NEW VOICES ON SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION BETWEEN EMERGING POWERS AND AFRICA
African civil society perspectives

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**Executive summary**

Against a background of sustained economic growth over the past two decades, emerging economies are revitalising their South-South Cooperation (SSC). The steady increase in economic and political weight of certain emerging powers, combined with the scaling up of South-South Cooperation, stirred up considerable academic as well as political interest. The changing development landscape and the impact of emerging powers in the area of development cooperation, especially when they act as donors, is a hot topic. In particular the activities of emerging powers in Africa are prompting a heated debate. However, the viewpoints of civil society in the partner countries of the emerging powers seem to barely attract any attention. The 11.11.11 Research Chair on Development Cooperation therefore set off to explore African civil society perspectives on South-South Cooperation. Its key question: how do African civil society organisations view, experience and react to South-South Cooperation between their countries and emerging powers, in particular the BICS?

**Mapping civil society perspectives**

Answers to this question were pursued through a combination of methods. Presented results and insights are based on: (1) a web-survey answered by 76 African CSO representatives of at least 58 different organisations in 11 different countries, (2) 25 semi-structured interviews with African CSO representatives, (3) a participatory feedback session with 40 Central-African CSO representatives of 20 different organisations, and (4) participatory observation at the 2012 China-African Think Thank Forum in Ethiopia. In the analysis, an account of the main topics, positions and arguments used in the mainstream - western dominated - debate on SSC was confronted with the views, experiences and reactions of the participating African CSO representatives. A limitation of the study to take into account is the limited representativeness of the data, insufficient to go near any generalising statements on what ‘African CSOs’ might think, but in line with the exploratory nature of this research.

**Scope & terminology**

The research explored and mapped the perspectives of a variety of established, formally organised African civil society organisations (CSOs). A broad interpretation of ‘civil society’ led to the inclusion of a wide array of organisations. Logistical constraints led to exclusion of informal, loosely organised or spontaneous forms of civil society.

The study focused on emerging powers Brazil, India, China and South Africa (BICS). There are many differences between them, but they have some things in common: they are donor and recipient at the same time, they are developing countries and members of the Global South, and they are not a member of OESO/DAC - the main governance institution within development cooperation.

South-South Cooperation (SSC) in this research covers any exchange of resources, personnel, technology, and knowledge between ‘developing’ countries. The research focus lies on the official cooperation, conducted under the umbrella of South-South cooperation, between the BICS and African countries. However, the study also takes into account the various ways participating civil society representatives define and frame South-South Cooperation.
**Discourse: is civil society being fooled by a shiny wrapping?**

SSC is being framed in a very distinct discourse, different and to some extent explicitly opposed to the discursive of Western foreign aid or development assistance. It explicitly opposes the concept of charity and instead emphasizes the principles of equality, respect for national sovereignty and ownership, and mutual benefits. It stands for a business-oriented approach to cooperation, the pursuit of win-win and a rejection of interference in internal affairs.

In the mainstream debate, reactions range from hailing this radically different discourse as a breath of fresh air, and a complementary or even alternative approach to development cooperation, to fundamentally questioning its principles: unconditional cooperation could entrench the power of unaccountable political elites at the cost of democratic reforms and respect for human rights. A business-oriented approach could end in unfair exchanges and a new scramble of Africa. And implicitly another question is tangible: will Africans fall for it?

Participating CSO representatives proved to be quite familiar with the key strokes of the discursive framing of the SSC. They also voiced a clear positive appreciation of the rationale and core principles of SSC. This does not mean they were ‘fooled by a shiny wrapping’. On the contrary, they too expressed doubts about whether and how the discourse will be put into practice, especially since the observance of the key principles relies solely on self-compliance by emerging powers. They pointed out that acting as equals was difficult when one party was a LICs and the other world’s second biggest economy. They mentioned ample examples of ‘win-win’ that did not mean equal benefits. Yet in different ways they indicated that the framing of SSC gave a wholly different ‘feel’ to the cooperation. They appreciated the straightforwardness of emerging powers and the notion of reciprocity being embedded in the cooperation, especially when contrasted with the rhetoric in North-South Cooperation which they experienced as patronising and often hypocritical.

The emphasis on respect for national sovereignty and ownership triggered particularly interesting reactions. Participating CSO representatives explicitly voiced their support for the principle of non-interference and considered it to be a true asset of SSC. Yet, they also feared that the lack of conditionality would undermine the fight for good governance, democracy and respect for human rights. This ambiguous position is partially explained by (1) bad experiences with political conditionality imposed by DAC-donors, (2) not automatically equating non-interference with no political conditionality, and (3) having different expectations towards different donors, in the hopes of benefiting from complementarity. The support for non-interference or non-conditionality in SSC should not automatically be interpreted as support for a radical shift towards non-conditionality in North-South Cooperation but does show the debate on political conditionality is overdue.

The statements and views expressed by the participants demonstrate very well the power and influence a discourse can have in shaping views and expectations. Participating CSO representatives may have a mainly favourable opinion about the semantics and the ‘talk’ of emerging powers, it does not mean they feel SSC has proven itself just yet. The often nuanced views and ambiguous arguments illustrate a wait-and-see attitude: emerging powers may talk the talk, but will they walk the walk?

**Impact: how does civil society weigh the pros and cons?**

The mainstream debate on the potential impact of SSC covers a wide continuum: on one end the optimists who consider SSC as a golden opportunity for Africa, offering the continent a way out for its aid-dependent economy. On the other end the pessimists
who fear Africa will be fal ing victim to rogue
donors and a new scramble. These extremes
aside, there is an increasing rich and nuanced
analysis of the features, terms and modalities
of SSC and their (potential) impact on develop-
ment in African countries and on the live-
lihood of African populations. Confronting
this debate with the views and experiences of
the participating CSO representatives,
showed there is in fact quiet some consensus
on the pros and cons of SSC, although the
participating CSO representatives have a less
judgmental and cautiously more optimistic
position.

Looking at the bright side, participating CSO
representatives applauded the BICS for scal-
ing up their cooperation with Africa while
DAC-donor budgets for development coop-
eration are under pressure. They appreciated
the BICS for doing business with and in their
country, because by doing so they meet cer-
tain acute needs in the short term. In par-
ticular the BICS’ fast and cost-effective con-
tributions to basic infrastructure, technology
transfer, telecommunication and access to
scholarships were pointed out. Another often
mentioned advantage was the improved
access to affordable consumer products,
from textiles and shoes to affordable medical
products and agricultural equipment. All in
all, the BICS were valued for their quick
delivery, and as a source of inspiration and
expertise for tried and tested responses to
development challenges.

However, in the same breath, participating
CSO representatives flagged a number of
clear downsides. Their number one concern
was SSC’s toll on local economy. Lower
prices and widespread corruption enable
Chinese, Indian and South-African compa-
nies to undercut local producers and suppli-
ers, forcing them out of the market. CSO
representatives didn’t feel this was compen-
sated by gains in local employment, because
of substandard working conditions, especially
in Chinese companies, and the alleged import
of labour force. According to them, the
competition caused by SSC was even being
felt in the informal economy, the example of
Chinese street vendors being cited several
times. Local producers and local labour force
was often considered worse off, but the gains
for consumers were also put into question.
The satisfaction with the improved access to
affordable consumer products was countered
by many complaints about the quality of the
(Chinese) products, which according to CSO
representatives were a safety hazard and a
danger to public health. With such infractions
on the livelihoods of African citizens, several
interviewees feared the rise of xenophobia
(read: Sinophobia) and even violence against
immigrants from emerging powers in the
long run. Additional drawbacks in the eco-
nomic domain were the possibly exploitative
natural resource deals with some emerging
powers and the lack of corporate social and
environmental responsibility by companies
from emerging powers.

In the political domain, participating CSO
representatives valued the emerging powers
and SSC as a mitigating factor in the skewed
international power relations. They hoped
that more powerful actors on the interna-
tional political scene could lead to a redistri-
bution of power. Yet, they also feared the
consequences of increased rivalry between
the ‘old’ and the ‘new’ powers, or of the
competition between North-South Coopera-
tion and South-South Cooperation. They
expected that there alliance with one side
would damage the relations with the other
side: ‘If two elephants fight, the grass suffers.’
In national politics, participating CSOs feared
that with no conditions attached, SSC under-
cut the fight against corruption and for
human rights and the efforts to improve
leadership accountability.

Overall, participating African CSO represen-
tatives seemed in the middle of a balancing
act, weighing pros and cons of SSC against
each other. They saw both opportunities and
risks and casted preliminary judgments,
emphasising that ‘it will all depend on how
things turn out’. And how things will turn
out, depends in their opinion, in the first
place on African governments and civil society. It is up to them to put solid governance frameworks in place that ensured civil society participation and that guaranteed that SSC did effectively benefit the African partners in the cooperation too.

Involvement: is civil society being sidelined?

The different BICS, some more than others, express cautious policy intentions regarding the involvement of civil society in their cooperation with Africa. It remains very vague as to what civil society they are referring to and what role they might envision. Looking at the current state-of-play, different analyses seem to agree that civil society is only by exception involved in the practice of emerging power’s SSC (in contrast to private and state actors). Participating CSO representatives confirm this impression. They characterise SSC as a state-to-state or exclusively bilateral affair and they can pinpoint very few CSO activities or initiatives with the aim of influencing SSC policy or practice.

Currently SSC is not the subject of systematic and well-defined debate amongst the participating CSOs, and hardly any organisation was actually working on the topic. In fact, most research participants indicated they don’t have detailed knowledge on the issue, and they depend solely on media and international NGOs for information. Despite a strong consensus on the importance of this issue, very few CSO representatives indicated they had concrete plans to start or scale-up their involvement with the topic. While the participating CSOs might have the topic on their radar, it is definitely not on their current to-do list.

Looking ahead, participating CSO representatives were convinced that civil society has an important role to play in assuring that SSC becomes better aligned with the needs and interest of African citizens. In this they showed almost equal support for CSOs in the role of watchdogs signalling negative side-effects of South-South cooperation as for CSOs as facilitators in the implementation of SSC. They also indentified quite some obstacles for meeting that ambition. The lack of transparency and the exclusive character of SSC are considered to be the major obstacles. Often, organisation and coordination of the civil society at the national level are considered inadequate to push such a common agenda. Also, the limited capacity for lobby and advocacy work, and the lack of knowledge and information on the topic of SSC are pointed out as major constraints. Finally, the funding for any activities related to this topic, be it research, consultation, campaigning, or awareness raising, is not available.

Consequently, CSO representatives felt that at the moment civil society is not well-equipped to take up a strong role in shaping SSC. Next to capacity building and additional research, the participating CSOs strongly felt that coalitions with CSOs in emerging powers could provide them with the leverage to ‘break open’ SSC.

Emerging questions

How can the current debate on SSC include African civil society voices better?

African CSOs could be an important window of more grounded information and nuanced assessments of SSC, and a bridge between the mainstream debate and local reality. Yet, so far they remain disengaged in the mainstream debate on SSC. On the other hand the vested interests of DAC-development actors, in combination with over-simplified messaging on SSC risk undermining the credibility of the mainstream debate on SSC. It distances the African CSO representatives even further from the debate and may undermine an honest and informed discussion on the up- and downsides of SSC. Including African CSOs could guard against this, but calls for CSOs with expertise and voice on the topic.
What can DAC-based development actors learn from the positive perception and reception of the SSC discourse by African CSOs? The discourse of SSC is not just ‘a shiny wrapping’. It is a framework that attempts to facilitate relationships between states based on reciprocity and therefore to some extent on equality. It also allows emerging powers and developing countries alike to reposition themselves on the international scene, by overcoming the donor/recipient dichotomy. The way participating African CSOs welcome the SSC discourse and consequently see SSC as a possibly empowering force, contrasts with their views on NSC discourse, its connotations of superiority and charity, and the association with dependency. Participating CSO representatives clearly value the SSC discourse as an achievement in itself. This could be an interesting starting point for a discussion on the values of charity and altruism still embedded in the DNA and messaging of many DAC-based development actors.

How can African CSOs strengthen themselves to take on the shaping role they aspire in SSC - and what part should DAC-based development actors play?

The participating CSO representatives felt that at the moment civil society is not well-equipped to take up a strong role in the shaping of SSC. Yet, the participating CSO representatives do aspire to become watchdogs or implementing partners of SSC. These obstacles show the need for (1) investing in expertise and capacity building, (2) developing a comprehensive research and advocacy agenda, and (3) forging civil society alliances across the borders. This is in the first place a challenge for African CSOs, who need to define a research and advocacy agenda, and who need to identify and connect with allies across continents. It is also a challenge for DAC-based development actors, whose explicit support for African CSOs in SSC might work counterproductive and undermine African civil society’s legitimacy as a relevant actor in SSC. On the other hand, the expertise of Northern CSOs and their networks across continents could be a crucial asset for their African partners.

So far the knowledge and the debate on SSC remain patchy, especially when it comes to civil society’s position in SSC. With this exploratory mapping of African civil society perspectives on SSC, the research aims to add another piece to the puzzle. Only by combining insights and viewpoints from different perspectives, can we further a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of SSC. The findings of this research as well as the burning questions they evoke should be seen as invitation for DAC-based development actors as well as African civil society to take on the challenge of an in-depth debate on SSC.
Preface

The recent economic and political rise of Brazil, India, China and South Africa (BICS), has gone accompanied by their (re-)emergence as influential actors in development cooperation. The potential game-changing impact on the power dynamics, actors and policies of development cooperation landed this trend on the research agenda of the 11.11.11 Research Chair on Development Cooperation. The global context of unpredictable political, socio-economic and environmental trends, the spur of reorientations and reforms in the sector of development cooperation, and an increasingly uncertain public support beg the question: Is development cooperation able to reinvent itself and improve its contribution to the struggle for sustainable development for all? To help answer this question HIVA’s Research Chair performs research on development (cooperation), with special attention for civil society and its role in development. Its first research project ‘Development Cooperation in 2020?’, summarised fifteen drivers of change in three future scenarios for development cooperation in 2020. In this second project the Chair takes one driver - the shift to multipolar world - as a starting point, and explores it further from an African civil society perspective.

Established in April 2011, this chair is a unique cooperation between the academic world and Belgian NGOs. The chair is assumed by HIVA, the Research Institute for Work and Society with a 35 year track record of research that combines scientific quality with social relevance. The chair was donated by 11.11.11, the umbrella organisation of Flemish North-South Movement which combines forces of over 70 member organisations and 340 volunteer groups, all making their stand for a just world without poverty. This research has been made possible by their decision to invest in independent scientific research on development cooperation.

At the core of this research are the views and insights of numerous civil society representatives who gave an interview, participated in the web survey, attended the participatory feedback session, or shared their views in any other way. We would like to express sincere gratitude for their contributions and hope the result of this research lives up to their expectations and provides them with more insights and inspiration to feed their future work.
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SSC</td>
<td>South-South Cooperation</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSS</td>
<td>Coopération Sud-Sud</td>
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<td>CSO</td>
<td>civil society organisation</td>
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<td>OSC</td>
<td>organisations de la société civile</td>
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<tr>
<td>NG(D)O</td>
<td>non-governmental (development) organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>ONG</td>
<td>organisations non-gouvernementales</td>
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<tr>
<td>FBO</td>
<td>faith-based organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>CBO</td>
<td>community-based organisation</td>
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<td>BRICS</td>
<td>Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa</td>
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<tr>
<td>BICS</td>
<td>Brazil, India, China and South Africa</td>
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<tr>
<td>DRC</td>
<td>Democratic Republic of Congo</td>
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<tr>
<td>RSA</td>
<td>Republic of South Africa</td>
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<td>PRC</td>
<td>People’s Republic of China</td>
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<td>NAM</td>
<td>Non-Alignment Movement</td>
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<td>GATT</td>
<td>General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade</td>
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<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNCTAD</td>
<td>United Nations Conference on Trade and Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>DAC</td>
<td>Development Assistance Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>CATTF</td>
<td>China Africa Think Thank Forum</td>
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<tr>
<td>LDC</td>
<td>Least Developed Country</td>
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<tr>
<td>LIC</td>
<td>Low Income Country</td>
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<tr>
<td>FDI</td>
<td>Foreign Direct Investment</td>
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<tr>
<td>FOCAC</td>
<td>Forum for China-Africa Cooperation</td>
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<tr>
<td>ASA</td>
<td>Africa-South America Summit</td>
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<tr>
<td>IBSA</td>
<td>India-Brazil-South Africa Dialogue Forum</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNASUR</td>
<td>Union of South American Nations</td>
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<tr>
<td>SAARC</td>
<td>South Asian Association for regional Cooperation</td>
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Introduction

Analyses of today’s world order speak of ‘tectonic shifts’ in the global economy and governance institutions (Kaplinsky & Messner, 2008: 199). The rise of Chinese and Indian economies, with other emerging economies such as Brazil, Russia and South Africa following in their wake, is reshuffling the economic as well as political power balance. When talking about the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) today, we are talking about 45% of world population, 25% of the global GDP and 15% of world trade, four of the world’s ten biggest economies and five parties with the power to question the constellation of global institutions and make or break deals in international negotiations (BRICS, 2012; Bilal, 2012). We are also talking about the largest trading partner of Africa. This is the result of ‘a seismic acceleration of commercial and strategic engagements between BRICS and Africa’ in the past decade (BRICS, 2012).

