Brazilian Cities in Mozambique: South–South Development Co-operation or the Projection of Soft Power?

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This article analyses the technical co-operation between Brazilian cities and their Mozambican counterparts against the backdrop of the growing assertiveness of cities in the global economy and the resurgence of South–South co-operation. It argues that widespread global interest in Brazil's relative success in socio-economic transformation, coupled with Brazil's quest for global recognition and leadership has propelled the country's cities to the status of providers of technical assistance in Africa. While the city-to-city dimension of Brazil's technical co-operation may have contributed to the positive image and good will that Brazil enjoys in both Africa and the wider global community, it also raises questions about the developmental value of the Brazilian model of development co-operation.

Introduction

Brazil's desire to become an influential global player against the backdrop of the so-called 'rise of the South' has placed it at the centre of ongoing shifts in the discourse and practice of international development co-operation. Alongside other developing countries, such as China and India, Brazil has in recent years made the significant transition from being a recipient of western aid to a noteworthy provider of development assistance to fellow developing countries. Over the years, technical co-operation has been promoted as the distinctive face of Brazilian development co-operation. Buoyed by its relative success in lifting millions of people out of extreme poverty over a relatively short period of time,[1] Brazil has prioritised and invested in technical co-operation as a mechanism for sharing its successful development policies, expertise and technologies with other developing countries. Brazil's technical co-operation has attracted the attention not only of African countries seeking development partnerships that are relevant to their socio-economic and cultural experiences, but also western aid agencies and multilateral organisations exploring potential synergies between the traditional aid paradigm and South–South development co-operation. These new dynamics in development co-operation are symptomatic of a broader trend that has seen the emergence of the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) as a new power pole in the global political economy.

Brazil's development co-operation in Africa has also attracted significant academic interest, as evident in the fairly large body of literature that has emerged on the subject over a short

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1 See M. Ravallion, 'A Comparative Perspective on Poverty Reduction in Brazil, China and India', *World Bank Research Observer*, 26, 1 (2011), pp. 71–104.

period of time.[2] This scholarship is pioneering, to the extent that it brings a critical perspective to the often romanticised discourse and practice of Brazil's development co-operation on the continent. However, the current literature on Brazil's development co-operation in Africa is biased towards the activities of the institutions of the federal government, a tendency that limits our understanding of a dynamic engagement that cuts across multiple sectors and layers of government. In fact, as Salomon argues, Brazil's development co-operation in Africa and the rest of the global South could best be described as 'multilevel co-operation', if due regard is given to the growing role of Brazilian subnational governments in international development co-operation.[3]

In this article, I contribute to addressing this weakness in the literature by analysing the technical co-operation between Brazilian cities and their counterparts in Mozambique, against the backdrop of the global assertiveness of cities and Brasília's official discourse on South–South development co-operation. I argue that widespread global interest in Brazil's relative success in socio-economic transformation over the past decades has created opportunities for Brazilian cities to be involved in decentralised co-operation with their Mozambican counterparts. Although partly driven by the desire of Mozambican cities to tap into the Brazilian experience in urban development and management, these South–South exchanges have also served as instruments for Brazilian cities to assert and market themselves globally. In recent times, decentralised co-operation between Brazilian cities and their Mozambican counterparts has also formed part of a broader soft-power strategy deployed by federal authorities in Brasília to position Brazil as a friend of Africa and a leader in the global South.[4]

The article is structured as follows. I begin with a theoretical discussion on the evolving role of cities in world affairs, drawing insights from the literature on global cities and that on the changing nature of international relations. This is followed by an overview of Brazil's approach to development co-operation in Africa, highlighting its underlying principles and dominant narratives, as well as its emerging significance. The third section of the article analyses the drivers of decentralised co-operation between Brazilian cities and their Mozambican counterparts. The fourth and fifth sections draw on examples of Maputo's technical exchanges with its Brazilian partners to discuss the implementation of these partnerships and reflect on their significance in the context of Brazil's development co-operation in Africa.

Cities as Partners: The Growing Role of Cities in Development Co-operation

The emergent role of cities in development co-operation can be located at the intersection of two interrelated processes, namely the re-emergence of cities as important geo-political and socio-economic spaces, and ongoing transformations in the modern international system that have challenged the pre-eminence of inter-state relations in global affairs. The organisation of socio-economic and political life around major cities is by no means a new phenomenon. As Michel Acuto reminds us, 'cities were the cradle that originally prompted the rise of politics

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2 See, for example, S. Magnoni, 'Brazil and its African "Neighbours": The Old Aid System for New Global Ambitions', KnowlEdge Working Paper, No. 2, Development Series (2010); A.C. Alves, 'Brazil in Africa: Achievements and Challenges', in N. Kitchen (ed.), *Emerging Powers in Africa* (London, LSE IDEAS Special Report, 2013), pp. 37–44; O. Stuenkel, 'Brazil in Africa: Bridging the Atlantic?', KAS International Reports, February 2013; E.R. Abdenur and D.M. de Souza Neto, 'Brazil's Development Co-operation with Africa: What Role for Democracy and Human Rights?', *Sur – International Journal on Human Rights*, 10, 19 (2013), pp. 16–35.

3 M. Salomon, 'Paradiplomacy in the Developing World: The Case of Brazil', in M. Amen *et al.* (eds), *Cities and Global Governance: New Sites for International Relations* (Burlington, Ashgate, 2011), pp. 60–61.

4 On the broader link between Brazil's South–South development co-operation and its foreign policy, see C.Y.A. Inoue and A.C. Vaz, 'Brazil as "Southern Donor": Beyond Hierarchy and National Interests in Development Co-operation?', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 25, 4 (2012), pp. 507–34.

as organised *polis*'.[5] And, although until recently cities were subjected to states in the modern international system, they have historically had a dynamic and mutually constitutive relationship with states. For example, cities have for a very long time been the growth engines for the industrialisation of national economies.[6] However, the contemporary significance of cities is qualitatively different, in that it is rooted in global transformations that are redefining the spatial organisation of social, economic and political activities. As captured by the extensive literature on 'Global Cities',[7] urban spaces have not only become important sites for domestic socio-economic organisation and power relations, but also constitute strategic nodes in an increasingly networked global environment.

