is that there are many reasons why information about the informal system and its role against gender development is lacked. In Yemen, there are different factions of women in formal and
informal organizations that are in continual competition. There is the group of Aden and the group of Sana’a. If one of the women from Sana’a can do their PhD at the WRTC project, the women in Aden which the WRTC is part of it would not accept that at all. It would have been wise to have information available on how the WRTC can contribute to bringing these factions together.

**10.4.4 Four Cases in the Comparative Setting**

The advantage of this way of investigating project success and failure is that it allows us to move outside the narrow view of examining the effectiveness of the aid projects, in level of achieving their ready-made or stated aims (top-down approach of policy making and implementation), and look at the wider context of interactions between ideas, institutions, and individuals and objects that all contribute to the process of aid project translation on the ground. It also gives us a much-needed realism about how to incorporate information on local knowledge during the policy implementation of an aid project. Relevant examples here are the process of translation of MBA and WEC projects, and the durability of the alliances and harmonized networks created, involved and supported by different levels - the personal level, the department level (MBA was partly supported by the department staff), the organizational level, the sectoral level as well as by the other direct stakeholders. There is a great deal more evidence of the two projects attempting to enroll beneficiary groups, not through formal consultation, but by informal and personal ties (the local manager role in MBA and the role of the Minster of Water Ministry in the case of WEC). These efforts were all part of the process of enrolling the respective sectors in the projects as allies. The black box of information about the formal and informal institutions at all levels was opened. All the involved actors were eager to achieve the specific objectives of the NPT project, by building the capacity and capability of the host organizations within SU, and to contribute to some extent in promoting the capacity building process within the respective government sectors. The lesson learned from the MBA case is that conflict and strife, even if they could have been avoided, are not essentially detrimental. When faced positively the network actors involved come out of it stronger, knowing each other better and with a better perception of how their collaborative relationship can best revolve issues. The process takes time and requires effort. It is time and effort well spent as long as the parties concerned are willing to face the conflict and tension in an intellectually honest and open manner.
On the other hand, we can use the associability approach of actor network perspective to explain why the translation processes of MPA and WRTC were marred by conflicts. These projects faced different problems such as distrust, lack of mutual understanding; cultural clashes and so on that led various alliances to disintegrate. The main result was the breakdown of relationships between the Dutch contractors and the Yemeni counterparts and between the Yemeni counterparts themselves. Therefore, the projects failed to keep the interests of actors aligned, and the black box of information on local knowledge remained closed. In the case of WRTC, this also took place because of the poor translation of the gender theme in the first place: the beneficiaries of the project, as I have explained, saw the WRTC as evil and thus they made it very difficult for the project. The other formal and informal organizations such as the civil service ministry for MPA and women's NGOs and unions were not fully brought on board. The donor, I have argued, acted as a processing centre that focused on side problems such as money distribution. Ultimately, the donor's interests were not being met, and in the absence of an effective relationship between the donor and the counterparts, the networking between them had withered away by the end of the project.

10.5 Summary and Conclusion

This chapter contributes to the limited research on aid policy analyses in Yemen and on institutional change that have taken place there. As such, the findings of this chapter also hold value for policy makers and implementers concerned with effective administrative and other institutional and governance reforms in recipient countries. The policy analysis in this chapter allows us to test the two main hypotheses posed in Chapters 1 and 3, that:

1. Incorporation of local knowledge in the policy design stage, integrating formal and informal institutions and organizations in host governments or organizations, increases the effectiveness of aid programs.
2. Incorporation of local knowledge during the implementation stage leads to greater openness to local realities not foreseen in the design stage and reduces the probability that aid programs or projects need redesigning, thus increasing their effectiveness.

To test the above main hypotheses of the study, we empirically analyzed the factors that downplayed the LKS at both the policymaking and implementation levels. The
main conclusion of the analysis is that donors have little chance of changing public
sector institutions through their conventional approach. Why? This approach is
inappropriate for incorporating the local knowledge aspects of specific recipient
country, and it is based on a poor understanding of what institutions are and how
they change. As revealed in section 10.2, Dutch policymakers adapted international
assumptions and western theories of good governance to identify the problems and
to formulate the NPT program in the infamous one-size fits all policy. The
implementation process of the NPT program implicitly adopted the top-down
approach. The middle management, who took over the responsibility to conduct the
POI for the NPT in Yemen, could not perform this mission in an effective way. There
was a clear lack of formal and informal data on the structure, organization,
management and staffing and censorship at various levels, so there was no clear
picture of the targeted organizations to realize "the policy fit". The information in the
POI did not give the Dutch contractors the necessary information to prepare for
problems they could face confronted with the local situation during the actual
implementation. The local knowledge was in an unopened black box. Information on
local knowledge, therefore, required effort on the part of the project implementation
team to incorporate it.