The BRICS have been scaling up their South-South cooperation (SSC) over the past decade, including with African countries. For example, according to some estimates the annual growth rates of BRICS’ foreign assistance between 2005 and 2010 varied between 7% for South Africa and above 20% for China, Brazil and Russia (GHSi, 2012: 7). The IMF estimated that BRIC’s foreign direct investment (FDI) to Least Income Countries (LICs) amounted to 1.7 billion euro in 2009, 40% of which was destined to Sub-Sahara Africa (IMF 2011: 16). These figures are already impressive, but it doesn’t stop there. With its sometimes sensationalist lingo of ‘rising powers’ disclosing themselves as ‘new donors’ wanting to ‘challenge the western dominance’, proclaiming a ‘radically alternative approach’ based on ‘equal footing’ and at the same time being portrayed as the protagonists in a ‘new scramble for Africa’ with Africa falling a victim to a new episode in the ‘resource curse’, the discussion on the role of emerging powers in Africa is bound to attract attention. This is confirmed by a spurt of academic and policy analyses over the recent years, looking at different aspects and implications of the burgeoning SSC. One issue has drawn little attention so far: the position of civil society within the dynamics of SSC.

This research aims to address this lacuna through an exploratory study of how African civil society organisations (CSOs) view, experience and react to SSC between their country and emerging powers, in particular the BICS (Brazil, India, China and South Africa). The current debate seems to bypass civil society organisations both in the BICS and in Africa, while in the mean time taking often strong positions on the pros and cons of SSC between the BRICS and African countries. This begs the question whether the - mostly western - scholarly and policy debate is still ‘in sink’ with how local actors are experiencing the rise of SSC.

The first chapter explains the rationale of this research. Chapter two reports on the methodology used. Chapter 3 gives a brief state of play in SSC and an overview of the issues pending in the mainstream debate on SSC by the BICS. Next, Chapter 4 aims to confront these mainstream views with the perspectives of African CSO representatives. Chapter 5 builds on this interaction between mainstream debate and civil society perspectives to identify interesting trends, possible explanations and crucial questions that need to be addressed in order to improve the understanding of the African CSO’s role in SSC and the obstacles standing in their way.
1 | Research rationale

This chapter situates the research in the existing literature, demarcates the research’s main focus and describes and substantiates the choices in terminology and operationalisation. Essential is the decision to look for African CSO perspectives on issues pending in the debate on BICS and SSC, as well as the recognition of the definitional controversy surrounding this topic.

1.1 Determining the research scope

The steady increase in emerging powers’ economic and political weight as well their growing South-South Cooperation (SSC) over the past decade stirred up considerable academic as well as political interest. The focus of this research should therefore be situated in a growing body of research and literature on the changing development landscape and the impact of emerging powers in the area of development cooperation, especially when they act as donors.

The heavy weights - Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) - receive the lion’s share of the attention. Quite some research looks into the policies and practices of different emerging powers (Cabral & Shankland, 2012; Chaturvedi, 2012a, 2012b; Vickers, 2013), with China’s role being especially scrutinised (Brautigam, 2009; Grimm, 2011; Tull, 2006; Woods, 2008). Less frequently other emerging economies (e.g. Turkey, Indonesia) and their role as development providers also appear on the research agenda’s (e.g. Schulz, 2010). Despite major challenges in availability, transparency and comparability of data, quite some efforts have been done to define and map development-related resource flows of non-DAC countries (Brautigam, 2009; Greenhill et al., 2012; Park, 2011; Zimmerman & Smith, 2011). The potential impacts on the (until now) DAC-country dominated development discourse, institutions and practices is also being investigated (Grimm et al., 2009; Kragelund 2011; Manning, 2006; OECD, 2010; Reality of Aid, 2010; Rowlands, 2013; Woods, 2008). These and others also reflect on the development impact these (re-)emerging development actors might have, highlighting the potential and the risks (Davies, 2010; Kragelund, 2008; Manning, 2006). Very laudable efforts have been made to do all of the above, such as Mawdsley’s (2012) comprehensive overview of emerging powers and their role in the changing development landscape.

These existing works however tend to focus on the global level, or take a donor perspective. Some publications exploring the possibilities of trilateral co-operation did engage with recipient countries (Pollet et al., 2011). Some took a recipient country perspective to analyze the impact of South-South cooperation (Grimm et al., 2010; Sato et al., 2010). Very few however take a civil society perspective, and if so they are mostly aimed at civil society in the emerging powers (John, 2012). In the ongoing discussions of the ins and outs of the emerging powers’ SSC, the implications for and viewpoints of civil society in the partner countries so far seem the attract barely any attention. This observation marks the overall contours of this research: the research aims to explore emerging powers’ SSC from a civil society perspective. In different steps - discussed below - we have narrowed and

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1 For example Schulz (2010) identifies the CIVETS, which encompasses Colombia, Indonesia, Vietnam, Egypt, Turkey and South Africa, as not only new economic poles, but also development providers investing in peer-to-peer learning and horizontal partnerships.
operationalised this overall research focus, at the same time looking for a path through the definitional morass this subject unavoidably entails.

1.2 Terminology and operationalisation

To begin with, this research focuses on emerging powers, and more specifically on Brazil, India, China and South Africa (BICS). In addition to a striking economic take-off, emerging powers² demonstrate a growing geopolitical (and sometimes also military) weight at the regional and global level, with major emerging powers challenging Western dominance (Konijn, 2012: 1; Mawdsley, 2012: 4, 19). Within this group of emerging powers, and despite being mainly characterised by their differences, the BICS have a set of interesting traits in common: they all have large and fast-growing economies, all are global or at least regional powers with their own geopolitical agendas, they all are (until recently) donor and recipient at the same time, they all are being counted as part of ‘the South’, none of them is a DAC member, and as a group they attracted and attract a lot of academic and political debate (Rowlands, 2012: 633). While normally Russia is included amongst the major emerging powers, it is also considered as an outlier when it comes to development cooperation (Rowlands, 2012: 634, 642; Waltz & Ramachandran, 2010: 11). In the light of its candidacy to the OECD, its recent overtures towards DAC, its lower involvement in Africa and it not being part of the South, it is not included in this analysis.

Next step was to narrow the research to a focus on African civil society organisations (CSOs). Putting the spotlight on ‘Africa’ and ‘civil society’, is inspired by the observation that the activities of emerging powers in Africa in particular are prompting a heated debate, one in which civil society voices are rarely heard. In view of the lack of existing research, such focus holds the opportunity to explore an underexposed dimension of SSC. However, it also means taking a rather controversial actor - African civil society - as a starting point. Using a broad definition of civil society as being ‘the arena, outside of the family, the state, and the market where people associate to advance common interests’ (CIVICUS, 2009: 9), the trap of reducing civil society to non-governmental organisations (NGOs) was avoided. It led to the inclusion of a wide array of organisations, from non-governmental organisations (NGOs), labour unions, indigenous groups, youth organisations, women’s rights movement, charitable organisations, faith-based organisations to professional associations. Yet, practical constraints limit the scope of the research to the more established, formally organised civil society organisations, excluding loosely organised, informal associations that according to different scholars play a prominent role in African society (Chazan, 1982; Thomson, 2000; Vervisch, 2006). It has also been pointed out that the current dominant interpretation of civil society as an autonomous force balancing the state and the private sector is based on a Western European and American experience (Lewis, 2002; Fowler, 2012). The post Cold War assumption among many policy makers that an African civil society could champion democratisation and development led to a partial redirection of development cooperation to civil ‘recipients’ - and to a spectacular growth of civil society organisations in Africa (Vervisch, 2006). According to Fowler (2012) exporting the western-derived concept of civil society has led to an exogenous understanding and vocabulary of civil society in Africa. Notwithstanding growing ‘nationalisation’ and (in theory) greater local voice, a part of the African civil society organisations are, arguably, strongly shaped by western norms. While aware of these reflections and of the profound political character of different interpretations of what civil society is, does or should do (Kaldor, 2003; Fowler, 2012), it is beyond the scope of this study to take an explicit position in these debates. The research results

² In comparison to the term ‘emerging economies’, which mostly refers to developing countries that pulled off a striking economic take-off, the concept of emerging powers is more narrow: all emerging powers are emerging economies, but not all emerging economies are also emerging powers.
should be seen as an account of the perspectives of the CSOs who participated in the study and by no means as representative for civil society at large.

Finally, we also decided to use South-South Cooperation to frame emerging powers’ activities in developing countries, instead of using the concepts of foreign aid or development assistance. This has different reasons. For one, the existing definitions or criteria for foreign aid or official development assistance (ODA) have been developed within the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development’s (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC), and are therefore often seen as shaped by the West’s discursive as well as material dominance of the aid arena. Consequently some emerging powers explicitly dissociate themselves from concepts such as ‘donor’, ‘recipient’ and ‘aid’ (Bilal, 2012: 17; Mawdsley, 2012: 153). Secondly, the distinct practices of emerging powers, who often ‘blend’ different types of resource flows and ‘blur’ the boundaries between them (see also 3.1) make it virtually impossible to differentiate and isolate resource flows that would fit the criteria of a particular definition. Only focusing on the resource flows that fit the OECD-DAC definition would result in a very partial picture and might lead to overlooking important flows or practices in BICS-Africa relations. A safer approach therefore is to take into account official cooperation that has been conducted under the umbrella of ‘South-South cooperation’, a concept much broader than development aid or assistance. According to Mawdsley (2012: 63) it encompasses “the exchange of resources, personnel, technology, and knowledge between ‘developing’ countries - a loose definition that can cover almost any form of interaction from South-South foreign direct investment by Asian, African and South-American multinational firms, to diplomatic meetings and agreements, to the provision of technical experts.” Development assistance is by no means the principal ingredient in South-South cooperation. Nonetheless Kragelund (2010: vi) considers it to be the most important element as it is used to facilitate the other flows. This research therefore opted to focus on SSC, with special attention for those dimensions that African countries or emerging powers perceive, frame or label as development cooperation or development assistance.

1.3 Research questions

In view of the different choices discussed above, the core question of this research can be phrased as: how do African civil society organisations view, experience and react to South-South cooperation between their country and emerging powers, in particular the BICS? This question raises a set of different sub-questions:

- how well-informed are African CSOs about South-South cooperation and the activities of emerging powers in their country?
- (how) do emerging powers interact with African CSOs in their partner countries and how do African CSOs experience the interaction with emerging powers?
- what expectations do African CSOs have towards emerging powers and the SSC with their country?
- what do African CSOs think about (1) the implication of the rise of emerging powers on the position of developing countries in international policy making; (2) the implications of growing SSC for Western donor discourse and practice; (3) the impact of growing SSC on partnerships between CSOs in the South and CSOs in developed countries?
- what role do African CSOs see for themselves in shaping South-South cooperation between their country and emerging powers, and what obstacles are they confronted with?
- are African CSOs planning or involved in activities related to emerging powers active in the context of South-South cooperation with their country?
This chapter reports on the different methodological choices, in data collection as well as in data analysis. It also discusses their implications for the scope of this research. A strength to remember is the combination of different data collection methods, which delivered a rich set of data covering different stakeholders’ perspectives. A constraint to take into account is the limited representativeness of the data, insufficient to go near any general statements on what ‘African CSOs’ might think, but in line with exploratory nature of this research.

### 2.1 Data collection

With research questions covering a wide range of aspects in African CSOs’ relations to SSC, all of them underexposed in literature so far, this research took a decisive exploratory approach. Aiming to gather indicative information on what might be happening between African CSOs and SSC, but also on how and why it is happening, a combination of data collection methods was used: literature review, a web-survey aimed at representatives of African CSOs, semi-structured interviews with representatives of African CSOs, a participatory feedback session with Central-African CSO representatives and participatory observation at the 2012 China Africa Think Thank Forum (CATFF).

#### 2.1.1 Literature review

The review of academic literature on the topics ‘emerging powers’, ‘SSC’ and ‘BICS in Africa’ was complemented by a search for existing literature on the role of civil society in SSC or civil society perspectives on SSC. Since this search rendered few results, an additional screening of relevant CSOs’ and emerging powers’ policy was undertaken. Together this provided a solid footing and inspiration for the research orientation, data collection and data analysis.

#### 2.1.2 Web-survey

Since few publications on the position of civil society in the dynamics of SSC or on the view points of civil society on SSC are available, additional data collection was a must. We therefore designed a web-survey\(^3\) which, in a 10-15 minute online query, gauged the respondent’s (1) knowledge of SSC with emerging powers; (2) attitude towards the discourse typical of SSC; (3) opinion on the risks and opportunities of SSC for the development in the country; (4) opinion on the role of civil society in shaping SSC; and information on (5) current or planned activities by the CSO related to SSC; (6) any interaction between the CSO and emerging power development actors. The survey featured open questions as well as multiple choice questions and questions using a Likert scale. The survey was available in both French and English.

Aimed at a wide target group of African CSO representatives the web-survey was circulated widely. It was made accessible through different online channels such as our own website, the CIVICUS newsletter, and different online fora, such as the Barefoot Guide Connection and the Eldis com-

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\(^3\) The web survey is now closed, but can still be visited online: http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/FG2HKXV for the English version, http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/7ZYJTK8 for the French version.
Data collection through the survey took place during October, November and December 2012. Despite the wide circulation and a strong response at the CSO gathering in Bujumbura, the overall response was limited. We counted 19 Anglophone responses, all from different organisations, and 57 Francophone responses, from at least 42 different organisations. All in all, the survey delivered 76 responses of at least 458 different African CSOs. The distribution of these responses, both geographically as organisationally, varies. We received responses from 11 different African countries: Burundi, DRC, Rwanda, Malawi, Kenya, South Africa, Ethiopia, Uganda, Liberia, Zimbabwe, Benin, with almost a third of the responses coming from Congolese organisations, and more than half of the remaining responses coming from either Burundian or Rwandan organisations (see Figure 2.1).

Looking at the nature or type of the participating organisations the responses were quite diverse (see Figure 2.2). According to the organisations’ self-definition, most of the participating CSOs are umbrella organisations representing members. The non-governmental development organisations (NGDOs) make up the second largest group, and community-based organisations (CBOs) and interest groups (for a specific group such as workers or teachers) follow on the third and fourth place. Looking at the organisations in detail we find that trade unions, farmer organisations, organisations fighting for human rights, women’s rights, youth rights, consumer rights, indigenous peo-

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* In total the web-survey delivered 76 responses from 11 African countries. The category ‘others’ contains South Africa (4), Malawi (4), Kenya (3), Ethiopia (2), Benin (2), Liberia (1), Uganda (1), Zimbabwe (1).

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4 Some respondents chose not to state the organisation they represented, and where therefore not counted as a unique organisation.
ples’ rights and good governance, as well as media and environmental organisations were all represented in the study. Looking at it from a different perspective, and categorising the organisations according to their main activities and overall approach in (1) lobby organisations using a rights based approach, (2) organisations mainly involved in service provision and (3) organisations representing private sector, we find a large majority of participating CSOs in the first category, while private sector hardly participated.

![Figure 2.2 Distribution of web-survey responses according to type of organisation](image)

* Based on self-definition by CSO representatives. Respondents had the possibility to select multiple categories.

### 2.1.3 Semi-structured interviews

In addition to the web-survey, semi-structured (face-to-face as well as phone) interviews were organised with CSO representatives. Following a similar outline to the one used in the web-survey, respondents were asked about the nature of their organisation, about the debate on SSC and how well-informed they considered their own organisation and the civil society at large, about their opinion on the discourse and possible costs and benefits of SSC, about interactions with development actors from emerging powers, and about current activities and a possible future role for civil society in SSC.

Interviewees were selected through reputational sampling and snowball sampling, with an effort to include different types of organisations, representing different constituencies and being established in different countries. In total 25 45-90 minute interviews were conducted, either face-to-face during field visits in Burundi, Kenya and Ethiopia in October 2012, or by phone or Skype during October, November and December 2012 (see Appendix 1).