The emergence of so-called global cities[8] – large globally connected metropolises and conurbations – is taking place against the backdrop of unprecedented urbanisation, the restructuring of global capitalism, and the ascendancy of neoliberal economic ideology. Together with the modern technological revolution, these processes have contributed to reducing the significance of the nation-state as the main organising unit for socio-political and economic activities, allowing cities, regions and supranational entities to emerge as new strategic spatial units.[9]

The global cities associated with these transformations are seen as sites where many of the processes of neoliberal globalisation assume concrete and localised forms. In other words, as Simon Curtis argues, 'the internal life of cities, and the form that such cities take … could only be understood by reference to their connections at the international level and the functions that they fulfil for the global economy'.[10] Given their status as strategic sites in the global economy, global cities tend to be disconnected from the broader dynamics of their national economies. Coupled with the concentration of well-paid jobs in high-profit-making specialised service firms, alongside a tendency to informalise a large part of the urban economy, this global orientation contributes to spatial and socio-economic inequality within these cities, and between them and other entities in the same country.[11] It is in this context that cities have also emerged as strategic sites for political contestation between different societal interests, as well as catalysts for bottom-up and transnational challenges to established global processes and policies.[12]

It is evident from the preceding account that, contrary to traditional conceptions of the city, global cities are not passive or isolated spaces, disconnected from and having no significant bearing on global affairs. In the words of Curtis, they are 'essential to processes of globalisation, providing a material and infrastructural backbone for global flows, and a set of physical sites that facilitate command and control functions for a decentralised global economy'.[13] The strategic networks that facilitate this role also serve as multiple entry points for these cities to exercise soft power with a view to shaping the material, ideational and institutional structures

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5 M. Acuto, 'The Geopolitical Dimension of the Global City', in M. Acuto and W. Steele (eds), *Global City Challenges: Debating a Concept, Improving the Practice* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 171.

6 S. Curtis, 'Global Cities and the Transformation of the International System', *Review of International Studies*, 37, 4 (2011), p. 1927.

7 See, for example, Acuto, 'The Geopolitical Dimension'; Curtis, 'Global Cities'; S. Sassen, 'The Global City: Introducing a Concept', *Brown Journal of World Affairs*, 11, 2 (2005), pp. 27–43; M. Acuto, 'Global Cities: Gorillas in our Midst', *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, 35, 4 (2010), pp. 425–48.

8 Although the concept of 'global city' has traditionally been used to theorise the experiences of entities in the rich industrialised countries of the North, its use in this article eschews the dichotomy and hierarchical division of cities that is implied in the dominant literature. For a critique of this scholarship, see J. Robinson, *Ordinary Cities: Between Modernity and Development* (London, Routledge, 2006).

9 Sassen, 'The Global City', pp. 27–31; Curtis, 'Global Cities', p. 1924.

10 Curtis, 'Global Cities', p. 1929.

11 Sassen, 'The Global City', p. 30.

12 Sassen, 'The Global City', pp. 38–40; Acuto, 'The Geopolitical Dimension', p. 173.

13 Curtis, 'Global Cities', p. 1923.

of globalisation.[14] Concepts such as 'strategic urban planning' or 'city branding' speak to the different ways in which global cities construct specific identities and visions for their localities, and attempt to position themselves favourably in the processes of globalisation.[15] Not surprisingly, cities all over the world have become important actors seeking to influence global policy debates on a wide range of issues, including peace and security, climate change and sustainable development. Consider, for example, the activism of the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group (a global network of around 83 megacities, including the African cities of Johannesburg, Addis Ababa, Cairo and Lagos) in climate change debates. City twinning, and city-to-city co-operation more generally, also emerged in this context among the tools used by cities to actualise their global ambitions.

In modern times, city-to-city exchanges first emerged as mechanisms for promoting global peace and harmony, in defiance of the divisive logic of the state-centric international order. Beginning in the 1950s, concepts such as city twinning, friendship cities and sister cities gained currency, particularly in Europe and the United States, to promote interaction and understanding between local authorities and communities across national borders.[16] As the strategic importance of cities in the global economy grew, so did the focus and reach of their transnational exchanges. Thus cities, from engaging in what were largely symbolic and cultural partnerships, would eventually also move into the domain of development co-operation.

The involvement of cities in development co-operation, captured in the concept of decentralised co-operation, has its origins in the North–South development assistance framework. Decentralised co-operation in this context was conceived as a complementary mechanism for delivering and boosting the impact of western aid in developing countries.[17] Not surprisingly, it turned out to be little more than a one-way transfer of financial and material resources, from local governments in the North to their twinning partners in the South.[18] However, over recent decades, decentralised co-operation has had to adapt to a new discourse on international development co-operation. The emphasis given to concepts such as local ownership, capacity building and autonomous development in this new discourse has prompted a reconsideration of the focus of and approach to decentralised co-operation. While retaining its aid component, decentralised co-operation is manifested today mostly as horizontal collaborations for capacity building and the sharing of knowledge, experiences and technologies that can serve as catalysts for endogenous development.[19]

As the discussion in the next sections show, the contemporary manifestation of decentralised co-operation embodies not only the growing assertiveness of cities and other subnational units in world affairs, but also the current global realignment of power. It also speaks to the mutually reinforcing relationship between states and cities in a global environment where the interests of actors are best served through 'catalytic diplomacy'.[20] As emerging geopolitical powers such as BRICS expand their global role, so have their major cities sought to practise what David

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14 Acuto, 'Global Cities: Gorillas', pp. 435–8.
15 Acuto, 'The Geopolitical Dimension', pp. 173–4; J. Melissen and R. Van der Pluijm, 'City Diplomacy: The Expanding Role of Cities in International Politics', *Clingandael Diplomacy Papers*, No. 10 (2007), pp. 20–25.
16 P. Joenniemi, 'City-Twinning as Local Foreign Policy: The Case of Kirkenes-Nickel', University of Tartu Centre for EU–Russia Studies (EURUS), *EU–Russia Papers, No. 15*, 2014, pp. 3–4.
17 P. Hatfeck, 'An Introduction to Decentralized Co-operation: Definitions, Origins and Conceptual Mapping', *Public Administration and Development*, 23, 4 (2003), pp. 336–8.
18 M. Bontenbal, 'Strengthening Urban Governance in the South through City-to-City Co-operation: Towards an Analytical Framework', *Habitat International*, 33, 2 (2008), pp. 181–9; M.H. Romero, 'Political Foundations for Building Public Decentralised Co-operation Policies in Latin America', in *Year Book for Decentralised Co-operation* (Montevideo, Observatory for Decentralised Co-operation EU–LA, 2010), pp. 37–8. See also C. Dhaene, 'Capacity-Building Combined with Seed Money Is What We Want MIC to Be About', *Capacity.org*, 21 (2004), pp. 4–5.
19 Romero, 'Political Foundations', p. 38.
20 B. Hocking, 'Catalytic Diplomacy: Beyond "Newness" and "Decline"', in J. Melissen (ed.), *Innovation in Diplomatic Practice* (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1999), pp. 21–42.

Grewal refers to as 'network power': that is, the ability to develop and co-ordinate global linkages that affords them the opportunity to set standards and exert influence.[21] On their part, countries such as Brazil have not missed the opportunity to tap into the transnational linkages of their cities to enhance their geopolitical influence in the global South.