In other words, at policy level the implementation of more or less international
standardized programmes made LK a footnote in the different country programmes.
For the middle management, focusing on one or two sectors (and in the case of NPT
on the HE sub-sector) the LK should have become more important, but the middle
management relied on the international reports and censured workshops, so LK was
not taken into account. Thus all experiences with LK were pushed to the operational
level of implementers. The explanation here is that the policy maker just wanted to
overcome difficulties and just to formulate a policy that picked low-hanging fruits. It
was therefore a process which passed on the difficulties of incorporating local
knowledge from one level to another, from the policy making level to the middle
management level from the middle management level to the operational level.

It was assumed that the opposite would take place, as local knowledge should be
higher in the policymaking than the operational level. Contractors who implement
the aid programs often have no institutional stability, meaning that their involvement
in the implementation process is based on a competitive selection among plenty of
contractors. At policymaking level, the organizations are institutionally stable as the
same organizations in a donor country are responsible in forming its aid polices.
There should be lessons learned about the accumulation of knowledge through previous aid practices in recipient countries. However, there is a lack of information on local knowledge practices on online networks. There is a lack of institutional memory within donor countries, and also the diplomatic language and development jargon used in the interactions between actors during policy making prevents the black box of LK from being opened at the policy making level:

**Table 10.3 The Process of Incorporating LK during the Development of the NPT Program**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The policy process</th>
<th>Knowledge of LK</th>
<th>Incorporating LK during the Program Development</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strategic policy making level</td>
<td>+++</td>
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<tr>
<td>Middle management Level</td>
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<tr>
<td>Operational Level</td>
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The patterns and theme that seemed to emerge among the four selected NPT cases are that implementers (contractors) are the players at the heart of the aid intervention process. This idea is interrelated with the actor-network perspective, which provided the associability development approach and its main idea that the LKS (opening the black box) might be solved through the direct and indirect interactions with all actors involved in the actual process of implementing of an aid project in a specific places and time. The associability development approach is an alternative analytical tool of aid policies that offers a unique lens for analysis, and allows a deeper understanding of the dynamics of the aid programs’ implementations process. It reminds us of how solve the sheer complexity of incorporating local knowledge, as in this study the four selected case studies as part of the NPT program in Yemen are divided equally into two models of associability. The first is the harmony model of associability and networking; and the second one is the conflict model of associability and networking.

The harmony model explains the MBA and WEC projects. They witnessed effective mobilization of allies, such as government organizations, using formal and informal ties and tools. There were significant and strong actor-network interactions between the actors such as the donor contractor and its experts with the Yemeni counterparts, or among the Yemeni counterparts themselves at the departmental and organizational levels. They could open the black box of information about the functions of formal and informal institutions that set the rules of the game within the different organizational levels. Thus they provided extensive local information for
capacity building within the SU university organizations and the targeted organizations, within the government and the private sectors. The more harmonized interactions increase the level of incorporating information about local knowledge (opening the black box), and increase the level of effectiveness of aid projects.

The conflict model of associability explains the MPA/NIAS and WRTC projects. These projects experienced ongoing conflicts and poor consultation between allies. There were significant and strong conflicted interactions between the actants such as the donor contractor and its experts with the Yemeni counterparts, or among the Yemeni counterparts themselves at the departmental and organizational levels. The conflicted interactions showed that there were remarkable differences in the motives, power position and dominance of the actors, which decreased the incorporation of information on local knowledge (i.e. kept the black box closed), and thus decreased the level of effectiveness of the aid interventions. There are several factors that lead towards the creation of conflicting actor networks which we reviewed during the analysis, such as: trust and openness; commitment; mutual understanding; avoiding cultural differences; unequal representation; the initial visit to define the project; the rapid rotation of staff; and a large number of actors.

The above conclusions, which were drawn based on qualitative analysis, are in line with the results of quantitative analysis (see Chapters 7, 8, 9), showing that MBA and WEC were more effective than MPA-NIAS and WRTC in achieving the overall objective and the specific objectives of the Dutch NPT program in Yemen. Depending on the strong compatibility between the results of quantitative and qualitative analyses, we can say that the results of this study are strong enough to generalized that there is a deficiency of broad understanding and the application of local knowledge by donors. In turn, the deficiency of practical knowledge or the lack of incorporating local knowledge is a very important factor in the failure of donors, trying to promote public sector reform programs in poor policy environments. These results give us strong empirical support to refute the argument of the PCP approach and its main argument that, foreign aid programs did not and will not work in poor policy environment. The problem is not a poor environment but rather poor aid polices formulated with a lack of synthesis, research and institutional analyses to understand the environment. Unfortunately, donors, frustrated with their failed involvement and unwilling to challenge their underlying assumptions, have been reluctant to eschew a top-down approach in policy implementation. In particular, they have ignored the necessity for advance research and interactions in the policy
reform context. The aid policy makers must formulate sound polices that fit with, and are tailored to, recipients’ unique context and needs. There are many policy and theoretical reflections of this study which we present in the next, concluding chapter.