The geographical distribution of the interviews shows that the bulk of the interviews was with CSO representatives from Burundi, Kenya, Ethiopia and Malawi (in part explained by the higher response rate of face-to-face interviews compared to Skype or phone interviews). Additional interviews were conducted with CSO representatives from DRC, Senegal, and Benin. One interview with an international organisation, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) was also included. Looking at the type of organisations, we find that most interviewees represented...
lobby organisations taking a rights-based approach, while far less interviewees spoke for service provision organisations and no representative of a private sector organisation was found willing to participate. The sample includes representatives from consumer (1), youth (2), environmental (1), faith-based (1), farmers (2) and international (1) organisations, as well as media (2) and research institutes (1), and service providing NGDOs (5). It also comprises lobby organisations working on human rights, good governance and development (8) of which most (6) also acted as an umbrella representing other member organisations.

2.1.4 Participatory feedback session
Data collection in several Central-African countries was complemented by a participatory feedback session with the participants of a regional civil society meeting, organised by 11.11.11 in Bujumbura (Burundi) during the first week of October 2012. At that occasion over 40 representatives from 20 different Rwandan, Congolese and Burundian organisations convened to round off a training for the reinforcement of their political impact. The researcher was attributed two slots on the meeting’s agenda, respectively of 30 minutes and 2 hours. At the beginning of the week the research was briefly introduced and participants were invited to fill-out the survey, which delivered 38 responses. At the end of the week, the survey results for this sample were presented to the participants and different topics for discussion were identified by the researcher as well as by the participants. In intervision groups the participants discussed the topics and reported back to the plenary. This provided valuable insight in the motives and explanations behind some individual as well as general survey results. It also helped to draw attention to some issues that might have been otherwise overlooked in the data collection, data analysis and research follow-up.

2.1.5 Participatory observation
A final component of the data collection was a participatory observation at the 2nd Meeting of the China-African Think Thank Forum (CATTF) organised in Bishoftu, Ethiopia, on 12-13 October 2012. The forum is a high-end platform for academic exchange and ideological dialogue between China and Africa, and ‘while sticking to the governing tenets of Civil Initiative, Government Support, Frank Dialogue and Consensus Building, CATTF aims to promote academic research, boost mutual understanding, and expand Sino-African consensus’ (Prof. Liu Hongwu cited in CATTF, 2012). During this meeting academics and government officials - the difference not always being clear - met to discuss ‘Chinese and African Common Interests: Current Issues and Future Perspectives in Governance, Peace and Security’.

The researcher participated in the forum with a paper titled ‘What about civil society? The need for a debate on differences and consensus on the role of civil society in Sino-African relations’. The core statements of the paper were presented in one of the breakaway sessions, and then discussed with Chinese and African participants. How the topic of civil society was received by both Chinese and African participants and the response it triggered, was also taken into account as research data. The forum also provided ample opportunity to observe and participate in debates on the pros and cons of the principle of non-interference in internal affairs as it is applied by China, as well as on other topics related to Sino-African relations.

2.2 Data analysis
The dataset of survey responses was cleaned, taking out respondents outside of the target group (e.g. non-African organisations) or responses that were too incomplete to be relevant. Due to a limited response, the survey did not render a solid foundation for generalisation. Only a basic statistical
analysis was performed, of which the results were used in combination with the interview information and literature review.

The audio records of the interviews were transcribed and the transcripts were screened in order to: (1) identify information on the lead themes that emerged during the literature review (2) perform a divergence analysis to investigate to what extent the collected information was consistent and where striking differences or contradiction occurred; (3) and to check for information on topics that were previously not on our ‘radar’.

This research took an iterative-inductive approach, although the time frame of the research did not allow to reach the point of data saturation: a first literature review resulted in the selection of what seemed lead themes in the debate on SSC. These lead themes were used as the basis for the data collection. A mid-term analysis of the data led to an adjustment of the data collection, incorporating additional topics. After closure of the data collection, the results were used to guide additional literature analysis, in order to be able to confront the perspectives of the research participants with the different views, positions and perceptions in scholarly and more popular literature, and vice versa. The combination of different data collection methods and the interaction between literature and data resulted in a very mixed, but also very rich body of data.
Building on the existing literature, this chapter gives an oversight of the facts and figures on BICS and South-South Cooperation. It then zooms in on several hot issues in the debate, especially related to the BICS’ cooperation with African countries. What stands out is that the facts and figures are incomplete and on many issues empirical data are lacking. Consequently the mainstream debate is often hinged on hypotheses and speculations.

3.1 The ABC of the BICS and SSC

Although the recent spurt of interest in ‘new donors’ or ‘non-traditional donors’ would suggest otherwise, South-South cooperation is in fact nothing new. An important predecessor or even founder of SSC has been the Non-Alignment Movement (NAM) that brought together a number of developing countries who did not want to choose sides during the Cold War, and instead advocated the necessity of more South-South trade and cooperation, and a more just economic world order. Although officially established in 1961, the ideological foundation of the NAM was laid during the Bandung Conference in 1955 where a set of principles was defined, emphasising national sovereignty, non-interference in internal affairs, equality between nations, and the promotion of mutual interest. The NAM's legacy - its principles and its role in the liquidation of colonialism in the 50s and 60s - clearly lives on in SSC today (Kragelund, 2010: 2; Mawdsley, 2012: 63). Not just as an alternative to, but also as part of Cold War politics SSC played a role, with China’s socialist development cooperation as a prominent example (Mawdsley, 2012: 49). Another important landmark was the formation of the Group of 77 (G77) at the end of the first United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in 1964. As an intergovernmental organisation within the United Nations (UN), the G77 aimed at promoting the developing countries’ common interests and SSC within the UN. In this, and through other initiatives, the UN has been instrumental in formalising SSC (Kragelund, 2010: 2; Bilal, 2012: 14). The history of SSC sometimes resurfaces and is important to understand the dynamics of current SSC.

Because of the debt crisis during the 80s and the quarrels at the negotiating table of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) Uruguay Round (‘86-’93), developing countries became more inward looking: SSC efforts came to a temporarily stand still at the beginning of the 90s. International cooperation, re-launched after the Cold War, was dominated by the North moving ‘aid’ to the South (Kragelund, 2012: 2; Morais de Sá e Silva, 2010: 1). However, as a result of the fast growth of the ‘emerging economies’ over past two decades, SSC was ‘rediscovered’ internally as well as externally, by the academic world as well as in global governance fora. This was demonstrated when at the 2011 High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Busan, the OECD-DAC donor community tried to bring on board new actors such as emerging powers. Yet, Southern actors remain reluctant to engage, since to them the aid effectiveness agenda is ideologically charged (Bilal, 2012: 23) and they have few incentives to give up any of their leeway to shape SSC according to their own vision and needs (Konijn, 2011). As a result, the Busan outcome document frequently refers to the benefits of South-South and triangular cooperation but also stresses that ‘[t]he principles, commitments and actions agreed in the outcome document in Busan shall be the
reference for South-South partners on a voluntary basis’ (Busan Partnership for an Effective Development Cooperation, 2011: 2).

**Figures** on the scale of this (re)emerging cooperation are hard to get by. One cautious attempt, using available figures on individual countries’ development programmes, estimated the share of 2009 development co-operation flows of non-DAC countries to amount to roughly eight percent of global Official Development Assistance (ODA) (Zimmerman & Smith, 2011: 724). Another source concluded that the 25 countries with a South-South agenda (including countries such as Brazil, China, India, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa) accounted for about ten percent of overall development cooperation flows in 2009 (Bilal, 2012: 18). According to these estimates, the share of the BICS’ development cooperation flows in the overall ODA flows should range somewhere between two percent (Zimmerman & Smith, 2011: 724) and three percent (Bilal, 2012: 18).

However, the interpretation of these figures - or of all figures on the topic, for that matter - should take a few things into account. There is a lot of conceptual confusion and divergence, with different actors applying different definitions. Consequently the figures that are going around might not all be comparable. An important distinction is the difference between development assistance and SSC, the latter being much broader and including trade, investment and technology transfer (see also 1.2) (Konijn, 2012b: 4). In the estimates above the focus lies on those resource flows that fit as much as possible the definition of ODA. While this is helpful for the sake of comparison, it also results in a very partial picture excluding other important resource flows in SSC. Getting the full picture of SSC flows proves to be extremely difficult. Emerging powers often ‘blur’ and ‘blend’, because of tied aid the distinction between aid and commerce becomes blurred, and the habit of blending ‘aid’ with trade and investment makes it impossible to track the volumes of the distinct components (Mawdsley, 2012: 138). Also, emerging powers are not strong in transparency. In part this is because they do not systematically use monitoring and reporting systems, in part because they do not want to disclose these figures in order to, for example, avoid public opposition against the allocation of such budgets to other developing countries while domestic challenges are not all addressed.

Figure-wise and in comparison to ODA the importance of this trend may seem modest. But, The differences on conceptualisation and exact estimates aside there is an overall consensus about the fact that the **visibility, presence and impact of SSC is on the rise** and that the BICS are driving this trend. What might explain the buzz about SSC is its **radically different rationale and approach**. It departs from the idea that cooperation should not be driven by charity or power/dependency relations. Instead the principles of equality, solidarity, the respect for national independence, sovereignty and ownership, mutual benefits (promoting win-win outcomes) and complementarity are key (Bilal, 2012: 27). These key traits can easily be traced in BICS’ policy statements, speeches and acts related to SSC. China’s Africa Policy (2006) explicitly refers to the principles of independence, equality, mutual respect and non-interference in each other’s affairs

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5 ‘Blurring’ refers to the practice of tying aid, which means cooperation is made dependent upon specific conditions, often serving the commercial interest of the donors, and therefore blurring the boundaries between the two. ‘Blending’ describes the practice of emerging donors to compose packages consisting of different development, trade and investment flows to fit a specific cooperation. It is put forward as a more integrated approach (Mawdsley, 2012).

6 As Kragelund (2012: 4) points out, a clear indicator is the explosion in popularity of regional meetings. Since 2000 the Forum for China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) is held every three years, in 2006 and 2009 an Africa-South America Summit (ASA) took place, in 2008 the Indians launched an India-Africa Forum summit, this year the India-Brazil-South Africa Dialogue Forum (IBSA) will be holding its third summit, and the BRICS summit has just held its fifth edition. And maybe there is a BRICS development bank in the making. Next to these new-founded specialised fora, the BICS also have access to a key regional institutions such as the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), the African Union, or the South Asian Association for regional Cooperation (SAARC). This array of meeting spaces sets the scene for a strong peer connect between the BRICS - and for a growing political influence in these on global forums (John, 2012: 4).
(part II & III). The country’s first White Paper on Foreign Aid (2011) also recalls and reasserts ‘The Eight Principles of China’s Foreign Aid’ put forward by Zhou En-lai in 1964 as the underlying guiding principles of their policy upon today. Brazil portrays its cooperation as a ‘mutually beneficial relationship between partners’ (Cabral & Shankland, 2012: 3) and talks of ‘horizontal cooperation’ to emphasise equality amongst partners (Mawdsley, 2012: 153). Speeches and announcements by Indian ministers refer to the deep historic roots of the India-Africa partnership and evoke India’s own battle against poverty to stress its deep understanding Africa’s challenges: “Having fought against poverty, as a country and a people, we know the pain and the challenge that this burden imposes” (GOI, 2003: 22). They are also not shy about stressing the benefits their development cooperation is bringing in. South-Africa’s White paper on foreign affairs in its turn states that: “South Africa’s foreign policy (...) draws on the spirit of internationalism, pan-Africanism, South-South solidarity; the rejection of colonialism and other forms of oppression; the quest for the unity and economic, political and social renewal of Africa; the promotion of poverty alleviation around the world; and opposition to the structural inequality and abuse of power in the global system. (...) South Africa subscribes to the principles of sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of other states.” (GOSA, 2011: 11, 16, 20). However, there are concerns that this SSC discourse conceals or overlooks issues of competition and conflict, and in particular, that its state-state focus tends to ignore the distributional consequences of the benefits and costs of growing flows and activities (this will be discussed further below, see 3.2).

A focus on specific modalities and sectors in its implementation also makes SSC stand out. Until recently developing countries had very limited financing options outside of the multilateral development banks and bilateral aid flows. This is changing quickly with additional channels for financing opening up, the BICS being one of them. Their cooperation uses different financial tools: funding to regional and multilateral development banks and programs, grants, concessional loans, export credits and debt relief. In particular the resources-backed concessional loans for infrastructure, social and industrial projects that China is providing - the so-called ‘Angola model’ draw a lot of attention (Chahoud, 2008 quoted in Mawdsley, 2012: 119). Another interest element in the BICS development financing, is the use of export credits through which BICS’ support their companies to do business in African countries. The fact that some BICS count these as ‘aid’ triggers discussion. Next to these financial modalities, technical cooperation is also an eye catcher in the SSC. According to Rhee (2010 quoted in Mawdsley 2012: 124) it should be considered as an emblematic modality of SSC. It covers a wide scope of initiatives, including the long-standing provision of doctors, nurses and other medical personnel, and the provision of education scholarships or short-term training opportunities. The importance attached to diplomatic relationships is also stressed. Finally, sector-wise one could say that in general the emerging powers tend to focus on productive sectors, including infrastructure, energy provision and technology. This contrasts with the DAC-donors’ and multilateral organisations’ shift towards social programs, decentralisation efforts, empowering and democratisation (Mawdsley, 2012: 132).

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7 China repeatedly reasserted ‘The Eight Principles of China’s Foreign Aid’, as put forward by Zhou En-lai in his 1964 speech as the basis for its foreign aid: (1) China always bases itself on the principle of equality and mutual benefit in providing aid to other nations; (2) China never attaches any conditions or asks for any privileges; (3) China helps lighten the burden of recipient countries as much as possible; (4) China aims at helping recipient countries to gradually achieve self reliance and independent development; (5) China strives to develop aid projects that require less investment but yield quicker results; (6) China provides the best-quality equipment and materials of its own manufacture; (7) in providing technical assistance, China shall see to it that the personnel of the recipient country fully master such techniques; (8) the Chinese experts are not allowed to make any special demands or enjoy any special amenities (White Paper on Foreign Aid, 2011: 3).

8 Export credit can support state and private companies of a particular (donor) country to do business in another (recipient) country, where the investment climate may be more challenging.

9 Technical cooperation aims at strengthening individual and organisation capacity by providing expertise, training, learning opportunities and equipment (Mawdsley, 2012: 123).
Konijn (2012a: 1) summarises SSC’s preferences as “a business-oriented approach in which aid is a minor ingredient of large, integrated packages of (concessional) loans, trade and investment, with an emphasis on natural resources extraction and infrastructure development.” He opposes this to the traditional donor approach which is “aid-centred and mostly de-linked from commercial flows of trade and investment, with an emphasis on social development and good governance”. This nicely catches the common ground between the BICS, but one should also keep in mind that the BICS differ on how they flesh out SSC. They emphasise different principles, modalities and sectors, and they have different (often still evolving) institutional set-ups (Rowlands, 2012: 638). This is visible for example in different sector choices. While China, India and Brazil focus on productive sectors, South Africa is more preoccupied with democracy and conflict resolution. Also when it comes to geographical scope, the latter is only involved in countries in the proximity while the three other powers are involved across the globe (Kragelund 2010: 18). The individual approaches of the BICS have been summarised in Table 3.1.
### Table 3.1  Key characteristics of the BICS (2007)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>China</th>
<th>India</th>
<th>Brazil</th>
<th>South Africa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aid in (US$)</strong></td>
<td>3.1 billion (2008), but higher estimates exist</td>
<td>1.48 billion (2007), but much lower estimates also exist</td>
<td>Estimate range from 400 to 1.200 million for (2010)</td>
<td>Lot of confusion, estimates range from 16 billion in 2004 to 433 million end of the 2000s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Governmental institutional structure (leading actor)</strong></td>
<td>Highly centralised structure, and implementation decentralised (Department of Foreign Aid of the Ministry of Commerce)</td>
<td>Very fragmented and being reformed (Ministry of external Affairs) (as of 2013 the India International Development Cooperation Agency)</td>
<td>Fragmented and implementation carried out by sector specific actors (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Agência Brasileira do Cooperação)</td>
<td>In process of change (DIRCO and in the future SADPA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other actors</strong></td>
<td>Private sector companies - although little is known</td>
<td>Private sector companies - although little is known</td>
<td>Private sector companies, and some civil society organisations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Principles</strong></td>
<td>Equality and mutual benefit (amongst other)</td>
<td>Mutual benefit, solidarity</td>
<td>Solidarity, mutual benefit</td>
<td>Solidarity, mutual benefit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Financial instruments</strong></td>
<td>Grants, credit lines, interest free loans and concessional loans, but Other Official flow more important than ODA</td>
<td>Credits, concessional loans and grants</td>
<td>Credit and grants</td>
<td>Grants and loans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Modalities</strong></td>
<td>Complete projects, technical assistance, equipment, capacity building, emergency aid, volunteer programs</td>
<td>Projects, scholarships, technical assistance humanitarian assistance</td>
<td>Technical assistance, scholarships, humanitarian assistance</td>
<td>Projects, technical assistance, humanitarian assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of cooperation</strong></td>
<td>Mainly bilateral</td>
<td>Mainly bilateral</td>
<td>Bilateral, multilateral and trilateral</td>
<td>Bilateral, trilateral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Country focus</strong></td>
<td>Global but focus on neighbouring countries, but increasingly Africa</td>
<td>Neighbouring countries and Africa</td>
<td>Latin America and African countries (Lusophone in particular)</td>
<td>Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sectors</strong></td>
<td>Infrastructure, productive sectors, health and agriculture</td>
<td>Agriculture, infrastructure, economic sectors and ICT</td>
<td>Health, education, Agriculture, social security and health</td>
<td>Democratisation, post-conflict resolution</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Krageljung (2010: 19-20) adapted by Tom De Bruyn (2013)

### 3.2 Puzzling together the opinions on SSC

Detailed information on the different aspects of its implementation (such as scale, scope, form, modalities, allocation, etc.) might be lacking, yet journalists, politicians and academics alike do not refrain from commenting on the opportunities and drawbacks of SSC. This results in an interesting body of comments: from unfounded doom scenarios and euphoria, over speculations based on preliminary indications to occasional pleas for more nuance and more research-based debate. Since this debate unavoidably has an impact on our perception of SSC, it is worth glossing over it, identifying the controversial issues and the different arguments explaining the enthusiasm and suspicion about SSC. This account of the ongoing debate on SSC explores three main themes: the SSC discourse, the costs and benefits of SSC and civil society involvement in SSC.
3.2.1 On the south-south cooperation discourse

SSC is being framed in a very distinct discourse, different and to some extent explicitly opposed to the discursive of Western foreign aid. Despite the large heterogeneity in the group of Southern development actors there are some aspects within this discourse that they all seem to share. Mawdsley (2012: 152) identifies four common elements:
- a shared identity as ‘developing nations’, based on a shared experience of colonial exploitation, suppression or post-colonial inequality and present vulnerability to uneven neoliberal globalisation;
- the claim on specific expertise in appropriate development approaches or technologies, again based on a shared identity and in the own -bitter- experience with addressing similar development challenges;
- a strong rejection of hierarchical relations in a fundamental attitude based on equality and respect for national sovereignty and for the principle of non-interference in domestic affairs;
- the insistence on win-win outcomes of SSC.