Brazil in Africa: Projecting Soft Power through Development Co-operation

Brazil is not a new player on the African scene. As Stuenkel notes, Brazil has had an on-off diplomatic relationship with Africa since the late 1950s and early 1960s, when many African countries gained independence.[22] However, it was the coming to power of President Lula da Silva and the Workers' Party in 2003 that would mark a significantly new phase in Brazil–Africa relations. Inspired by his country's changing economic fortunes, President Lulu infused Brazil's foreign policy with the ambitious goal of turning the country into an influential actor on the global stage in the context of an increasingly multipolar world order. A corollary of this aspiration was the re-orientation of Brazil's foreign policy away from the focus on relations with the US and Europe to prioritising diplomatic relations with other countries of the South, thereby recasting South–South co-operation as the cornerstone of Brazilian foreign policy.[23] As Brazil has attempted to re-align itself geopolitically with the so-called 'Rising South', Africa has become a priority in its foreign policy, and development co-operation has emerged as a key instrument in its diplomatic toolkit.

As a foreign policy tool, Brazil's South–South development co-operation is couched in a discourse that attempts to distinguish it not just from the northern aid paradigm, but also from the activities of other southern providers of development assistance. Brazil does not consider itself as an aid donor in the tradition of western countries. Instead, it defines its assistance as development partnerships that are undertaken in the spirit of South–South solidarity. Official rhetoric therefore emphasises horizontal and mutually beneficial co-operation, demand-driven action, non-interference in the domestic affairs of partner countries, and respect for national sovereignty as the guiding principles of Brazil's development co-operation with other developing countries.[24] Additionally, unlike countries such as China and India, which make explicit link between development assistance and the promotion of their national interests, Brazilian officials have argued that the country's development co-operation is motivated solely by considerations of solidarity and is not intended to advance its political or commercial interests.[25]

Despite receiving only a fraction of the total financial allocation for Brazilian development co-operation, technical co-operation has been promoted as the distinctive face of Brazil's solidarity diplomacy.[26] Brazil's technical assistance is anchored in the logic of peer learning and capacity building for endogenous development, and is designed to share the country's successful development policies and strategies with its southern counterparts. Not surprisingly, most of this co-operation has focused on areas such as agriculture, food security, health and education, where Brazil is believed to have recorded significant policy successes and amassed vast experience over the years.[27]

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21 Quoted in Acuto, 'Global Cities', pp. 437–8.
22 Stuenkel, 'Brazil in Africa', p. 29.
23 Inoue and Vaz, 'Brazil as Southern Donor', p. 514.
24 L. Cabral and A. Shankland, 'Narratives of Brazil–Africa Co-operation for Agricultural Development: New Paradigms?' China and Brazil in African Agriculture, *Working Paper 051* (2013), p. 5.
25 Cabral and Shankland, 'Narratives of Brazil–Africa Co-operation'. See also G. Seibert, 'Brazil in Africa: Ambitions and Achievements of an Emerging Regional Power in the Political and Economic Sector', Instituto Universitário de Lisboa, Centro de Estudos Africanos (2011), p. 14.
26 See Cabral and Shankland, 'Narratives of Brazil–Africa Co-operation', p. 6.
27 Stuenkel, 'Brazil in Africa', p. 33.

Following Brazil's diplomatic rapprochement with Africa during Lula's administration, the continent has remained the prime destination of Brazilian technical assistance.[28] Although current trends suggest an attempt to extend assistance to other countries, Portuguese-speaking African countries (Angola, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, São Tomé and Príncipe, and Cape Verde) have traditionally been a priority in Brazil's technical co-operation with Africa, owing to a common colonial heritage.[29] Within this group, Mozambique stands out as the major recipient of Brazilian technical assistance in Africa.[30] According to Chichava *et al.*, in addition to the fact that both countries share a common colonial history and language, the prominence of Mozambique in Brazil's development co-operation with Africa can also be explained by strong diplomatic ties between both countries and the appeal of business opportunities in Mozambique.[31]

There is little empirical evidence about the actual contribution of Brazil's expansive technical assistance to the socio-economic development of recipient countries in Africa, given the fact that it involves the transfer of intangible assets such as knowledge, technology and skills. However, scholars such as Inoue and Vaz are optimistic that 'the external development co-operation that Brazil provides can, and has, made a positive difference in the recipient countries'. Even as they suggest the need for more empirical research to ascertain the impact of Brazil's technical co-operation in its partner countries, they contend that '… numerous human and institutional capacity-building projects have contributed to the development of recipient countries'.[32]

Unlike the uncertainty about its developmental impact on recipient countries, the contribution of Brazil's technical co-operation to the country's international image and foreign policy objectives is unmistakable. Alves notes that, 'Brazil's co-operation practices in [Africa] have substantiated its normative discourse with concrete actions in a very short period of time, which has greatly enhanced its prestige in the region'. Perhaps inferring from the many requests for trilateral partnerships that Brazil has received from countries such as the US, Japan and Germany, she adds that 'Brazil is increasingly regarded as a reliable development partner in (and outside) Africa', suggesting that traditional donors seem to perceive Brazil's approach to development co-operation 'as a more palatable form of South–South co-operation'.[33] The contribution of this positive image and the goodwill that accrues from it to Brazil's global political ambitions and economic interests should not be overlooked. As Stuenkel reminds us, it was thanks to the diplomatic support of its African friends that Brazil's candidate was elected for the position of Director-General of the Food and Agricultural Organisation in January 2012.[34] Besides, as Milani argues, Brazil's recent economic expansion in Africa cannot be adequately explained outside the framework of its technical co-operation on the continent.[35]

Drivers of Decentralised Co-operation between Brazilian and Mozambican Cities

Brazil's technical co-operation with Mozambique has evolved at two levels. First, co-operation takes the form of technical assistance negotiated between the national governments of both

28 L. Cabral and J. Weinstock, 'Brazilian Technical Co-operation for Development: Drives, Mechanics and Future Prospects' (London, Overseas Development Institute, September 2010), p. 5.

29 *Ibid.*

30 A.C. Alves, 'Brazil–Africa Technical Co-operation: Structure, Achievements and Challenges', South African Institute for International Affairs (SAIIA) Policy Briefing No. 69, August 2013, p. 3.

31 S. Chichava *et al.*, 'Brazil and China in Mozambican Agriculture: Emerging Insights from the Field', *IDS Bulletin*, 44, 4 (2013), p. 102.

32 Inoue and Vaz, 'Brazil as "Southern Donor"', p. 531–2.

33 Alves, 'Brazil in Africa', p. 44.

34 Stuenkel, 'Brazil in Africa', p. 31.

35 C. Milani, 'Brazil's South–South Co-operation Strategies: From Foreign Policy to Public Policy', SAIIA Occasional Paper No. 179, March 2014, p. 10–11.

countries and executed by the ministries and agencies of the Brazilian federal government. Technical co-operation at this level has focused primarily on adult education, scholarships, agricultural research and the treatment of HIV/AIDS patients,[36] and has been the subject of a burgeoning literature.[37] Second, technical co-operation between Brazil and Mozambique also takes place at the level of subnational governments. Perhaps because it is largely conducted independently of the development co-operation of the Brazilian Co-operation Agency (ABC), this decentralised technical co-operation has received little attention in the academic discourse on Brazilian development co-operation in Mozambique and Africa more generally. However, I argue in this section that although technical co-operation between Brazilian cities and their Mozambican counterparts embodies the growing assertiveness of global cities described above, this co-operation is also embedded in the South–South solidarity discourse championed by officials in Brasília. It should therefore be understood as an integral component of Brazil's development co-operation policy in Africa, and its underlying rationale to boost Brazilian influence on the continent.

The emergence of Brazilian cities as actors in development co-operation in Mozambique strongly resonates with the processes of global transformation outlined in preceding sections of this article. City-to-city exchanges and partnerships between both countries can therefore be understood, first and foremost, in the context of a quest for global influence, competitiveness, and access to beneficial networks. As Salomon points out, city branding has always been an integral part of the international relations strategy of Brazilian cities, owing to a conviction that a positive image and reputation is a valuable asset in today's highly competitive and interdependent global environment.[38] By sharing their development experiences and expertise with their southern peers, Brazilian cities have sought to project a positive image of themselves, while developing and managing their own networks of influence. Decentralised technical co-operation in this context, especially when it is undertaken in collaboration with international development agencies, could also be interpreted as a strategy for Brazilian cities to legitimise their urban development policies and influence global discourses on sustainable development from the vantage point of their own experiences and preferences.

In this regard, a strong correlation can be observed between the urban development discourses and branding strategies of Brazilian cities and the areas in which they are more inclined to co-operate with their Mozambican counterparts. For example, inspired by the anti-globalisation discourse of the left-wing Workers' Party that governed Porto Alegre from 1989 to 2004, the city has sought to market itself globally as an advocate of democracy and solidarity. Consistent with this branding strategy, Porto Alegre's international co-operation has revolved around the dissemination of the concept of participatory budgeting and democracy, which it pioneered in the 1990s.[39] Porto Alegre's co-operation partnerships in Mozambique have, for the most part, also reflected this internationalisation strategy in terms of the focus on participatory budgeting.

From the perspective of Mozambican cities, the strong global appeal of Brazil's development experience against the backdrop of renewed faith in South–South co-operation has been a key driver of co-operation with their Brazilian counterparts. African cities, most notably those in Mozambique, have shown a strong inclination towards learning and borrowing from

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36 Seibert, 'Brazil in Africa', p. 14.
37 See, for example, Chichava *et al.*, 'Brazil and China'; S. Schlesinger, 'Brazilian Co-operation and Investment in Africa: The Case of ProSavana in Mozambique', TEMTI Series of Economic Perspectives on Global Sustainability, No. 1, 2014; A.E. Abdenur *et al.*, 'Brazilian Health and Agricultural Co-operation in Mozambique: An Overview', Brics Policy Center *Working Papers*, 2, 5 (2014); M. Foller, 'South–South Co-operation: Brazilian Partnership with Mozambique and the Construction of an Aids Drug Plant', *Austral: Brazilian Journal of Strategy & International Relations*, 2, 3 (2013), pp. 167–91; G. Russo *et al.*, 'On the Margins of Aid Orthodoxy: The Brazil–Mozambique Collaboration to Produce Essential Medicines in Africa', *Globalization and Health*, 10, 70 (2014).
38 Salomon, 'Paradiplomacy in the Developing World', p. 58.
39 *Ibid.*

the urban development experiences of their Brazilian counterparts, given the important role played by metropolitan and intermediary cities in Brazil's socio-economic transformation.[40] Thus, in addition to the project-based exchanges carried out under the auspices of multilateral organisations and networks, or as part of Brazil's multi-level development co-operation, many Mozambican cities have also entered into direct twinning or long-term partnerships with their Brazilian counterparts. As demonstrated below with the case of Maputo, many Mozambican cities therefore have multiple Brazilian cities as co-operation partners, with each partnership focusing on areas in which the participating Brazilian city is believed to have excelled.

Some of these partnerships, such as that between the cities of Matola (Mozambique) and Canoas (Brazil) in the area of participatory budgeting and democracy, have evolved from the South–South co-operation initiatives championed by multilateral organisations and networks.[41] However, others reflect the official, and sometimes personal, initiatives of Mozambican local authorities resulting from their exposure to and admiration for the urban development models of Brazilian cities. The example of Maputo's technical exchanges with Porto Alegre in the area of participatory budgeting in the 2000s speaks to this reality. As elaborated in the next section, this particular collaboration was initiated by the then mayor of Maputo, Eneas Comiche, who, as a one-time international figure, had been exposed to Brazil's development experience and had served as an advocate of South–South co-operation.[42]

Notwithstanding the active agency of the cities involved, a network comprising western donors, multilateral development organisations, and local government associations have played a major role in catalysing and giving momentum to the technical co-operation between Brazilian and Mozambican cities. As noted earlier, Brazil's relative success in combining economic growth and a raft of social programmes to uplift millions of people out of poverty within a short period of time turned the country into the global community's poster child in the fight against poverty and social exclusion. As evident in the many trilateral development co-operation initiatives involving Brazil and traditional donors, the 1990s and early 2000s were characterised by a strong desire on the part of western aid agencies and multilateral organisations to transfer best practices and lessons from Brazil's development experience to other developing countries.

Against this backdrop, Brazilian cities were soon identified by western donors and multilateral organisations as repositories of valuable best practices that should be shared with other cities in the developing world. It should be noted that, thanks in part to the interventions of multilateral development agencies such as the World Bank, International Labour Organisation (ILO) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), a number of Brazilian cities had recorded significant successes in urban development and management.[43] These agencies have sought to replicate the success stories of Brazil's urban development by encouraging South–South knowledge exchanges between cities in Brazil and Africa. For example, in pursuit of its Decent Work Agenda[44] in Mozambique, the ILO has worked closely with cities in Brazil such as Belo Horizonte and Porto Alegre. According to the ILO, the two Brazilian cities 'have considerable

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40 See, for example, D. Thorpe, 'Belo Horizonte Helps Namibian Mayors Pledge to End Hunger and Malnutrition', *Sustainable Cities Collective*, 25 July 2014.
41 United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), 'South–South Co-operation in the Field of Participatory Democracy', *UCLG News*, 16 June 2014.
42 See Carolini, 'Valuing Possibility', p. 276.
43 See, for example, Alcira Kreimer and Roy Gilbert, 'Best Practices in Urban Development: Learning from Brazil', World Bank Operations Evaluation Department (OED), *Précis*, No. 156, Autumn 1997.
44 The ILO's Decent Work Agenda seeks to promote the creation of employment in conditions of safety, security and human dignity. For more on this, see ILO, 'Brazil's Contribution to the ILO South–South and Triangular Co-operation Strategy: An Overview: 2011–2013', report prepared for the 7th Annual Review Meeting of the ILO, Geneva, 18 June 2013.