Evidently from the amount of popular and scholarly publications, the SSC discourse provokes quite some reactions. One question that commentators seem to ponder on is whether its basic principles are good or bad. On the positive side, it is argued that this radically different discourse might bring some fresh air in the OECD-dominated international development policy, and could offer an alternative or complementary approach to development and cooperation (Mawdsley, 2012; Kragelund, 2010; Bilal, 2012). Especially its opposition to the idea of hierarchical donor-recipient relationships couched in charity, in favour of equal partnerships based on mutual benefit (see Table 3.2) holds promise. As Mawdsley (2012: 154) states: “Many Western actors fail to comprehend the positive value attached to discourses of reciprocity. There is much evidence to suggest that countries that have for decades been humiliated by colonial exploitation and then by demeaning post-colonial foreign aid are appreciative of the social relationships this helps construct.” The words of the prime minister of Botswana (quoted in Paulo & Reisen, 2010: 539) illustrate this nicely: “I find that the Chinese treat us as equals. The West treats us as former subjects.” In line with this sentiment is the observation that the BICS represent Africa as a continent of vast economic opportunities, as opposed to Western view on Africa as a lost continent in need of help (Konijn, 2012; Mawdsley, 2008).

The individual principles have also been judged favourably. The principle of non-interference in domestic affairs for instance can be seen as a move away from the self-serving and inconsequent (read: hypocritical) practices of political conditionality by Western donors. The respect for national sovereignty and the focus on equality can foster greater national ownership of the cooperation’s objectives. The experience of emerging powers in overcoming specific development challenges could be a valuable asset and a source of tried-and-tested solutions to challenges experienced in Africa.
Table 3.2  The symbolic claims of Western donors and Southern development cooperation partners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Western donors</th>
<th>Southern development cooperation partners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Charity</td>
<td>Opportunity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral obligation to the unfortunate</td>
<td>Solidarity with other Third World countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expertise based on superior knowledge,</td>
<td>Expertise based on direct experience of pursuing development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>science and technology</td>
<td>in poor-country circumstances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sympathy for different and distant</td>
<td>Empathy based on a shared identity and experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The virtue of suspended obligation, a</td>
<td>The virtue of mutual benefit and recognition of reciprocity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lack of reciprocation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Mawdsley, 2012: 153

On the other hand however, SSC’s principles are fundamentally questioned. Most often a case is made against the principle of non-interference in internal affairs. One argument is that unconditional cooperation will entrench the power of unaccountable political elites at the cost of democratic reforms and respect for human rights. In this argument the approach of the emerging powers is flatly opposed to the efforts of DAC-donors to foster democracy, good governance, and respect for human rights. SSC could undo the gains made through the DAC-guided development cooperation (Manning, 2006) and could even undermine the future leverage of DAC-donors by giving developing countries a choice between demanding or accommodating development partners (Tull, 2006).

Even in the case of a positive judgment on the core principles of SSC, another question is being contemplated: do emerging powers have good or bad intentions? They may have ‘cloaked’ it in attractive discourse, but what are they really up to? There are quite some doubts on whether the emerging powers will live up to their rhetoric. The shared identity as ‘developing countries’ is being questioned based on the growing differences between the development paths and economic and political interests of developing on the one and emerging powers on the other hand. The basic principle of equality is interpreted as an illusion, since the undeniable power imbalances in the relationships between Least Developed (LDCs) or Low Income Countries (LICs) and heavy weights such as the China, India, Brazil and even South Africa must have some impact on the deals that are struck. Consequently the idea of win-win outcomes is also questioned, as power imbalances and capacity deficits (on the African side) will result in cooperation that is less lucrative for African developing countries then it is for the BICS. In the worst case it will lead to a new scramble for Africa, with BICS exploiting Africa’s natural resources unchecked (Bilal, 2010: 21). These concerns also live strongly in the popular debate. An article by Naim (2006) is a good illustration: “(...the goal of these donors is not to help other countries develop. Rather, they seek to further their own national interests, advance an ideological agenda or even line their own pockets. Rogue aid providers couldn’t care less about the long-term well-being of the population of the countries they aid.” And even former US secretary of foreign affairs, Hilary Clinton, warned African leaders about cooperation with countries that only want to exploit the continent’s resources.

Cutting across these dichotomising discussions are the appeals for more nuance. First, because the lack of evidence and insight does not warrant for such strong judgments. Secondly, because the different flaws being pinned on emerging powers are often sore spots for DAC-donors as well. And thirdly because they ignore divergence and evolution in the interpretation and implementation of certain principles amongst the different BICS. This is the case for the principle of non-interference in domestic affairs. China and India have interpreted or implemented this as a firm rejection of political conditionality, but the position of Brazil and South-Africa is more nuanced. South-Africa for example focuses on democratisation as one of their key sectors (Kragelund, 2010: 15) and the India-Brazil-South Africa Dialogue Forum (IBSA) takes a very different approach (compared to the
when it comes to stressing the importance of democracy and respect for human rights. Even in the case of China the very strict implementation of the non-interference policy might have to be taken with a pinch of salt. China’s current practice is often understood as total indifference towards the political context in which its SSC is taking place. Case in point is often China’s involvement in Sudan. But, as Mawdsley (2012: 118) points out, it is not in China’s interest to do business in a failed state or a war zone. China’s role in Sudan for example did evolve over time and China did get politically engaged. At the CATTF II, where the role of Sino-African relations in governance, peace and security was the main theme, part of the discussion was exactly on how China should match its understanding of non-interference with its growing responsibility as an emerging power.

What would African civil society think of this?

Critics of the classical development cooperation are eyeing the SSC discourse as an interesting alternative or complementary approach to development, and many African leaders seem to agree. At the same time mainstream commentators are often doubting that the emerging powers have the intention of putting their principles into practice, or fear the consequences if they actually would. How do African civil society organisations position themselves in this debate? Are they fan of the SSC discourse? And do they believe it is more than just a shiny wrapping?

### 3.2.2 On the costs and benefits of SSC

Overlapping the discussion on principles and intentions, is the debate on whether SSC on these terms is actually beneficial for the partner developing countries. This debate too has sceptics warning for an array of bad side-effects on the one hand, and enthusiasts pointing at opportunities on the other hand.

A shortlist of frequently warned for drawbacks of SSC would definitely feature the claim that emerging powers are ‘rogue’ donors: “In recent years, wealthy nondemocratic regimes have begun to undermine development policy through their own activist aid programs. Call it rogue aid. It is development assistance that is nondemocratic in origin and nontransparent in practice, and its effect is typically to stifle real progress while hurting ordinary citizens” (Naím, 2006). In this line of thought, the fundamental concerns about the principle of non-interference have proven justified: emerging powers are cooperating with whoever they want, including authoritarian and even genocidal regimes. By doing so, they are providing alternative channels of financing to regimes that may have been excluded from such resources (by DAC-donors) with good reason. Consequently, SSC might be undermining the gains and efforts of DAC-donors to force some regimes towards more democratic accountability or a better human rights record (Naím, 2007; Tull, 2006: 476; Woods, 2008). Also shortlisted would be the fear that SSC is the vehicle for a new scramble of Africa: the emerging powers perceive Africa as a potential business partner and a source of natural resources, and use SSC as a way to facilitate and secure their access to these natural resources and land (Carmody, 2011; Kragelund, 2010: 21). This approach could spark a new scramble for Africa - a race not only between emerging powers but also between emerging and industrialised countries, in a manner that is overwhelmingly detrimental for the continent (Bilal, 2012: 27). A third major concern is with the impact of SSC on local consumers, producers, and workforces in African countries. In particular China is blamed for pruning away many of the benefits of its large-scale infrastructure projects in Africa by hiring Chinese contractors and even imported Chinese workers. According to these assessments, African countries end up with low-quality infrastructure, local contractors out of business, and little or no extra employment. In cases where Chinese firms do hire locally, they are sometimes reproached for horrible working conditions. Also the massive import of cheap consumer products from China, and the arrival of so many Chinese, Indian, South African entrepreneurs and businesses are stirring up strong critique. Commentators point out that SSC is pushing
local producers out of the market, while consumers end up with no choice but to buy low-quality imported products. Others predict this will create tensions amongst locals and (especially Chinese) immigrants (Michel, 2008). A fourth concern related to the effect of these additional donors on the efforts to increase aid effectiveness: operating outside of the OECD policy framework for development cooperation, they risk aggravating aid fragmentation and the lack of donor coordination. Also often mentioned is the problem of a lack of monitoring, reporting, and evaluation. Without more transparency it will be hard to evaluate or learn from SSC. These and many other objections to the BICS’s approach flavour the debate on SSC.

However, these presumed drawbacks are often contradicted by more optimistic assessments of SSC’s features. One of the top arguments in favour of SSC is that it results in more available resources for more sectors in more developing countries, including those that many DAC-donors consider too risky (Dreher et al., 2011: 1959, Kragelund, 2010: 20-21; Kragelund, 2008). This additional source of resources has protected developing countries from the effects of economic recession and stagnating ODA-flows (IMF, 2012: 13-16). Also being welcomed is the specific expertise the BICS can provide, based on their own development experiences. The idea is that their best practices, such as Brazil’s approach to the fight against HIV/AIDS or its Bolsa Familia program, or India’s ‘Triple A’ (affordable, available, and adaptable) technological innovations, could be a better and more adapted source of inspiration for developing countries than programs invented by Western development actors. Also pleading in favour is the view that BICS are taking a more coherent and integrated approach to development cooperation (a sore spot for the DAC-donors) by including trade and investments. For example, 90% of African exports benefit from unilateral Chinese and Indian tariff exemption. This can be a strong stimulus for Africa’s productive sectors, and compares favourably with DAC-donors demanding mutual exemption and still excluding major export commodities of the South (Kragelund, 2010: 22). The warning of a potentially detrimental impact on economic and political reforms in African countries is countered by the analysis that SSC is still small compared to resource flows from Western development partners, and can not been seen as a full alternative. Instead of giving African leaders the leverage to brush aside all conditions outright, it might just give them some room to maneuver in their negotiations with DAC-donors, and that is most often considered a good thing. Also, one of the few empirical studies looking at the actual allocation of bilateral aid of non-DAC donor countries, could not find a bias against better governed (less corrupt) recipient countries (Dreher et al., 2012: 1961). More practically, but also much appreciated in SSC, is its speed, low transaction costs, and the respect for national ownership.
### Table 3.3 Arguments for and against different characteristics of SSC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SSC practices</th>
<th>Risks/negative impacts/arguments against</th>
<th>Opportunities/positive impacts/arguments in defence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>General</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased SSC by non-DAC countries</td>
<td>Could undermine efforts for more aid effectiveness, more donor coordination and less aid fragmentation (^\text{10})</td>
<td>Resulted in more resources for more countries. Made countries less dependent on the stagnating ODA from DAC donors. Protected developing countries from the shock of economic recession (^\text{11})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Puts additional pressure on the absorptive capacity of donor darlings</td>
<td>Uses different modalities and therefore spreads out the pressure and transaction costs on key ministries and institutions (^\text{12})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driven by strategic concerns, aimed at securing access to natural resources.</td>
<td>Will lead to a new scramble for Africa, with Africa becoming the battleground for conflicts of scarcity (^\text{13})</td>
<td>The DAC-donors are no different.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenging the Western dominance</td>
<td>Challenges the DAC-donor community’s authority to set the standards and norms (^\text{14}) Could mean developing countries get even less opportunities to choose their development paths</td>
<td>Challenges the DAC-donor community’s authority to set the standards and norms (^\text{15}) Could offer an alternative approach to development and cooperation (^\text{16})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Specific modalities</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concessional loans</td>
<td>Might endanger debt sustainability</td>
<td>Research showed that emerging lenders (in particular China) are not guilty of free-riding on international debt cancellations or of imprudent lending (^\text{17})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angola model</td>
<td>Creates high debt burden</td>
<td>Is an achievable form of repayment or securitisation foreign-currency-strapped countries; China did it too, as recipient of Japanese loans in the 80s; Western investors and bankers use it too.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Export credits</td>
<td>It is market entry mechanism to facilitate own companies.</td>
<td>It helps to overcome some of the risks and cost of expansion into new sectors and locations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tied aid</td>
<td>May undermine developmental and humanitarian effectiveness by enforcing overpriced and unsuitable goods or services, forcing out local producers and providers, and importing labour force.</td>
<td>Many DAC-donors still tie their aid. The tied aid of Southern development partners may be less expensive and better suited. Research shows that the Chinese labour component is often exaggerated (^\text{18})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited conditionality</td>
<td>Leads to cooperation with and enabling of authoritarian regimes. Undermines the fight against corruption and for democratic reforms and respect for human rights (^\text{19})</td>
<td>Many Western countries act no different. Western as well as non-Western states and firms are complicit with problematic states (^\text{20}) China is less indifferent than usually portrayed (^\text{21}). SSC also holds conditions, aimed at ensuring the financial viability of projects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blending (= mixing aid with commercial instruments)</td>
<td>Blending leads to distortion of the market and unfair competition. May put commerce before poverty reduction and good</td>
<td>Private sector actors in industrialised countries also receive state support. Including trade and investments bringing new markets</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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11 Davies, 2010: 11; Greenhill, 2013: 25; IMF in BRICS brochure.
14 Kragelund, 2010: 21; Rowlands, 2008: ??.
15 Kragelund, 2010: 21; Rowlands, 2008: ??.
16 Blal, 2010: 1; Rowlands, 2012: 646.
18 Kragelund.
Technical cooperation offers low value for money (often expensive and unadapted experts). Demand-driven TC is more prone to capture of programs by local elites. May be designed to match BICS commercial or strategic interests of donors instead of partner needs.

In case of SSC it is not a vertical transfer of apolitical knowledge (as in NSC) but a horizontal experience sharing and knowledge co-creation. Aims to offer better value for money. Have relevant know-how to share. Democratises participation in SSC, since every country has some ideas to exchange.

Using a different approach than most DAC-donors spreads out the pressure and transaction costs on key ministries and institutions.

By partner countries experienced as more aligned with government priorities.

Less burdened by administrative and procedural delays, faster results, cheaper, lower transaction costs, less donor-driven.