experience in supporting local economy and small enterprises',[45] adding that Belo Horizonte, in particular, has become an example of best practices in food safety.[46]

The active participation of Brazilian and Mozambican local government officials in the activities of global city networks in the late 1990s and early 2000s would provide yet another incentive for decentralised South–South co-operation between cities from both countries.[47] The capacity-building initiatives of networks such as the Cities Alliances and the United Cities and Local Government (UCLG), in particular, have been a major driver of co-operation between Brazilian and Mozambican cities. For example, the UCLG has, since 2013, initiated a framework for decentralised South–South technical co-operation between local authorities in Brazil and Mozambique, with the financial support of the Norwegian government, the European Commission and the Barcelona City Council. Dubbed the 'City Future' programme, this programme has also benefited from the technical support of a host of other actors, including the National Front of Mayors (FNP) from Brazil, the Association of Mozambican Municipalities (ANAMM), Architects Without Borders (ASF), and Cities Alliance. The initiative is founded on the assumption that participating Mozambican cities could learn from the experiences of their Brazilian counterparts in areas such as sustainable urban land use and planning, participatory budgeting and the management of informal settlements.[48]

Another major driver of technical co-operation between cities in Brazil and Mozambique is the transformative foreign policy embraced by the Workers' Party in Brazil, in power since 2003. The aspiration for global influence underpinning this foreign policy created sufficient space for city governments, especially those governed by the Workers' Party, to assume a proactive role in international relations. Salomon argues that, during this time, the attitude of the federal government towards the transnational engagements of subnational governments shifted from merely accepting these activities to actually incorporating them into its own foreign policy strategies. Consequently, it has become more accurate to describe Brazil's development co-operation as 'federated international co-operation' or 'multilevel co-operation'.[49] In the case of Brazil's co-operation with Mozambique, this dynamic has given rise to a mutually reinforcing relationship in which cities and other subnational entities use the support of the federal government to strengthen their global networks, while Brasília leverages these transnational linkages to consolidate its reputation and influence in Mozambique. Since 2011, the Brazilian government has launched two programmes through which it has actively supported the decentralised co-operation of its subnational entities, including the partnerships between the Brazilian cities of Guarulhos and Vitória, on the one hand, and their Mozambican partners of Maputo, Matola and Xai Xai, on the other hand.[50]

Brazilian Cities in Mozambique: The Case of Maputo

This section draws on some of the technical exchanges and sister-city partnerships between the capital city of Maputo and its Brazilian partners to discuss the implementation of these

45 A. Amorim and P. Martinot-Lagarde, *City-to-City and South–South and Triangular Co-operation* (Geneva, International Labour Organisation, 2013), p. 39.

46 ILO, 'Brazil's contribution'.

47 Salomon, 'Paradiplomacy in the Developing World', p. 56. See also G. Carolini, 'Valuing Possibility: South–South Co-operation and Participatory Budgeting in Maputo', in C.N. Silva (ed.), *Urban Planning in Sub-Saharan Africa: Colonial and Post-Colonial Planning Cultures* (New York, Routledge, 2015), p. 276.

48 UCLG, 'Decentralised Co-operation in the South: An Effective Tool to Promote Development', *UCLG News*, 17 February 2014. See also UCLG, 'Decentralised Co-operation between Mozambique and Brazil Advances through Technical Exchange', *UCLG News*, 9 September 2013.

49 Salomon, 'Paradiplomacy in the Developing World', pp. 60–61.

50 For more on these federal programmes for decentralised technical co-operation, see I.C. Leite *et al.*, 'Brazil's Engagement in International Development Co-operation: The State of the Debate', Institute of Development Studies, Evidence Report No. 59 (May 2014), p. 52.

partnerships and reflect on the significance of decentralised co-operation in this context. As the capital and largest city of Mozambique, Maputo has been at the forefront of decentralised co-operation with cities in Brazil. The city's technical exchanges with its Brazilian counterparts therefore offer a window on to the actual manifestations and impact of the technical assistance provided by Brazilian cities in Mozambique. Maputo has sister-city partnerships or has engaged in technical co-operation with a number of metropolitan and intermediary cities from Brazil, including Rio de Janeiro, Guarulhos, Porto Alegre, and Belo Horizonte. It also has a partnership on technical co-operation with the Brazilian federated state of Paraná

At the behest of Maputo, the UCLG and the ILO sponsored a South–South city learning exchange on informal inner-city trading in the Mozambican capital in 2012. As Kamete and Lindell have documented, Maputo has, since the 1980s, struggled to reconcile the aspirations of the local elite to create and project a modern city image with the rapidly increasing informal trading activities of the urban poor.[51] The initiative was therefore designed to allow the Mozambican city to draw on the experiences of the Brazilian cities of Belo Horizonte and Porto Alegre, and the South African city of Durban, in efforts to manage informal inner-city trading through strategies that are sensitive to and enhance the livelihoods of informal traders. The underlying assumption of this initiative was that the cities of Durban, Belo Horizonte and Porto Alegre have decades of experience in handling informal trading in socio-economic contexts that are similar to that in Maputo, and therefore could offer practical ideas and lessons to Maputo.

In both Belo Horizonte and Porto Alegre, the approach to dealing with sprawling informal markets hinges on restricting authorisation for trading in the inner city and relocating most street vendors to designated trading areas or so-called popular shopping centres. Despite being hailed by city officials and some international organisations as a socially responsible model of urban renewal, some observers have criticised the strategy for entrenching exclusion from public space and promoting a discourse of 'formalisation' that underrates the value of informal trading. The privatisation of the development and management of popular shopping centres also means that street vendors are in effect left at the mercy of private entrepreneurs, in terms of the rent charged for stalls and the services provided in these markets.[52]

Durban's approach to inner city development has officially been couched in a sustainable livelihoods framework that proactively supports informal trading. A highly celebrated success story in this regard is the Warwick Junction urban renewal project, which saw city authorities and street vendors collaborating to come up with creative solutions that accommodated the interests and improved the livelihoods of thousands of street traders. However, as Caroline Skinner notes, the livelihoods of street vendors in the Durban city centre have sometimes taken a back seat to private property interests and the modernist vision of an orderly city.[53]

The Maputo mentoring and learning exercise made use of collaborative exchanges and reflective workshops, including site visits to informal markets in the Maputo city centre, to explore ways in which the experiences of participating Brazilian and South African cities in managing informal trading could be adapted to the local context in Maputo. For Maputo, key take-home lessons from this exercise included acknowledging the right of informal traders to the city, and the need for municipal authorities and informal traders to develop jointly a

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51 A.Y. Kamete and I. Lindell, 'The Politics of "Non-Planning" Interventions in African Cities: Unravelling the International and Local Dimensions in Harare and Maputo', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 36, 4(2010), pp. 889–912.

52 See A. Carrieri and I. Murta, 'Cleaning up the City: A Study on the Removal of Street Vendors from Downtown Belo Horizonte, Brazil', *Canadian Journal of Administrative Science*, 28, 2 (2011), pp. 217–25; A. Alcântara *et al.*, *Street Vendors and the Right to the City* (São Paulo, Gaspar Garcia Centre for Human Rights, 2014), pp. 81–4; A.P. Salej, *Informal Economy Budget Analysis in Brazil and Belo Horizonte*, Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO) Working Paper No. 15, March 2010, p. 16.

53 C. Skinner, 'Challenging City Imaginaries: Street Traders Struggles in Warwick Junction', *Agenda*, 23, 81 (2009), pp. 101–9.

shared vision for the city and to work together to realise it. In practical terms, this translates to, among other things, ending the arbitrary relocation of informal markets that compromised the livelihoods of street vendors.[54] It has since proven difficult to adopt these best practices in the context of Maputo where, as Kamete and Lindell note, the local political and economic elite are traditionally opposed to the idea of street vending in the city centre, and the approach of local authorities has been to restrict these activities.[55] The tension between the right to city space and welfare of street vendors,[56] on the one hand, and the interests of the local elite, on the other, has determined the extent to which the progressive ideas emanating from this South–South learning exchange have influenced Maputo's attitude towards street vendors.[57] In the main, although street vendors have at times used their patronage ties with local party leaders to extract concessions from the municipality,[58] it is the preferences of the local elite and not best practices from its sister-cities that continue to dictate how the city space in Maputo is managed.

The history of the introduction and early attempts to implement the idea of participatory budgeting in Maputo is also instructive of the complex dynamics of decentralised co-operation between cities in Brazil and Mozambique. As a governance tool for promoting democratic decision-making and fiscal responsibility among local authorities, participatory budgeting is believed to have been pioneered by the city government of Porto Alegre under the Workers' Party in the late 1980s. When the reform-minded Eneas Comiche took over the mayoral office of Maputo following the 2003 local elections, he sought to give substance to his participatory governance rhetoric by introducing this concept to municipal planning processes. Comiche's participatory budgeting project was inspired by and was to be modelled on the experience in Porto Alegre. Thus, in addition to deploying two municipal employees as interns in Porto Alegre, Comiche himself is believed to have visited the Brazilian city to appreciate personally its participatory budgeting processes.[59] According to Carolini, besides the interest demonstrated by Maputo officials, there was also a push from Brazilian local authorities. For example, 'in 2006 a group of technical experts from [Maputo Municipality] … was invited to Porto Alegre by the mayoral office there to take part in an international workshop on municipal administration and to learn more about participatory budgeting-supported projects in Brazil'.[60]

Drawing mainly on lessons and assistance from Porto Alegre, Maputo adopted a framework for participatory budgeting that approximated what Nylen has described as a '"maximalist" Brazilian-style model', which has its normative roots in the empowering and emancipatory discourse of the Workers' Party's radical conception of democracy. This model allowed residents in Maputo's 63 neighbourhoods and seven districts to deliberate and identify priority public works projects that the city council would invest in. Approximately 15 per cent of the city's investment budget was dedicated to projects emanating from this process.[61] Notwithstanding its strong Brazilian influence, Maputo's initial approach to participatory budgeting also drew

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54 UCLG, 'Peer Learning in Maputo City, Mozambique; "Hygiene, Health and Markets"', October 2012, available at https://issuu.com/uclgcglu/docs/maputolearning_eng, retrieved 16 November 2014. See also Kamete and Lindell, 'The Politics of "Non-Planning"', p. 903.

55 Kamete and Lindell, 'The Politics of "Non-Planning"', p. 902.

56 The idea of a 'right to the city' was first proposed by French sociologist and philosopher Henri Lefebvre in his seminal book *Le Droit à la Vie* (Paris, Anthropos, 1968), as a collective entitlement of marginalised groups to reclaim and re-invent the city space, and has since served as a slogan for many social movements around the world. For more on this, see M. Huchzermeyer, 'Humanism, Creativity and Rights: Invoking Henri Lefebvre's Right to the City in the Tension Presented by Informal Settlements in South Africa', inaugural lecture, School of Architecture and Planning, University of Witwatersrand, 12 November 2013.

57 Personal conversation with official of the Maputo city council, Maputo, 7 October 2014.

58 See Kamete and Lindell, 'The Politics of "Non-Planning"', pp. 903–5.

59 W.R. Nylen, *Participatory Budgeting in a Competitive–Authoritarian Regime: A Case Study (Maputo, Mozambique)* (Maputo, Instituto de Estudos Sociais e Económicos [IESE], 2014), p. 28.

60 Carolini, 'Valuing Possibility', p. 276.

61 Nylen, *Participatory Budgeting*, pp. 9–10, 28–9, 52.

inspiration from a parallel process, sponsored by a network of organisations such the World Bank Institute, UH–Habitat, and Cities Alliance, to adapt and introduce the idea to the African context, including a celebrated pilot project in the central Mozambican city of Dondo.[62]

However, Maputo's experimentation with the Brazilian model of participatory budgeting soon floundered in the context of a local political environment dominated by a single party. Unlike in Porto Alegre and other Brazilian cities where participatory budgeting found fertile ground in a competitive political environment and an active grassroots civil society movement, the pervasive influence of the ruling Frelimo party meant that there was little room for genuine reform in Maputo. Nylen argues that Maputo's participatory budgeting exercises in the mid 2000s were motivated mainly by intra-party political competition within Frelimo, adding that 'Mayor Eneas Comiche adopted the idea as a means to connect with FRELIMO-dominated neighbourhoods and their leaders (who vote in party primaries)'.[63] In this context, the concept of participatory budgeting faced resistance from anti-reformists within the ruling party, and attempts to translate it into an implementable plan of action were hamstrung by the pervasive influence of Frelimo in local government structures, as well as by Comiche's own preoccupation with his political survival as mayor of Maputo.[64] In the words of Nylen, participatory budgeting in Maputo turned out to be 'an instrument of partisan mobilisation or manipulation rather than empowerment or oversight', to the extent that some processes were never implemented and priority projects were ignored or delayed for several years.[65]

Ultimately, the Brazilian model of participatory budgeting lost its appeal in Maputo following Comiche's failure to secure his re-election in 2008. This has since been replaced by a so-called community development model of participatory budgeting, implemented as part of the World Bank-sponsored Maputo Municipal Development Programme or ProMaputo. While lacking the radical democratic aspirations embodied by the Brazilian-style participatory budgeting, the current version of the practice in Maputo is seen to have better prospects in the current political context in Mozambique, characterised by a dominant ruling party and high levels of clientelism and corruption.[66]

Maputo's technical co-operation with the city of Guarulhos on solid waste management is also worth examining here because it adds another layer to the complexities involved in localising the ideas and best practices adopted from these exchanges. In particular, it brings to the fore the challenges associated with the predominantly statist and technocratic character of decentralised South–South co-operation. Maputo has a sister-city partnership with Guarulhos, which has seen the two cities co-operate on the management of urban waste, cemeteries and transportation. This partnership received a boost in 2011, when its waste management component was selected for funding as part of a decentralised co-operation programme jointly sponsored by the Brazilian and French governments.[67] This sponsored project served as a catalyst for a series of technical exchanges on integrated solid waste management between Maputo and Guarulhos, which were able to outlive the initial funding period.[68]

Guarulhos enjoys a reputation in Brazil for its integrated and participative approach to solid waste management, which hinges on collaboration between the municipality and waste

62 *Ibid.*, pp. 29–31.