This brief account of arguments debating the development outcome of SSC is by no means complete. In fact every feature of SSC, from its basic rationale, its discourse and principles, to its preferred modalities, sectors and partners, is being treated to a list of pros and cons (see Table 3.3), despite that lack of facts and figures to base this scrutiny on. Overall the debate on SSC covers a wide continuum: on one end optimists who proclaim China’s emergence is a ‘golden opportunity’ for Africa, offering the continent a way out for its aid-dependent economy (Moyo, 2009: 120), on the other end the pessimist who fear Africa will be falling victim to rogue donors and a new scramble (Naim, 2009) and along the way more nuanced analyses that emphasize what a huge challenge it is for African states to take advantage of the opportunity SSC holds (Rampa & Bilal, 2012: 267).

**What would African civil society think of this?**

The revitalisation of SSC and especially of the Sino-African relations triggered strong dichotomous reactions. Some observers characterised this debate as hysteric, Sinophobe and unfairly stressing the drawbacks. They underline the strengths of SSC and the promises it holds to address certain development challenges. At the same time others denounce the undeserved euphoria around the potential of SSC and point out the detrimental side-effects of SSC. The question can be asked to what extent this debate is also raging amongst civil society in the African partner countries of the emerging powers? And what does their cost-benefit analysis look like?

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23 Davies, 2010: 11; Rowlands, 2012: 646.
26 Mawddsey, 2012: 111.
27 Greenhill et al., 2012: 27.
29 Davies, 2010: 11.
3.2.3 On civil society involvement

The steady build-up in trade and investment flows between BICS and Africa has gone accompanied by the creation of a set of new multilateral meeting fora and a continuing string of friendly diplomatic exchanges. But in contrast to private sector and government, civil society on both sides seems to be seeing much less action.

The common SSC policy statements remain rather silent when it comes to the role of civil society. All five final declarations of the BRICS summits combined contain only one explicit reference in this regard, one sentence stating that: “We encourage expanding the channels of communication, exchanges and people-to-people contact amongst the BRICS, including in the areas of youth, education, culture, tourism and sports” (Delhi Declaration, 2012: §48). Although this refers to interaction and exchange by actors beyond the realm of state or market, it is a far cry from a recognition of the need for organised civil society to get involved. In national policy documents on SSC, references to non-state and non-private sector actors are scarce as well.

China’s Africa Policy (2006) contained two brief pointers referring to cultural exchange (§3) and people-to-people exchange (§8). In it, the Chinese government resolves to “guide and promote cultural exchanges in diverse forms between people’s organisations and institutions in line with bilateral cultural exchange programs and market demand” (China’s Africa Policy, 2006: §3) and to “encourage and facilitate the exchanges between people’s organisations of China and Africa, especially the youth and women, (...) and guide Chinese volunteers to serve in African countries.” The subsequent White Paper on China-Africa Economic and Trade Cooperation (2010) did not contain any such notions, but the White Paper on Foreign Aid (2011: 19) proposed to enhance people-to-people exchange by setting up a scholars and think thank cooperation. Interestingly the Beijing Declaration of the fifth Ministerial Conference of the FOCAC (2012) does state that China “(...) will vigorously carry out the dialogue between Chinese and African civilisations, launch a new round of exchanges in culture, education, sports, tourism and other fields, and forge closer ties between the young people, women, non-governmental organisations, media organisations and academic institutions of the two sides, with a view to deepening the understanding and friendship between the people of China and Africa and promoting the diversity of the world civilisations.” [emphasis added] (Beijing Declaration, 2012: §16). To our knowledge this is the first explicit reference to a role for NGOs in its Africa policy.

India’s policy related to economic and development cooperation also explicitly focuses on bilateral channels, but at the same time seems to recognise the role of NGOs as a development actor that should be engaged by the development partner itself. This was shown for example by the following 2003 statement of Finance Minister J. Singh, delineating India’s approach: “(...) the Government of India would now prefer to provide relief to certain bilateral partners, with smaller assistance packages, so that their resources can be transferred to specified non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in greater need of official development assistance” (GOI, 2003: 21). While explicitly naming governments as the go-to development partner, India and Africa did commit “to involving the private sector and civil society in Africa and India to widen the scope of our partnership” (Addis Ababa Declaration, 2011: §28) at the latest Africa-India summit in 2011. So far examples of India linking-up with its own or partner country NGOs to channel development funding, or otherwise engaging civil society are rare (Mawdsley, 2012: 100). But it is interesting to see that in the past few years the Indian Ministry of Foreign Affairs supported the development of different online networking websites, bringing together people from India and Africa. The project ‘Indiafrica: a share future’ is such an example, with the stated aim “to complement the government to government and business to business initiatives, and to bring the people of India and Africa closer and help partner shape the future of these two geographies by engaging their youth” (www.indiafrica.in
Another interesting development is the establishment of a Forum for Indian Development Cooperation in 2012, which for the first time formally brought together Indian Government officials and Indian civil society representatives in preliminary discussions about potential cooperation.

Brazil and South Africa might be taking a different approach. Although the Brazilian model for international cooperation is mostly based on government-to-government arrangements, greater participation of civil society has been called for. According to Cabral and Shankland (2012: 17-18) signs of a growing awareness for the role of non-state actors in development cooperation are starting to show, with social movements being involved in some government-led projects, and with attempts to create a civil society forum for the community of Lusophone countries. How this trend will evolve and what role African CSOs might be given remains to be seen. Finally, according to Vickers (2012) the South African agency for development cooperation in the making will have the mandate to coordinate all outgoing international development cooperation as well as partnerships including with civil society (Vickers, 2012: 551).

All in all, there seem to exist some cautious policy intentions for a more pronounced role for civil society in the BICS’ international cooperation, but it is unclear whether in each case (1) it is mostly, or only, rhetorical support; (2) it is a streamlined policy line shared by the different actors involved in the SSC of the country; and (3) to what extent it is or will be truly implemented. Anyhow, looking at the current state-of-play, different analyses seems to agree that civil society is only by exception involved in the practice of emerging power’s SSC. They also wonder how the civil society in the different recipient/partner countries will respond to the further expansion of relations between their country and emerging powers. Will they be able to respond, work out tactics and strategies to ensure better development outcomes? Or will in the long run cooperation with emerging powers further entrench the power of unaccountable political elites and sideline civil society (Mawdsley, 2012: 102)?

What would African civil society think of this?

In current practices of SSC between emerging powers and African countries, African CSOs seem to be involved only by exception. The different BICS, some more than others, expressed cautious policy intentions to involve civil society in their cooperation with Africa, but it remains very vague as to what civil society they are referring to and what role they might envision. The question arises whether civil society is being sidelined in SSC.
This chapter confronts the different arguments recurrent in the mainstream debate on BICS and South-South cooperation, with the opinions, experiences and expectations of a selected group of African CSO representatives. Using the collected data, it summarises what is supported or rebutted by the participants in the research. First, opinions and attitudes towards the discourse of SSC and its (expected) impact on development, society and politics are discussed. Next, the concrete implications of SSC for African civil society organisations are looked at. Some key points in this chapter are the China bias of the respondents, and the overall impression that many of the participating civil society representatives may have a limited knowledge but an overall nuanced view on SSC with emerging powers.

4.1 The ‘China bias’ and conceptual confusion

Our research scope included all BICS. However, participants in the research tended to focus on China: given the choice as to which BICS to comment on, participants tended to first or only comment on China, and the examples given in answers to open questions were, a few exceptions aside, about the Sino-African relations. The same goes for the interviews: respondents tended to focus on China unless they were asked specifically about the role of other BICS. This ‘China bias’ is important to keep in mind for a correct interpretation of the research results discussed below. A partial explanation for this bias is that participants perceived China as the most active emerging power in their country (see Figure 4.1). But China is also in the limelight of the discussion on SSC, and as a Kenyan interviewee points out: “Whatever support there is [from other BICS], it is more at a quieter level, not so much seen outside, much quieter than what you see with the Chinese.”
Another observation from the interviews is that participating CSO representatives do not use the different terms and concepts in a consequent manner. SSC and development cooperation with emerging powers (or sometimes also development aid) are often used interchangeably. Yet, at the same time, when asked to define SSC, most respondents did explicitly distinguish between development aid on the one hand and SSC or development cooperation on the other, the latter being broader and including areas such as trade and foreign investment. This conceptual confusion is no big surprise, especially since even in specialised literature there is no consensus on the correct use and meaning of different concepts. This too is an important aspect to keep in mind for a correct interpretation of the research results.

4.2 Is civil society being fooled by a shiny wrapping?

The distinct discourse of SSC has triggered positive as well as negative reactions by scholars, journalists and politicians alike. Quite some opinions have been voiced on whether the principles are a good foundation for an African development-friendly cooperation, and whether they will actually be put in practice. The question arises as to how this discourse is being received by civil society. How do they judge the different principles being put forward? And how do they assess the potential of these principles to actually shape the practice of SSC?

4.2.1 Do emerging powers talk the talk?

A first observation from the interviews, is that many of the respondents were familiar with (at least some of) the key ideas of SSC. Most interviewees mentioned the principle of mutual benefit (win-win) or the principle of non-interference and the absence of political conditionality spontaneously. With few ‘I don’t know’ answers, survey respondents indicated to be informed about these principles too. It would appear that at least the key strokes of the discursive framing of the SSC are well-known amongst the participating CSOs.

Another general impression is that the interviewees had a mainly positive appreciation of the core principles of SSC. This seems to be confirmed by the survey results (see Figure 4.2) where maximum a third of the respondents was in disagreement or strong disagreement with the different statements expressing a positive assessment of the discourse. However, the survey results express a
more positive sentiment than one would conclude from the interviews where quite some disagreement or nuances were voiced in regard to specific aspects of the discourse.

Figure 4.2 How do you feel about the discourse of South-South cooperation?

Despite a clear appreciation of the emphasis on equality, solidarity and mutual benefit, interviewees doubted the sincerity and credibility of these principles: “We see less and less of South-South cooperation’s mutual support and solidarity, it is being taken over by national interest” (Kenyan CSO). They had few illusions as to what really drives SSC: “At the moment South-South cooperation is solely based on commercial interests” (Burundian CSO, own translation). Some also wondered how SSC can be about equality and solidarity when the cooperation in reality is mostly one-sided: “African governments are passive recipients. Just like they are passive recipients in North-South Cooperation. (...) Kenya sent their troops [to Somalia], but after four months they could no longer afford it and needed someone else to pay the bill. (...) In essence, in the context of cooperation from South to South, the recipients are still not really actively engaged until they are facilitated. Meaning that element of solidarity is still lacking, where we say: Kenya, take corn to Malawi, don’t ask money from UN or Belgium, just take your own money. That’s real cooperation.” An ambivalent attitude towards mutual benefit is also noticeable. On the one hand interviewees welcomed the up-front attitude of the BICS, and especially China, who are open about the benefits they want/get through the cooperation (thereby recognising the fact that African countries also have something to offer). On the other hand they also showed resentment because they feel the benefits are unequally divided: all parties might win, but one will win more than the other: “When China comes here, she will not talk to you about human rights, she will not talk to you about democracy. She will go straight to the point and tell you that business is what really interests her. It’s clear; it’s about win-win, even if it’s not really win-win. When the West comes, it will talk about, well, development, and human rights and the lot. The words are nice, but the practices sometimes condemnable.” (Burundian CSO, own translation). They felt that part of the explanation is the persistent power imbalance that marks SSC: “The power imbalance are still too visible. It is not a partnership amongst equals at this point. It is even much more skewed in South-South cooperation than in North-South cooperation” (Kenyan CSO).
The principle of non-interference and the accompanying absence of political conditionality also triggered mixed reactions. Only by exception did interviewees disagree with the basic principle of non-interference. They considered respect for national sovereignty and ownership to be crucial in good cooperation and a true asset of SSC. The same overall support was found in the survey results: 43 respondents ‘agreed’ or ‘agreed strongly’ with the statement that non-interference should be a principle in all cooperation. Only 18 out of 65 voiced their disagreement, which could imply both disagreement with the principle in itself or with the idea that all cooperation should embody it. Especially in the light of the predominantly rights-based approach of most of the participating organisations this support for non-interference, of which the lack of conditionalities is the translation, is striking. However, despite the fact that many interviewees explicitly voiced their support for the principle of non-interference, their subsequent arguments revealed a much more nuanced and ambiguous position.

The most prominent concern, showing up in almost all interviews, was that the lack of conditionality would undermine the fight for good governance, democracy and respect for human rights. Interviewees brought forward different dynamics through which this risk could materialise. To begin with, because of the lack of transparency, conditions and follow-up, the incoming resources could disappear into the wrong pockets, and fuel corruption. Many interviewees were convinced that this was currently the case, for example in the cooperation with China and India (also see 4.3). Secondly, an alternative and non-conditional source of resources could give political leaders more room to manoeuvre around certain DAC-donor conditions related to democratic reforms and respect for human rights: “Most emerging countries don’t have a democratic system, and they don’t operate based on a respect for rights. So, when a government doesn’t respect the conditions [of the traditional donors] they tend to turn towards the emerging countries. And if they would succeed in getting sufficient funds from the emerging countries, this risks corroding …it could have negative consequences for democratic systems in Africa” (Burundian CSO, own translation). Thirdly, DAC-donors could feel inclined to become less demanding, in order to remain an attractive/competitive cooperation partner. According to some respondents this is already the case: “As human rights defenders, we fear that the more the cooperation with China expands, the less our message on human rights will be heard. The other cooperation partners who worried about human rights, start to tone down their message now that they see the growing importance of China” (Burundian CSO, own translation).

Often in the same breath with these risks, interviewees pointed out several advantages. According to them, the lack of conditionality makes SSC: (1) faster and a lighter burden on their administrative systems; (2) a quick source of resources in a time of need and (3) less intruding in internal policy processes in a moralising or patronising way. This last point came up in several critiques. One aimed at the impact of political conditionality on civil society: “The advantage is that those countries are supposed to be sovereign countries that make their own decisions and conclusions, so that’s what it’s good for (…) Sometimes the DAC-donors use aid, even through NGOs, to influence. Anything that goes against the local culture, they give money towards such causes. They interfere with the country’s culture (…) the way they are investing funds determines what our civil society is working on” (Kenyan CSO). Another voicing frustration toward the meddling of DAC-donors: “(…) Sometimes they just order you around (…). I believe that China respects the independence of the countries. We are independent. They have to respect our opinions. But the traditional donors are there, they even push for certain leaders: this one is good apprentice, be should go in that ministry” (Congolese CSO, own translation). And yet another pointing at the inconsequent and self-serving implementation of political conditions by the DAC-donors: “They [emerging powers] may have their own interests. They may be good or bad, but they don’t interfere in what happens in the nations. It’s positive, because the policies imposed from the West are not necessarily nice ones” (Kenyan CSO).
At first sight the attitudes towards interference and conditionality seem rather contradictory. On the one hand the interviewees supported the principle of non-interference and sometimes explicitly rejected DAC-donors’ political conditionality, on the other they feared SSC will impact their democracy and human rights agenda in a negative way and sometimes explicitly condemned the emerging powers for shying away from this more political agenda. Going deeper into the interviews, some partial explanations for this contradiction emerge. The first one is that interviewees seem to have different types or even specific examples of political conditionality in mind when making their statement ‘for’ or ‘against’. Examples of political conditionality that were frowned upon are: (1) conditions attempting to shape (or ‘prescribe’) policies in specific domains (e.g. in the education sector, foreign affairs), (2) conditions so technical and detailed that there is a lack of capacity to even deal with them, and (3) covert interference with political processes (e.g. which politician should go where in the administration, but also what democracy should look like). One interviewee explains: “When you try to force someone to take over your identity and personality, at a certain point they will break. For those who don’t impose a lot of conditions: it helps the country to develop.” (Burundian CSO, own translation). Another says: “If someone gives us a solution, if the solution is imposed on us without our consent, without our government’s consent, then that is interference.” At the same time many interviewees support conditionality or interference in other specific circumstances, for example in reaction to the violation of international commitments a country has taken. In that case, international community should condemn or take action: “As far as the principles are concerned, I do agree with the principles [of non-interference and no conditionality]. (…) But when we say non-interference, in what sense? We know that our country is signatory to a number of human rights declarations. So, if these are violated, proper actions must be taken by the international community and local organisations. And I don’t define this as interference” (Ethiopian CSO). Since interviews did not go in to depth in the interviewees’ interpretations and assumptions regarding political conditionality, it is hard to draw general conclusions. It is however clear that interviewees distinguish between different types/degrees of conditionality, and that their attitude can differ from one type/degree to another.