63 *Ibid.*, p. 65.

64 *Ibid.*, p. 52. See also Carolini, 'Valuing Possibility', pp. 276–7.

65 Nylen, *Participatory Budgeting*, pp. 18, 32.

66 *Ibid.*, pp. 59–63. On clientelism and corruption in Mozambique, see J. Sumich, 'Politics After the Time of Hunger in Mozambique: A Critique of Neo-Patrimonial Interpretation of African Elites', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 34, 1 (2008), pp. 111–25.

67 This waste management project took the form of a quadrilateral exchange involving Maputo, Guarulhos, and the sister-cities of Seine-Saint-Denis (France) and Matola (Mozambique). For more on this, see Leite, 'Brazil's Engagement', p. 52.

68 Personal conversation with official in the international relations directorate of the Maputo city council, October 2014 and April 2015.

recycling co-operatives, and the recognition and promotion of waste picking as a source of livelihood for the urban poor. Although municipal bye-laws in Maputo and the city's 2008 Master Plan for Solid Waste Management make provision for the integration of the informal sector in solid waste management, the practice has lagged behind legislation and policy.[69] Technical exchanges between officials and technicians from both cities provided an opportunity for Maputo to draw insights from Guarulhos' experience in integrating waste pickers and the broader recycling sector into the city's solid waste management system. However, this learning exercise has had limited impact on solid waste management practices in Maputo.[70]

A recent study by Buque and Robeiro found that waste recycling remains a marginalised activity in Maputo and is largely undertaken separately from the municipality's solid waste management system. The authors blame this state of affairs on an underdeveloped market for recyclable waste in Mozambique, low levels of local awareness about recycling issues, and weak municipal leadership in implementing the city's Integrated Waste Management Plan.[71] According to officials directly involved in the technical exchange with Guarulhos, part of the challenge in localising the Brazilian model of waste management in Maputo lies in an enduring negative attitude (held by local communities and authorities) towards *catadores* (waste pickers) and their activities. *Catadores* are generally stigmatised as criminals, outcasts or failures, and, although the municipality's attitude towards them is believed to have improved over the years, their contribution to the city's waste management has not been fully embraced officially.[72]

As Allen and Jossias point out, the continued marginalisation of *catadores* in Maputo could also be explained by their lack of awareness of their potential, as well as their limited exposure to the experiences of their peers in other countries, including, for example, 'the achievements of the *catadores* in Brazil in obtaining legal recognition and rights and self-respect'.[73] This understanding underlines the limits of the predominantly governmental and technocratic approach that is characteristic of decentralised South–South co-operation. Arguably, a more holistic approach to the co-operation between Maputo and Guarulhos, which, in addition to official exchanges, also made provision for networking between *catadores* and other civil society players from both cities, would have a much greater impact on solid waste management practices in the Mozambican context.

The predominantly technocratic approach to decentralised South–South co-operation, however, seems to have been quite effective in Maputo's technical co-operation with the Brazilian state of Paraná. As part of the ProMaputo programme, the Mozambican capital city was encouraged by the World Bank to enter into a technical co-operation agreement with the state of Paraná in 2012. The partnership, which was renewed in 2014 and is expected to run until 2016, has largely been implemented by Paranacidade, the social and urban development agency of the government of Paraná, in collaboration with local municipalities in Paraná that share similar characteristics and challenges with Maputo.[74] One of the major projects undertaken as part of this partnership focused on strengthening Maputo's capacity to improve its tax collection system and raise revenues for the enhanced provision of municipal services, and has since received international recognition as a best practice in South–South knowledge exchange.[75] Through training exercises, exchange visits of technicians and municipal officials,

69 C. Allen and E. Jossias, 'Mapping of the Policy Context and *Catadores* Organizations in Maputo, Mozambique', WEIGO Organising Brief No. 6, May 2011, pp. 5–6.
70 Personal conversation with officials in of the Maputo city council, October 2014, April 2015 and January 2016.
71 L.I.B. Buque and H. Ribeiro, 'Overview of the Selective Waste Collection with Pickers in Maputo Municipality, Mozambique: Challenges and Perspectives', *Saude Sociedade*, 21, 1 (2015).
72 Allen and Jossias, 'Mapping of the Policy Context', pp. 9–10.
73 *Ibid.*, pp. 11–12.
74 Personal conversation with official in the international relations directorate of the Maputo city council, October 2014 and April 2015.
75 World Bank, 'The South–South Experience Exchange Facility 2014 Implementation Progress Report', pp. 28–9.

and follow-up engagements via emails and video-conferencing, Maputo has been able to draw on the municipal tax management experience of the city of Araucária in Paraná to improve especially its property tax collection system.[76]

According to a World Bank report, this technical exchange has brought Maputo a step closer to financial sustainability by enabling the Mozambican city to extend its property tax collection net to a total of 57,000 properties within the main urban core of the city.[77] However, this positive view of the contribution of the technical co-operation between Maputo and Paraná to growing the former's revenue base should be understood in the context of the current settlement pattern in Maputo. Most of Maputo's residents live in informal settlements, which are not covered by the municipal cadastre. The ultimate impact of the capacity-building exercise in terms of improved revenue collection from property tax is therefore limited.

South–South Development Co-operation or the Projection of Soft Power?

The examples of Maputo's co-operation with its Brazilian partners discussed in the preceding section are instructive in appreciating the contours and significance of decentralised co-operation in the context of Brazil's development co-operation in Mozambique, and Africa generally. There is no gainsaying that the city-to-city dimension of Brazilian technical co-operation has been a contributing factor to the positive image and good will that Brazil, as a nation, enjoys in both Africa and the wider global community. For example, if the rhetoric of officials at the Maputo city council and ANAMM is anything to go by, it is fair to conclude that, thanks to the technical assistance of its city governments, Brazil is widely perceived in official circles as a 'friend' of Mozambique.[78] Likewise, it can be inferred from the discourses of international organisations and networks that the technical assistance of Brazilian cities, especially in the context of their transnational co-operation with Mozambican cities, has become one of the drivers of the global hype about Brazil's model of development co-operation. Consider, for instance, the World Bank's celebration of the technical co-operation between Paraná and Maputo as a best practice in South–South knowledge exchange, or the fact that technical exchanges between Brazilian and Mozambican cities have been the face of the UCLG's decentralised South–South co-operation programme, which has attracted the interest of many international development actors. It is, however, difficult, and not within the scope of this article, to ascertain the extent to which Brazilian cities and their federal government have successfully translated this positive reputation into a soft power resource that promotes their interests in Mozambique and globally.