Several comments in the interviews hint at another partial explanation for the ambivalent attitude towards political conditionality: interviewees seem to have different expectations towards different donors. One reason is the difference in historic ties and shared history: “The responsibility of traditional western donors towards the South is different. The others are like merchants: they come to sell their stuff and they leave, they land a deal and then they’re done. But in this case [with the traditional donors] there are historical ties! If Belgium would just passively watch the injustice happening in Congo, between the leaders and the population, one day history will condemn you for it” (Congolese CSO, own translation). Another reason is the ambition of getting the best of both worlds, with NSC providing pressure for political reforms and SSC providing (hopefully increasing) easy access to resources. In that sense the two are sometimes perceived as complementary. A third reason is that neither of the two extreme positions (excessive conditionality versus no conditionality at all) is considered as ideal, and interviewees are in fact arguing for the happy medium: “(…) We appreciate South-South cooperation because it comes without conditions or interference. At the same time, one of the risks we fear is the lack of democracy. I’m telling you that this in fact is not contradictory. We demand both. Our countries, our communities have certain requests for which we look at the emerging countries. And other requests that can be answered through the traditional cooperation with the West. This means we are not about to blow up traditional cooperation with the West, but the encounter between these two models of cooperation requires a synthesis of both. I think the North-South cooperation has something to learn when it comes to modalities and conditionality. On the other hand, we would like to see South-South cooperation reinforced by democratic values” (Congolese CSO, own translation). All in all, the support for non-interference or non-conditionality in SSC should not automatically be interpreted as support for a radical shift towards non-conditionality in NSC. These are only tentative analyses of what could be behind the ambiguous attitude towards non-interference and conditionality, but they do suggest a thorough study and discussion of the different views and attitudes toward political conditionality is overdue.
The argument that emerging powers, as former developing countries, have a better understanding of the challenges and a more adapted expertise to offer was also commented on. About half of the survey respondents ‘agreed’ with this statement, leaving the other half either undecided or disagreeing (see Figure 4.2). In the interviews a same mixed reaction surfaced. It wasn’t contested that the experiences of emerging powers and their quick rise could serve as inspiration (and encouragement) for developing countries. But this acknowledgement wasn’t necessarily translated in a belief that the emerging powers would therefore offer better cooperation. A distinction was made between emerging powers having a better understanding of a developing country’s context on the one hand, and them having a better understanding of the needs of the locals on the other hand. While respondents were inclined to concur with the former, they were not convinced of the latter.

An interesting discussion amongst different CSO representatives during the group session touched on a related issue. Some participants praised China for showing that development could be achieved through a different model than the one proclaimed by the West. They referred to strong state control of both the market and the political sphere as a success factor, pointing out that “you can’t eat democracy”. This however triggered quite some reaction from fellow civil society representatives: “The development model that China stands for can really be dangerous for us. We risk putting at stake certain convictions that we share today, all in the name of the development that China offers us. I think we need to be very careful! (…) We can’t afford to fantasize about a way to achieve development while leaving democracy and human rights at an impasse. It’s too dangerous” (Congolese CSO, own translation).

4.2.2 Will emerging powers walk the walk?

Not only the inherent value of the principles, but also the extent to which they are or will be put into practice was a subject of discussion: “As far as the principles are concerned, I do agree with the principles. It has to be based on mutual benefit and equal relationships. The principles are OK, I think. But what I’m not sure of, is whether these principles are practically maintained in this South-South cooperation.” With his statement a representative of an Ethiopian CSO summarises a view shared by many of the interviewees: they might agree with the rationale of SSC but have doubts about whether and how it will be implemented. The fact was pointed out that, although placed at the core of SSC, the observance of these principles relies solely on self-compliance by emerging powers.

Some interviewees so far saw little evidence of a real implementation of the principles. In their opinion, there is little difference between SSC and the cooperation with DAC-donors. According to some interviewees the discourse is therefore mostly ‘good PR’: “The challenge we find in the principles of South-South cooperation is that a lot of them are fuelled and shaped around facilitating political relationships, they are constructed on the basis of very good political speak, they are honestly the very best you come around to in international relations PR. Mutually beneficial. What is it? Is it that we can sign a cooperation to fix a road? Or can we work on the basis of questions like ‘that road has a bit of a controversy because it goes through communal land. Have you been able to sort that out?’” (Kenyan CSO). Others even voiced the concern that this discourse is distracting attention from the reality: “It’s only theory; it’s a discourse to lull the population to sleep. Do these emerging countries defend the interests of the population towards our leaders? No, they don’t. I don’t see these words put into practice.” (Congolese NGO, own translation).

Yet again, there seems to be another side to this perception as some of the interviewees and survey respondents judged the practice of SSC to be in line with its discourse. As the survey shows (Figure 4.3), only a fourth of the respondents disagreed with the statement that the practice of SSC is in line with its principles. And the support for the statement that ‘SSC is not so different from NSC’ is not overwhelming at all, with a third of respondents still undecided on the matter. Interviewees argued for example that they haven’t yet seen a case of China interfering in domestic affairs
without being invited to do so. Or they experienced the outspoken attitude of emerging powers and especially China - in contrast to the DAC-donor communication and attitude - as a sign of respect and as recognition of sovereignty and ownership: “Western powers sought their own interests. BRIC countries seek their own interest, but they treat us with respect” (Zimbabwean CSO).

There was a very strong endorsement of the idea that ‘traditional western donors’ can learn something from SSC (see Figure 4.2). Examples given referred often to the less paternalistic attitude of emerging powers: “At times they [the traditional donors] are there only to command. I believe China respects the independence of a country more. (...) In the cooperation with the West, we saw it was stained with paternalism. Sometimes so much so that it was like giving aid to a child. That cooperation now needs to allow the ‘children’ to grow up” (Congolese CSO, own translation). Also noted was the difference between Chinese and Western expats, the former often living in similar conditions to the local population: “They eat things even we don’t touch” (Congolese CSO, own translation). Other discursive aspects that DAC-donors are advised to take note of, were the emphasis on mutual understanding, mutual benefit, mutual respect and responding to locally defined needs. It was also noted however that SSC should learn from NSC when it comes to transparency: “In fact, South-South cooperation is what has a bigger responsibility to learn from the North-South relationship. South-South must not hide under the historics. It has to become a lot more transparent and open” (Kenyan CSO).

Figure 4.3 How do you feel about the discourse of SSC?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practice of SSC is in line with its key principles</th>
<th>In practice not so different from cooperation with traditional donors</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
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<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>Agree</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
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</tbody>
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* Statements were: (1) the actual practice of South-South cooperation is in line with the key principles of South-South cooperation (such as non-interference and equality); (2) in practice there is not much difference between cooperation with traditional donors and cooperation with emerging powers.

The majority of the participating CSO representatives took into account the historic background of SSC and endorsed the rationale of SSC in principle. At the same time opinions differed on how the principles should be translated into practice and whether they are already implemented in the current cooperation. The statements and views of the respondents demonstrate very well the power and influence a discourse can have in shaping views and expectations. However, respondents may have an opinion about the semantics and the ‘talk’ of emerging powers, it does not mean they feel SSC has proven itself just yet. The often nuanced views and ambiguous arguments illustrate a wait-and-see attitude: emerging powers may talk the talk, but will they walk the walk?
4.3 Civil society’s cost-benefit analysis

Alongside the discussion on SSC discourse, there is a heated and dichotomous debate on the potential development impact of SSC practices, at least in Western analyses. Some call the debate premature because SSC re-emerged only recently, the effects are not being felt fully yet and accurate information is still lacking. But where does African civil society stand? What are their expectations? How does their overall cost-benefit assessment turn out?

4.3.1 Which is your favourite BICS?

Many analyses talk about the ‘emerging powers’, when in fact they mean ‘China’. With this in mind the research tried to find out how the CSOs’ attitudes towards different emerging powers differ. Survey participants were asked to select an emerging power and next comment on its significance and potential for their own country’s development. The results to these questions again demonstrated the ‘China-bias’, with most respondents in the first or only place commenting on the role of China. Next were India and South-Africa. Brazil evoked remarkably less reactions. Most respondents were convinced that the cooperation with each of the BICS was an important stimulus for the development of the country. Only in the case of Brazil did respondents feel that at the moment the cooperation was not significant enough to have an impact on the socio-economic or political situation in the country. A partial explanation for this, is that most participating organisations were not from Lusophone countries, while Brazilian SSC with Africa is exactly focused on Lusophone countries. The current impact of China and South Africa on the other hand were firmly affirmed (see Figure 4.4). This trend is also visible in the interviews, with most interviewees pinpointing China as by far the most active emerging power in their country.
Figure 4.4  What do you think of the role played by emerging powers such as the BICS in SSC with your country? Looking at how important the BICS are considered to be

* The two statements were: (1) the cooperation with this emerging power is an important stimulus for development in our country; (2) the cooperation with this emerging power is not significant enough to affect the socio-economic or political situation in our country.

The survey also gauged how the respondents estimate the opportunities and risks in the cooperation with each of the BICS. The large majority of the respondents who commented on a specific BICS was convinced that the cooperation with this emerging power holds many opportunities. But, looking at the statement that the cooperation with the emerging power commented on holds many risks, the opinions were less clear-cut. Interestingly, in the case of India, about half of the respondents supported this statement. For Brazil and China, the support almost matched the opposition. For South Africa on the other hand, the opposition to this statement was biggest, with about half of the respondents disagreeing that the cooperation holds many risks. In other words, respondents who chose to comment on South Africa’s role, had fairly optimist expectations and saw less risks than other respondents assessing cooperation with India, China and Brazil. It is interesting to compare these trends with the BBC World Service Country Rating Poll, one of the few polls that measure’s views towards different countries across the world. The 2011 poll shows that participants from African countries hold remarkably positive views on the influence of China and South Africa in the world. Opinions towards Brazil and India were also mainly positive, but less outspoken (BBC, 2011). An explanation for the difference in expectations towards different BICS could not be distilled from the availed data.
Figure 4.5  What do you think of the role played by emerging powers such as the BICS in SSC with your country? Looking at the sentiments towards the different BICS

* The two statements were: (1) the cooperation with this emerging power holds many opportunities; (2) the cooperation with this emerging power holds many risks.

4.3.2  Always two sides to the medal

Participating African CSO representatives seemed in the middle of a balancing act, weighing pros and cons of SSC against each other. Asked straightforwardly whether they felt the impact of SSC is or would be positive or negative, many interviewees replied that they saw both opportunities and risks, that every medal has two sides. This stance is also visible in the survey results were many of the respondents answered they see ‘as much benefits as risks’ in the different domains of SSC (see Figure 4.2). Overall, survey and interviews showed a large implicit and sometimes explicit recognition of the potential of SSC, but also doubts and distrust as to whether SSC would fulfil its promise. In that sense, although not necessarily in agreement with the statement that the debate is premature, interviewees did seem to cast preliminary judgments, emphasising that ‘it will all depend on how things turn out’. This attitude is in line with more nuanced commentaries from academics and policy-makers, but at odds with the extremes of opinion - from Naim’s rogue donors to somewhat sweeping assertions of SSC’s mutual benefits by some proponents within the BICS.

Participants’ expectations towards SSC do differ from sector to sector, and from modality to modality. As shown in Figure 4.2, most respondents seemed to be optimistic about the SSC’s potential in the fields of development cooperation and domestic trade. Moreover, none of the respondents seemed to be spotting any risks in development cooperation with emerging powers, and only a few had fears about the impact on domestic trade. When it comes to cooperation with civil society and technology transfer, still about half of the respondents were confident that SSC holds more benefits than risks. Respondents were less optimistic about what SSC could mean for consumer products, the exploitation of natural resources, large-scale land acquisitions, the fight against corruption and for good governance. Interesting again is that for the first two areas, still about a third of the respondents felt there are ‘as much benefits as risks’. For the latter three categories, the number of respondents that casts a negative verdict was bigger. Different comments throughout the interviews, discussed below, illustrated the reasons behind these appreciations of SSC, and also seem to temper the optimist views on the SSC’s potential for domestic trade.
Figure 4.6 In what fields does South-South Cooperation show the most and the least potential for development in your country?

Looking at the bright side, interviewees were contented or hopeful about the emerging powers’ contribution to basic infrastructure, technology transfer, telecommunication and access to scholarships. Transport infrastructure (roads, railways) in particular but also large public buildings such as congress centres, parliaments or stadia were mentioned several times as important gains in SSC. Interviewees also confirmed the public’s perception that the Chinese get the job done and are fast and cheap: “We see the roads. You can tell us all about the intricacies, but now the people know you can have a bypass over Nairobi. It happens! And they are grateful that the Chinese are doing it. They deliver, as far as the people are concerned” (Kenyan CSO). Another listed advantage, next to infrastructure, was the access to affordable consumer products. Most importantly the Chinese consumer products but also affordable technologies, medical products (from India) or agricultural equipment (from Brazil and India) were mentioned. The increase in scholarships for Chinese and Indian training programs or universities was also appreciated. These activities of SSC were perceived as meeting actual needs: “The traditional cooperation gives you the impression that it is a top-down thing. South-South cooperation allows for more evolution, actions now come more bottom-up. The approaches towards development are more in line with real needs identified by the beneficiaries” (Burundian CSO, own translation). Looking for the bigger picture, one could summarise that the interviewees appreciated the emerging powers’ doing business with and in their country because by doing so they meet certain acute needs in the short term. Some also explicitly reminded of the fact that the Chinese were not put off easily by difficult or insecure situations or, to frame it in their words, did not ‘abandon’ their partner countries when the going was rough: “China plays an important part in Burundi, it is the only country that stayed even in moments of deep crisis when the other partners abandoned Burundi. China has never abandoned our country.” (Burundian CSO, own translation).

All interviewees agreed that there is another side to the medal: “(...) the overall turn-over for Africa is bad, it is an externalisation of African wealth as part of the engine for emerging economies. So, before we have xenophobic riots in our towns, can we please address the basis of how South-South cooperation is been given shape?”
They considered this downside to be most visible when looking at the **negative impact of SSC on the local economy**. This is being felt on different levels. First of all, local companies find themselves in stark competition with Chinese, but also Indian and South-African companies. Interviewees are pessimistic about the odds of beating that competition: lower prices enable these businesses to undercut local producers and suppliers, forcing them out of the market. If not the price differences then the widespread corruption will do the trick. Most interviewees voiced this frustration referring especially to Chinese firms that win all the public bids, either because they are cheaper or because the bids are rigged. They call for more transparency in these procedures to counter the suspicions of corruption: “People are pushing South-South because there are a lot of kickbacks going around. Just make the damn process transparent and accountable, and people will not have a problem with it” (Kenyan CSO). They also believe the local enterprises need to be better protected if SSC is to boost local economy: “Unless the government protects the local companies, they cannot compete. There must be some restrictions so that the local ones can cope. (...) The issue is that care must be taken to identify areas where these foreign companies or cooperation should take place, (...) where they can make good progress, and where local companies cannot really engage because of huge investment requirements. If there is a policy that helps to identify these areas of intervention, I see this cooperation as an opportunity for our country to grow” (Ethiopian CSO). Interestingly, not just the pressure on formal local economy but also on the informal local economy was mentioned. Several interviewees observed with some surprise a striking influx of Chinese nationals in ‘ordinary’ jobs, from restaurateur to street vendor: “It’s true that we can learn a lot from China. But what do we see instead? Ordinary Chinese encroaching on the territory of ordinary Burundians. We see Chinese journal vendors. What do we gain from that?” (Burundian CSO, own translation). This competition with the ‘man in the street’ was considered to have a big impact on the general perception of emerging powers in the countries: “There is a mixture of reactions from people. (...) [By some it is] being looked at as the Chinese now coming to colonise Africa in a different way, mostly when looking at the influx of Chinese nationals into our countries, who start small business that are supposed to be run by the locals, such as restaurants” (Malawian CSO).

Closely related to this point, is the impact of SSC on local employment, which was also considered as mostly negative. Most of the interviewees denounced the alleged practice of China to employ Chinese workers in big infrastructure projects instead of locals, and some also pointed out that the working conditions under Chinese employers did often not even meet the legally require norms and conditions. Finally, also the satisfaction with the improved access to affordable consumer products was countered by many complaints about the quality of the (Chinese) products, which according to several interviewees were a safety hazard and a danger to public health. With such infractions on the livelihoods of African citizens, several interviewees feared the rise of xenophobia (read: Sinophobia) and even violence against immigrants from emerging powers in the long run.