Whereas the connection between the technical co-operation of Brazilian cities in Mozambique and Brazil's positive global reputation is unambiguous, the same cannot be said of the contribution of these South–South exchanges to urban development in Mozambique. In the first instance, as most of the examples discussed above illustrate, the socio-economic and political environment in Mozambique has generally worked against the successful assimilation of foreign ideas and best practices. In a society defined by high levels of socio-economic inequality and political clientelism, the transformative discourse underpinning city-to-city co-operation in areas such as participatory budgeting and informal trading has failed to resonate with the local elite. In a bid to preserve their power and privileges, the local elite have used their role as gatekeepers of the institutional landscape of the city to determine which foreign ideas are localised and how. In this context, technical co-operation has had only minimal effect on sustainable urban development.

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76 *Ibid.*
77 *Ibid.*, p. 29.
78 In conversations with some of these officials, the concept of friendship emerged as the most important theme that appears to capture the dominant attitude of Mozambican subnational officials towards Brazil.

The influence of the elite on the outcomes of decentralised co-operation is reinforced by the fact that these exchanges largely replicate the statist and technocratic character of Brazilian development co-operation generally. As the example of Maputo demonstrates, the knowledge exchange and capacity-building initiatives at the centre of co-operation between Brazilian cities and their Mozambican counterparts take place exclusively at the level of technicians and other municipal officials. In some instances, such as in the case of Maputo's technical co-operation with Paraná on municipal financial management, this model of co-operation has been quite fruitful, even if, as pointed out above, its developmental impact has been limited by poor socio-economic conditions in Maputo. However, the absence of a people-to-people dimension to these exchanges has generally worked against their local impact. As the example of Maputo's partnership with Guarulhos on solid waste management points out, the exclusion of other local actors from decentralised co-operation tends to undermine the effective assimilation of best practices derived from these exchanges, especially when foreign-inspired interventions require successful collaboration between local authorities and other stakeholders in the municipality.

The predominantly technocratic approach to decentralised co-operation in this context also raises questions about the depth and sustainability of the 'friendship' that binds Brazil and Africa. Considering the difficulty in establishing a link between capacity-building initiatives and the service delivery performance of city officials, few Mozambicans actually get to experience or appreciate the Brazilian presence in the country. It is therefore safe to posit that the supposed friendship between Brazil and Mozambique exists mainly as a construct of the elite and government officials. Conversely, if we accept the thesis that decentralised co-operation, and sub-state diplomacy more generally, can be effective tools for democratising foreign policy and international co-operation,[79] then the absence of a people-to-people component in the decentralised co-operation of Brazilian cities could be seen as a missed opportunity for Brasília to win the good will not just of the Mozambican elite but also of the Mozambican people. Such a grassroots presence is essential for the sustainability of Brazilian influence in Africa, giving the growing strategic importance of public opinion in contemporary diplomacy. However, using city-to-city exchanges to build Brazil's grassroots presence in Africa should not be seen solely as a socio-cultural activity, as it also has implications for local political dynamics. As Cabral and Shankland suggest, extending decentralised co-operation to the social domain has the potential to introduce Brazil's rich history of grassroots social activism to the African context,[80] with the possibility of altering local power relations by raising the political awareness of and empowering previously marginalised groups.

Moreover, the notion that Brazil is perceived as a reliable development partner, at least by the African elite, also needs to be qualified if due regard is accorded to the multi-level co-operation framework. It has been established that technical assistance is at the heart of Brazil's model of development co-operation in Africa. This resonates with the new discourse on international development co-operation, which eschews aid in favour of collaboration for endogenous development. However, the case of co-operation between cities in Brazil and Mozambique highlights limits to the discourse that extols the developmental value of technical co-operation in the African context. Against the backdrop of an enduring culture of dependence inherited from North–South co-operation, the transfer of knowledge and experiences is yet to be fully embraced as a form of development co-operation in its own right. This is particularly the case given that the benefits that accrue from these technical exchanges are generally of an intangible nature and, as noted above, are mostly imperceptible to those not directly involved in the activities. In a socio-economic context where improving the material conditions of the city population is a matter of urgency, and city officials and politicians must be seen to be doing so,

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79 See F. Nganje, 'Paradiplomacy and the Democratisation of Foreign Policy in South Africa', *South African Journal of International Relations*, 21, 1 (2014), pp. 89–107.
80 Cabral and Shankland, 'Narratives of Brazil–Africa Co-operation', pp. 19–20.

co-operation partnerships with northern actors, which combine capacity building with financial and material aid, still maintain pride of place in the development co-operation of Mozambican cities. As one official in the Maputo city council puts it, Maputo has many friends in Brazil, but has the Spanish city of Barcelona as its main development partner.[81] On the one hand, this perception cannot be divorced from the inherent difficulty in isolating and evaluating the intangible benefits that accrue from the exclusively technical co-operation between Brazilian and Mozambican cities and the fact that this South–South co-operation is highly susceptible to the internal socio-economic and political dynamics of Brazil. On the other hand, it speaks to a preference for Barcelona's highly institutionalised development co-operation programme in Maputo, which almost always produces material benefits for the city.[82]

Conclusion

Most academic and policy debates on Brazil's development co-operation in Africa rarely capture the multi-level perspective of the phenomenon. In this article, I have used the example of technical co-operation between Brazilian cities and their Mozambican counterparts to demonstrate that city-to-city exchanges have increasingly become an integral component of Brazil's diplomacy of solidarity in Africa. Decentralised South–South co-operation in this context, I have argued, is driven mainly by the growing assertiveness of Brazilian cities and Brasília's quest for global influence, but also by a strong international interest in Brazil's development experience. I further argue that, while decentralised co-operation has contributed to enhancing Brazil's reputation in Mozambique and beyond, its actual contribution to the socio-economic development of participating Mozambican cities is in doubt. The developmental impact of city-to-city exchanges has been limited by, among other things, the preferences and gatekeeping role of the local elite, disparities in the levels of socio-economic and cultural development between Brazil and Mozambique, and the fact that decentralised co-operation in this context evolves mainly at the level of city officials and technicians. In addition to raising questions about the developmental impact of Brazilian technical co-operation in Africa, the multi-level perspective adopted in this analysis also raises the possibility that the dominant narrative that suggests a deepening bond between Brazil and Africa is a construct of the elite, which is not necessarily shared by the rest of the population.

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81 Personal conversation with official in the international relations directorate of the Maputo city council, October 2014 and April 2015.

82 *Ibid.*