Looking at the **impact on the national politics**, the interviewees were again mostly pessimistic. According to some, the prediction that the access to unconditional funds would make the political elite even less responsive to demands for democratic reforms and respect for human rights was coming true. They had noticed a deterioration in the elbow room for civil society. A few interviewees also said they had the impression that DAC-donors were already relaxing their stance on political conditionality, in response to the competition from unconditional SSC. Even more clear was the effect on corruption. With money going unchecked from one party to the other, interviewees had no doubts that a lot disappeared in the wrong hands: “There is a huge amount of corruption always going on between the South and countries like the Chinese. Whenever there is a huge amount of purchase or construction, of cooperation, there is always a certain amount of commission or bribing that has to be paid for senior government officials” (Kenyan CSO). Such instances were experienced and used as confirmation for the fears and doubts interviewees had regarding the SSC discourse (see also 4.2.1).
In the light of politics on a higher level - between North and South or internationally - emerging powers were looked at differently. Their growing economic and political footprint, to the point of challenging the existing world order, was considered a good thing. Not because interviewees believed they would defend developing countries’ interests in international fora. In fact, they were very sceptical of that possibility, and assumed that this would only happen when it was also in the interest of emerging powers themselves. But their rise was considered as a ‘healthy’ change in global politics that had for too long been dominated by the same Western powers: “The world shouldn’t be unipolar. (...) instead of the western world taking all the decisions on the destiny of the world, this [change] will make room for other viewpoints” (Burundian CSO, own translation).

Interviewees felt more concerned about what this would mean for North-South cooperation. According to almost all interviewees, increasing SSC would without a doubt have an effect on NSC: “Yes, South-South cooperation is impacting North-South cooperation in a big way! South-South is giving North-South a run for its money, especially on access to natural and extractive resources, and especially in Africa. That is why everybody is making all this noise: North-South is increasingly losing its grip” (Kenya CSO). Again opportunities as well as risks were pointed out. Some considered the (re)emergence of the BICS’ cooperation with Africa as an erosion of the influence and power of DAC-donors in Africa. Breaking the ‘monopoly’ of DAC-donors would give African states more leverage to negotiate a development cooperation that served their national interests (although there is also an increased risk of elite capture). Also, DAC-donors might feel more motivated to improve and reform their cooperation, for example to correct the contrast of their slow and burdensome cooperation with the quick delivery of SSC. On the down side however, interviewees feared the consequences of the competition between North and South. Sometime referring to the Cold War area, several interviewees pointed out that the rivalry between Western powers and emerging powers might be fought out on African ground. Both sides were looking to increase their influence sphere and accepting cooperation with one might impact the relations with the other in a bad way: “We see rivalry between the traditional countries and the emerging countries. And as we say: when two elephants fight, the grass suffers. When there is rivalry, each party needs support. The developing countries are that support. We are placed in a dilemma: if we support one, the other will be angry. My traditional partner will get angry, while I’m not yet mature enough. And if my current partner, the emerging countries whose influence is growing, get angry, that will cause me great problems in the future. We need to choose, and that choice will have consequences.” (Congolese CSO, own translation).
Figure 4.7  To what extent are your current partnerships with Northern CSOs affected by South-South cooperation?

* The statements were: (1) our current relationships with Northern CSOs are not affected. They are separate relationships. (2) Our relationship with Northern CSOs will be affected in the near future as South-South cooperation becomes more important. (3) Our relationships with Northern CSOs have already changed under influence of South-South cooperation.

With regard to the impact of SSC on the relationships between African and Northern CSOs, interviewees held far more moderate views. At the moment they did not experience big changes related to SSC. This was echoed by the survey results (see Figure 4.7), where 37 out of 58 organisations (strongly) agreed with the statement that the current relationships were not affected. In a similar question, almost as many organisations agreed as disagreed (24 against 22) with the statement that the relations with Northern CSOs had already changed, but none truly specified in what way. A majority (36 out of the 58) of the CSOs participating in the survey also expected that an increasing SSC would eventually have an influence, whereas only 10 disagreed with this prospect. For example, indirectly, shifts in DAC-donors’ national policies could have consequences for the budget (allocation) of Northern CSOs, on its turn affecting their cooperation with their African civil society partners.

4.4 Is civil society being sidelined?
Considering the very cautious references to civil society in the official SSC policy documents and the warnings in literature that SSC seems to be excluding civil society in policy making as well as implementation, different questions arise: Do CSOs on site share the perception that they are being excluded from SSC processes? Or are they in fact involved in SSC? If not, what could explain their lack of involvement? Is the topic of SSC on their radar to begin with? Do they feel confident about their knowledge on this topic to get involved? Have CSOs tried to interact with development actors involved in SSC?

4.4.1 On the radar but seldom on the to-do list
Survey and interviews results display a rather low involvement in SSC by the participating CSOs. To start with, very few survey respondents thought they, or civil society at large, had detailed
knowledge on the topic. Most of them considered their knowledge to be ‘general’, and overall the assessment of the expertise available in the civil society at large was less pessimistic than the evaluation of their own expertise.

Figure 4.8 How much does your organisation know about the role played by emerging powers such as BICS in SSC with your country?

A possible partial explanation for the low appraisal of the existent expertise might be that very few organisations are actually working on the topic. *Vice versa*, the lack of knowledge might equally be the cause for that. Looking at the individual data, 53 out of 76 respondents indicated their organisation was not working on the topic at all, was following it in the media or both. In the case of nine respondents their involvement also included (and was limited to research and advocacy). Another eight organisations indicated they receive training, two of which also received funding. There were no relevant inputs in the category ‘other’. Being allowed to select multiple categories, the aggregate data (Figure 4.2) shows the overlap between different categories.
For the categories of training and funding, it was often unclear whether this was funding or training to work on the issue of emerging powers, or funding or training received from emerging powers. In the case of one respondent who had indicated to receive funding, the organisation had managed to strike a deal with the Chinese embassy and over three years sent 3 girls on scholarship to China. Another organisation which indicated they received training, was referring to a training organised by South Africa on the topic of behavioural change and health and development communication.

The survey results were confirmed by the interviews. In none of the interviewed CSOs the topic was firmly on the agenda and part of the existing work load. Some interviewees could identify other CSOs whose work - indirectly - touched on the issue (e.g. a watchdog organisation on public bids). Interviewees seemed to be even more pessimistic about the general awareness of and knowledge on the issue. They seemed to share the impression that civil society at large is not very aware of this issue, and lacks knowledge to engage in a meaningful way: “Civil society organisations in Burundi are just now starting a discussion on the topic of development cooperation and the effectiveness of aid. That debate is just now starting. I don’t think there is an organisation specialized in the issue of South-South cooperation. They discuss aid in general, but they are not ready yet for specifications” (Burundian CSO, own translation). Somewhat of an exception were several Kenyan CSO representatives who stated civil society was aware of the issue: “I do think they are very alert. A lot of research is going on, on China, on the impact of China, on the role of BRICS in general. There is a significant amount of awareness and anxiety that things will change. (...) In the case of Kenya, there’s a heavy national civil society input. Well bigger than the international input.” (Kenyan CSO). But they too agreed that SSC or the role of emerging powers is not the subject of a systematic and well-defined debate amongst civil society. Interviewees did feel that in an indirect way, SSC is the subject of a public debate: “Let’s say 40% of public will know. They all know, people see it, so they know. Even at airports, there are signposts of China and Kenya shaking hands. People don’t really discuss it but in news they also capture that.” (Kenyan CSO). Important deals with China, India, or other emerging powers are reported by the media, and the impact of Chinese businesses on the local small and medium enterprises (SME), and the quality of Chinese products are topics of discussion ‘on the street’. Yet, they tended to agree that the public at large, and sometimes even journalists or those interested in international affairs, are not aware of SSC as an emerging trend: “It is a topic of discussion. Not using the SSC concept but talking about the influence of countries such as China and India in the political and economic
affairs. For example, the type of aid that is coming into Malawi, and the conditions this aid is coming in with. For example in case of infrastructure development where they bring in their own staff to work on that (...). So there is that discussion, but in terms of the concept itself, I think it is still a concept that people haven’t yet grasped” (Malawian CSO).

A majority of the respondents disagreed (29) or disagreed strongly (19) with the statement that ‘This is not an important issue. CSOs should focus on other issues’ (Figure 4.3). This was also the case for the interviewees. Despite the consensus on the importance of this issue, very few CSO representatives indicated they had concrete plans to start or scale-up their involvement with the topic, although some had tried or did find it an interesting option: “We have tried to begin this debate at (...) but after one good forum we did not seem to get the smoke out of our head and move forward because we lack the resources to sustain it. And it seems also not to have evoked interest in conversation, including among partners and funders, not even as a quasi academic discussion” (Kenyan CSO).

Interestingly, on the international civil society level, the topic is being put on the agenda. The International Trade Union Confederation organised a seminar on the topic in August 2012, exactly because many trade unions are integrating SSC and Triangular Cooperation in their development programs. They wanted therefore to define political and practical positions with respect to ‘official’ SSC and exchange on practices and challenges for the trade union south-south and triangular cooperation (ITUC, 2012a).

4.4.2 A state-to-state affair

“…We noticed this cooperation, but it’s from one government to another” (Burundian CSO, own translation). Featuring prominently in many of the interviews is the spontaneous characterisation of the cooperation with the emerging powers as being state-to-state, or exclusively bilateral. Interviewees raised this point when they were asked to define SSC, or to explain why the civil society in general was not active on this issue: “On civil society level, as non-state actors, we are blocked. As non-state actors we have no leverage, contrary to what is the case with traditional donor countries who have promised to double funding. If that doesn’t happen accordingly, at least we have written promises to back up our claims. But on the other side, there is nothing.” (Burundian CSO, own translation).

The impression of an exclusively bilateral cooperation is reinforced and confirmed by the lack of meaningful interaction between African CSOs and actors in SSC. A Burundian respondent told the anecdote of how his organisation tried to get in touch with the Chinese embassy to ask for funds. After several trials they were invited for a consultation, but only to be given the explicit answer that the Chinese government does not finance non-state actors. A Kenyan interviewee complains of how they repeatedly wrote the Chinese embassy but never got an answer. Hardly any interviewees know organisations that do have or had contacts with actors in SSC. The exceptions were interactions with officials from the own government departments working on development cooperation, and organisations working with stakeholders that were affected by the activities of an emerging power. The survey results show a similar image (see Figure 4.4).
4.4.3 What role do you want to play?

From the survey and the interviews it becomes clear that at the moment very few activities have been undertaken by CSOs with the aim of influencing SSC policy or practice. Despite this, interviewees and respondents were convinced that civil society has an important role to play in assuring that SSC becomes aligned with the needs and interest of African citizens (see Figure 4.10). In this they showed almost equal support for CSOs in the role of watchdogs signalling negative side-effects of South-South cooperation as for CSO’s as facilitators in the implementation of SSC. However, quite some obstacles for taking up such a role were identified. The lack of transparency and the exclusive character of SSC are considered to be the major obstacles. Often, organisation and coordination of the civil society at the national level are considered inadequate to push such a common agenda. Also, the limited capacity for lobby and advocacy work, and the lack of knowledge and information on the topic of SSC are pointed out as major constraints. Finally, the funding for any activities related to this topic, be it research, consultation, campaigning, or awareness raising, is not available.
Figure 4.11 How do you see the role of civil society organisations (CSOs) in the increasing South-South cooperation between African countries and emerging powers?

* The statements were: (1) CSOs should be facilitators for the implementation of South-South cooperation; (2) CSOs should be watchdogs, signaling negative side-effects of South-South cooperation. (3) CSOs should interact more with the officials involved in South-South cooperation. (4) African CSOs and CSOs in emerging powers should connect and get to know each other better. (5) This is not an important issue, CSOs should focus on other issues. (6) ‘Shame and blame’ tactics will not work when dealing with emerging powers.

Discussing barriers and looking at strategies to overcome them, CSO representatives believed more research to strengthen their own capacities, and putting the topic on the national agenda through awareness raising and representation of marginalised groups affected by SSC was very important. Some interviewees pointed out that media could be a very powerful ally, others stressed that the work on SSC should also be aimed at the behaviour of private sector actors and not only at government actors. However, interaction and collaboration with civil society across African countries and more importantly with civil society in emerging countries was considered as the most important lever to impact SSC: “We need to link this solidarity and civil society partnerships across borders and hold our states to account, and that is when we’ll start shaping SSC. We’ll work with colleagues in India, Brazil, China, and bring it to the attention, to the parliaments. (…) You can act stiff and deaf, but for how long? You cannot discount the effect of the information networks. Information asymmetries are being neutralised. The times have changed” (Kenyan CSO). Almost all interviewees had very high hopes for the effect of joining forces with civil society in emerging powers but several interviewees explicitly pointed out that this would be hard in the case of China, were they didn’t see any CSOs or feared government controlled CSOs. More interaction with officials involved in SSC would also be welcomed.

From the interviews it also became clear that although CSO representatives did demand a bigger role in SSC, they very clearly felt that the initiative to pursue this lies with African governments and African civil society. Most of them did not at all expect emerging powers to take the lead in pushing for more transparency or more civil society involvement. Instead they argued it was the responsibility of African governments and civil society to put solid governance frameworks in place that ensured civil society participation and that guaranteed that SSC did effectively benefit the African partners in the cooperation too. Interviews did not voice any specific expectations towards North-
ern CSOs, although several of them did stress that the support of Northern CSOs for civil society in Africa would also contribute to their capacities to take on the issue of SSC.
5 | Emerging trends and burning questions

This final chapter summarises the trends that emerge from listening to and analysing the viewpoints of the participating CSO representatives, and confronting their views with the mainstream debate on SSC.

5.1 Is the glass half empty or half full?

The confrontation between mainstream (often western) viewpoints and African civil society perspectives on the topic of SSC brings to light an interesting difference. One prominent message that western media, politicians and NGOs have conveyed so far, is that emerging powers’ SSC with African countries is ‘risky business’, ‘exploitative’, even ‘neo-colonial’. Justified or not, the participating African CSO representatives do not unequivocally share this pessimism. Although they often worry about the same risks and drawbacks pointed out in the mainstream debate, their position on SSC is less judgmental and cautiously optimistic: (1) looking at the discourse and principles, most participants seem to interpret SSC as a ‘fresh wind’ and an opportunity - although one that has yet to prove itself; (2) looking at the current costs and benefits, they consider the impact of SSC on the livelihoods of ordinary African citizens to be both positive (e.g. better infrastructure, affordable products) and negative (e.g. competition for local business). But at the national level they tend to emphasise how important SSC has been as a back-up for and addition to lagging DAC-donor ODA; (3) looking at the future, they identify important risks (that are often also present in their assessment of dealings with western development actors) as well as huge opportunities. Despite the balancing act of pros and cons, the overall sentiment that the research participants conveyed was more positive than the tone of the mainstream debate on SSC.

This may seem a disagreement on whether the glass is half full or half empty, but it is not without consequences. The research participants agreed SSC is a very influential trend that belongs high on the civil society agenda, but they approached the mainstream debate with mixed feelings. Firstly because it seemed to have only become a topic from the moment Western interests, such as access to natural resources and bargaining power in North-South relations, were being threatened. Secondly because they did not at all appreciate the patronising way their South-South relations were commented on: “It doesn’t help when Hilary Clinton tries to lecture the Chinese in Africa. You are putting us in a hard place, you are making us choose between two vested interests. People will easily say: we never saw the roads when the British were supposed to fix them, but we did see the Chinese doing their job” (Kenyan CSO). These and other comments indicated that the vested interests of DAC-development actors, in combination with over-simplified pessimistic assessments in the mainstream debate, risk undermining the credibility of any critical analysis of SSC. This in turn may distance the African CSO representatives even further from the debate and may undermine an honest and informed debate on the up- and downsides of SSC.

30 Notwithstanding the increase in nuanced and balanced analyses.
Policy implications

On the one hand African CSOs so far remain disengaged in the mainstream debate on SSC, whereas they could potentially be an importance source of more grounded information and nuanced assessments on the actual impact of SSC. On the other hand the over-simplified messaging on SSC, at least partially a consequence of the lack of African civil society voices, now hinders an honest discussion on the topic. A burning question is how African civil society organisations can take on a more active role in this debate. By doing so, they could be watchdogs against simplifications that undermine the credibility of the current debate. At the same time they could provide a window for more and better information on SSC towards African civil society and the general public. This is a challenge for both African CSOs and Western opinion makers in the debate on SSC.

5.2 (Dis)agreement on upsides and downsides

Confronting the western scholars and politicians led debate on SSC with the views and experiences of the participating CSO representatives also showed there is in fact quiet some consensus on the risks of SSC. The same issues were pointed out: the possibly negative impact on leadership accountability, good governance, the fight against corruption and for human rights; the toll on the local economy; the possibly exploitative natural resource deals with some emerging powers; the lack of corporate social and environmental responsibility by companies from emerging powers. Both sides also share some hopes regarding the opportunities of SSC: the challenging and exciting new approach to development cooperation, a mitigating factor in the skewed North-South power relations, and a source of inspiration and expertise for tried and tested responses to development challenges. Yet, despite this agreement on the headlines, underlying viewpoints, emphasises or solutions often differed, especially in two areas: the critique on non-conditionality of SSC and its impact on local economy.

One of the biggest concerns in the debate is that non-conditional SSC will undermine the goals and achievements of NSC in the field of democratisation and respect for human rights. Participating CSOs shared this concern and in some cases had the impression it was already coming true, but they did not see this necessarily as an unequivocal argument in favour of political conditionality. Quick delivery, less bureaucracy, more ownership and the respect for national sovereignty were important gains partially compensating for this risk. Moreover, the problem of undemocratic regimes or human rights violations could not to be solved by SSC also becoming conditional. Solving it would require an internal process making African governance regimes more responsible and accountable. Consequently, the principle of non-conditionality in SSC was supported widely. This did not mean they advocated for a total 'hands-off' approach in all cooperation, including NSC. Firstly, all countries, including their own, should be held to account when they violated their obligations under international and national law. Secondly, because of historic ties and in the hopes of securing the best of both worlds, participating CSO representatives had different expectations towards different partners. Although a fundamental rethinking of political conditionality is often called for, most would not support lifting all conditionality related to democracy and human rights.

The debate warned for the disruptive effects of Chinese enterprises, products and immigrants on local economy, local producers, consumer choices and livelihoods of ordinary African citizens. Participating CSO representatives also raised these points as one of their primary concerns, as they already witnessed this trend and feared it would increasingly translate into xenophobic sentiment, especially against Chinese immigrants. But their emphasis was distinctively different: they were not against the massive import of Chinese products - it had given many people unprecedented access to basic consumer products such as for example shoes - but against the lack of quality norms and control on these products. They were not against Chinese firms participating in public bids - they delivered cheaply and fast - but against the lack of transparency in these deals and the failure of the
government to provide a level playing field for local businesses. They also showed respect for the ability of Chinese workers and entrepreneurs to adapt to and thrive in their countries, often in the same conditions as the local population. They did however consider the influx of Chinese immigrants in all corners of the country and all sectors, including the informal one, a worrying trend.

Policy implications

The research shows that mainstream debaters and the participating CSO representatives share many concerns and hopes when it comes to SSC. However, agreement on certain upsides or downsides of SSC in some cases hides disagreement on the underlying arguments or proposed solutions. A point in case is the principle of non-interference in domestic affairs. Most participants supported the principle and consequently the lack of political conditionality in SSC. They took into account the advantages this entailed, such as quick delivery and more ownership. They also denounced the often hypocritical implementation of existing political conditionality in development cooperation with DAC donors. On the other hand, cooperation with no regard at all for human rights, democratic principles or good governance was not considered as desirable. Consequently political conditionality was identified as an area where DAC-donors and emerging powers could learn from each other. A second burning issue would therefore be a thorough debate on the current implementation of political conditionality in NSC, as well as in SSC. How can they both avoid meddling interference without becoming an accomplice of elite capture, human rights violations or repression of democratic reforms. This is a challenge for African CSOs, who so far bring a very mixed message when it comes to political conditionality. It is also a challenge for DAC-based development actors, bilateral as well as non-governmental, to create the space for a debate on this topic.

5.3 The right words do matter

In the mainstream debate, the discourse of SSC is sometimes applauded but doubts about its sincerity and actual implementation are made equally explicit. And implicitly another question is tangible: will Africans fall for it? This attitude doesn’t do credit to the impact discursive processes can have on how reality is experienced and given shape. Whereas the support of the discourse in the mainstream debate is often conditional on its actual implementation, participants in the research considered it an achievement in itself, and one that affected their experience of SSC in a positive way. This does not mean they were ‘fooled by a shiny wrapping’. On the contrary, they placed question marks behind the feasibility and sincerity too. They pointed out that acting as equals was difficult when one party was a LICs and the other world’s second biggest economy. They mentioned ample examples of ‘win-win’ that did not mean equal benefits. Yet in different ways they indicated that the framing of SSC gave a wholly different ‘feel’ to the cooperation. They appreciated the straightforwardness of emerging powers and the notion of reciprocity being embedded in the cooperation, especially when contrasted with the rhetoric in NSC which they experienced as patronising and often hypocritical.

Policy implications

The discourse of SSC is not just ‘a shiny wrapping’. It is a framework that attempts to facilitate relationships between states based on reciprocity and therefore to some extent on equality. It also allows emerging powers and developing countries alike to reposition themselves on the international scene, by overcoming the donor/recipient dichotomy. The way participating African CSOs welcome the SSC discourse and consequently see SSC as a possibly empowering force, contrasts with their views on NSC discourse, its connotations of superiority and charity and the association with dependency. The third burning question is about what DAC-based development actors can learn from the positive perception of the SSC discourse. It is huge challenge because it relates to the discourse of charity and altruistic solidarity still embedded in the DNA of many DAC-based development actors, a discourse that is not only misrepresenting the reality but might also be entrenching inequality at the heart of the relations that are based on it.
5.4 CSOs looking for leverage

The research shows that SSC is currently not on the ‘to do’ list of participating African CSOs. They are not lobbying actively for a more inclusive SSC, where decision making is more transparent, participatory and open to all main stakeholders. There is also no systematic work being done to address detrimental effects and maximise benefits of SSC. However, participating CSOs do have the topic on their radar, and agreed it is an important issue that needs to be addressed. Different CSO participants also identified crucial conditions for unlocking the potential of SSC and guarding against the possible drawbacks. In their view, the main catalyst is African governance systems themselves. What they consider most needed are strong legislative, regulatory and enforcement mechanisms that can ensure that the involvement of emerging powers in their country does not end in the plundering of it. They also agreed on the crucial role of civil society to push for this, but the current lack of transparency, the lock-out of non-state actors (with exception of business) and the lack of funds are hampering this. Their focus was on finding leverage to address these obstacles. In their view the by far most promising strategy is to form coalitions with civil society organisations across Africa and in emerging powers.

Some additional obstacles for a more active role of African CSOs need to be taken into account:
1. participating CSOs indicated they depend mostly on national or international media and international NGOs for information on the topic. This is no solid base for reliable and nuanced information. In fact, it should be the other way around, with local CSOs feeding information about the situation on the ground to media and international NGOs;
2. looking for coalition with other CSOs in Africa, but most importantly in emerging powers themselves will be hard as long as both sides know so little about each other. There seems to be a striking lack of knowledge on the civil society landscape in the emerging powers, especially in China. Only few of the participating CSOs could think of channels through which they might initiate an interaction with CSOs in emerging powers;
3. the attitude of development actors in emerging powers vis-à-vis African CSOs needs to be taken into account. Not all emerging powers consider civil society as an important or even relevant actor in SSC. In some cases, such as China, examples of corruption scandals have tarnished the reputation of African CSOs. Secondly, in the light of the increased Western support for civil society since the 90s, and the subsequent emergence of many CSOs, African civil society is in some cases viewed as a proxy for Western interests;
4. other obstacles for more CSO activity on this topic are a lack of financial resources, a lack of coordination between CSOs and a lack of capacity.

These obstacles show the need for (1) investing in capacity building, and (2) developing a comprehensive research as well as lobby and advocacy agenda. This should take into account that participating African CSOs stress the importance of different roles of ‘watchdogs’ of SSC on the one hand and facilitators in the implementation of SSC on the other. An important question is what role DAC development actors - both governments and CSOs - have in this story. Should excising North-South partnerships take on capacitating African CSOs in their work on SSC?
Policy implications

The participating CSO representatives felt that at the moment civil society is not well-equipped to take-up a strong role in the shaping of SSC. Partly because of the lack of capacity and funds, but more importantly because the current SSC lacks transparency and excludes civil society actors. Yet, the participating CSO representatives do voice the ambition to become watchdogs as well as implementing partners of SSC. Next to capacity building and additional research, the participating CSOs felt strongly that coalitions with CSOs in emerging powers could provide them with the leverage to ‘break open’ SSC. Only, until now they had little to no contact with such CSOs. The fourth burning question is how African CSOs can strengthen themselves and can be strengthened to take on the shaping role they aspire in SSC. It is in the first place a challenge for African CSOs, who need to define a research and a lobby and advocacy agenda, and who need to identify and connect with allies across continents. It is also a challenge for DAC-based development actors, whose explicit support for this role by African CSOs might work counterproductive and undermine their legitimacy as a relevant actor in SSC. On the other hand, and especially in the case of Northern CSOs, their expertise and networks across continents could be a crucial asset for their African partners.

5.5 Further discussion

- This research is a first step into the mapping of African civil society perspectives on SSC, based on a limited sample of African CSOs. Therefore, the research does not pretend to be more than a gauge, an exploratory study of the views, opinions and experiences of about 70 African CSO representatives. From this exploration five burning questions emerged: how can the current debate on SSC include African civil society voices better?
- what lessons does SSC entail for the current implementation of political conditionality in NSC as well as in SSC?
- what can DAC-based development actors learn from the positive perception and reception of the SSC discourse?
- how can African CSOs strengthen themselves, and be strengthened, to take on the shaping role they aspire in SSC? And what role should DAC-based development actors claim in SSC?

The findings of this research as well as the burning questions they evoke should be seen as invitation for DAC-based development actors as well as African civil society to take on the challenge of an in-depth debate on SSC.
Appendix 1 List of Participating Organisations

a1.1 Interviews (October 2012-January 2013)

Atupele Wirima, Executive Director, National Women’s Lobby Group (NWLG) - Zambia
Aurélien Comlan Atidegla, director, Groupe de Recherche et d’Action pour la Promotion de l’Agriculture et du Développement (GRAPAD) & Ressources et Expertises Internationales Pour le Développement (REID) consulting & Dynamique Organisations de la Société Civile d’Afrique Francophone (OSCAF) - Benin
Chiku Malunga, director, Capacity Development Consultants (CADECO) - Malawi, Lilongwe
Confédération des Association des Producteurs Agricoles pour le Développement (CAPAD) - Burundi, Bujumbura
Conseil National des Organisations Non-Gouvernementales de Développement (CNONG) - DRC, Kinshasa
Conseil Provincial des Organisations Non-Gouvernementales de Développement de Kinshasa - DRC, Kinshasa
Edmond-Dieudonné Hakizimana, president, Forum Burundais de la Société Civile du Bassin du Nil (FCBN) - Burundi, Bujumbura
Emmanuel Nshimirimana, National Coordinator, BIRATURABA - Burundi, Bujumbura
Eshetu Bekele, executive director, Poverty Action Network in Ethiopia (PANE) - Ethiopia, Addis Ababa
Father T.J. George, Salesian community - Kenya, Nairobi
Gabriel Rufyiri, president, Observatoire de Lutte contre la Corruption et Malversations Economiques (OLUCOME) - Burundi
Getu Hunde, general manager, Oromo Self-Reliance Association (OSRA) - Ethiopia, Addis Ababa
International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) - Italy, Rome
Kiama Kaara, programmes co-ordinator, Kenya Debt Relief Network (KENDREN) - Kenya, Nairobi
Lamine Dia, regional director, Union des Institutions Mutualiste Communautaire d’Epargne et de Crédit (U-IMCEC) - Senegal, Thiès
Mehari Taddele Maru, programme head, Institute for Security Studies (ISS) - Ethiopia, Addis Ababa
Niyongere Mitagato, national co-ordinator, Collectif des Organisations Non-Gouvernementales Locales de Jeunesse (CPAJ) - Burundi, Bujumbura
Noël Nkurunziza, president, Association Burundaise des Consommateurs (ABUCO) - Burundi, Bujumbura
Ousainou Ngum, executive director, Agency for Cooperation and Research in Development (ACORD) - Kenya, Nairobi
Owen Lupeska, head of programs, Zodiak Broadcasting Station (ZBS) - Malawi, Lilongwe
Pacific Nininahazwe, president, Forum pour le Renforcement de la Société Civile (FORSC) - Burundi, Bujumbura
Simon Sikwese, director, Pakachere Institute of Health & Development Communication - Malawi, Lilongwe
Steve Muchiri, chief executive officer, Eastern Africa farmers Federation (EAFF) - Kenya, Nairobi
Vitalice Meja, co-ordinator, Reality of Aid Africa Network - Kenya, Nairobi
World Youth Alliance Africa (WYA) - Kenya, Nairobi

a1.2 Participating organisations in web survey
Agency for Co-operation in Research and Development (ACORD) - Kenya, Nairobi
Association des Guides du Burundi - Burundi, Bujumbura
Association pour la Promotion de la Méérologie et la Normalisation en RD Congo en sigle (APROMEN) - DRC, Kinshasa
Association pour le Soutien aux Victimes du SIDA et de la Guerre (ASSIG EN SIGLE) - Burundi, Province de Makamba
Association pour l'Encadrement des Orphelins et l'Educacion (AEOEP EN SIGLE) - Burundi, Bujumbura
Associations Rwandaise pour la Défense des Droits de la Personne et des Libertés publieques (ADL) - Rwanda, Kigali
BIRATURABA - Burundi, Bujumbura
CEFOTRAR (recognised vocational training centre) - Rwanda, Kigali
Centre for Media Studies & Peace Building - Liberia, Monrovia
Centre de Formation pour la Promotion de la Gouvernance Minière - RDC, Lubumbashi
Centre d’Etude, Documentation et Animation Civique (CEDAC) - RDC, Bukavu
Coalition de la Société Civile pour le Monitoring Electoral (COSOME) - Burundi, Bujumbura
Collectif des Associations et Organisations Non-Gouvernementales Féministes du Burundi (CAFOB) - Burundi, Bujumbura
Collectif Pro-femmes/TWEESEHANWE - Rwanda, Kigali
Comité Anti-Bwaki (CAB) - RDC, Bukavu
Comité National Femme et Développement (CONAFED) - RDC, Kinshasa
Conseil National du Personnel de l’Enseignement Secondaire (CONAPES) - Burundi, Bujumbura
Conseil Provincial des Organisations Non Gouvernementales de Développement de Kinshasa (CRONGD/Kinshasa) - DRC, Kinshasa
Conseil Régional des Organisation Non-Gouvernementales de Développement du Sud-Kivu (CRONGD/Sud-Kivu) - DRC, Bukavu
Conseil Technique pour le Développement Rural (CO.TE.DE.R.) - RDC, Butembo
Co-operative Alliance of Kenya Ltd - Kenya, Nairobi
Développement Agropastoral et Sanitaire (DAGROPASS en Sigle) - Burundi, Province Bubanza
Forum pour le Renforcement et la Société Civile (FORSC) - Burundi, Bujumbura
Groupe d’Appui et d’Accompagnement pour un Développement Durable (GAAD) - RDC, Kinshasa
Institut Africain pour le Développement Economique et Social (INADES) - Rwanda, Kigali
International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) - Italy, Rome
Ligue Congolaise de Lutte contre la Corruption (LICOCO) - DRC, Kinshasa
Ligue des Droits de la Personne dans la Région des Grand Lacs (LDGL) - Rwanda, Kigali
National Youth Council of Malawi - Malawi, Lilongwe
Nkadze Alive Youth Organisation - Malawi
Nouvelle Dynamique Syndicale - RDC, Lubumbashi
Observatoire Burundais des Prisons - Burundi, Bujumbura
Observatoire de l’Action Gouvernementale (OAG) - Burundi, Bujumbura
Organisation Congolaise des Ecologistes et Amis de la Nature (OCEAN) - DRC, Kisangani
Organisation d’Appui à l’autoPromotion (OAP asbl) - Burundi, Bujumbura
Organisation pour le Développement de l’Archidiocèse de Gitega/Mutualité de Santé de l’Archidiocèse de Gitega (ODAG/MSAG) - Burundi, Gitega
Oromia Coffee Farmers Cooperative Union - Ethiopia, Addis Ababa
Oromo Self Reliance Association (OSRA) - Ethiopia, Addis Ababa
Pakachere Institute of Health and Development Communication - Malawi, Blantyre city
PE Childline & Family Centre - South Africa, Eastern Cape
Protection Desk Kenya - Kenya
Réseau d’Actions Paisibles des Anciens Combattants pour le Développement Intégré de tous au Burundi (RAPACODIBU) - Burundi, Bujumbura
Réseau d’Education Civique du Congo (RECIC) - RDC, Kinshasa
Réseau Ressources Naturelles RRN - DRC, Bukavu
Solidarité pour le Développement Communautaire - Burundi, Bujumbura
Soy Foundation - Uganda, Kapchorwa
Syndicat des Travailleurs de l’Enseignement du Burundi (STEB) - Burundi, Bujumbura
The Calabash Trust - South Africa, Nelson Mandela Bay
Union Nationales des Travailleurs du Congo (UNTC) - RDC, Kinshasa
Vision Sociale ASBL - RDC, Kinshasa
Wits University - South Africa
Women in Politics Support Unit (WiPSU) - Zimbabwe
Zodiak Broadcasting Station - Malawi, Lilongwe
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