# South-South cooperation monitoring movements: engaging Southern powers in Africa 'from below'

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Civil society mobilisation is a longstanding feature of international development cooperation politics. Transnational civil society campaigns have widely acted upon and contested large infrastructure projects in developing countries, notably those backed by international financial institutions and multilateral development banks (Fox and Brown 1998; Park 2019). Similarly, the so-called 'aid monitoring movements' (Rosemary McGee 2013) have also debated and problematised[ii] development finance and assistance initiatives led by (Northern/Western) 'donors' and implemented in 'recipient' countries in the Global South. Activism within traditional donor countries' aimed at shaping development aid (formally known as Official Development Assistance - ODA) policies and initiatives, influencing its geographical and sectorial priorities, as well as promoting greater aid transparency and accountability towards taxpayers at home and towards local communities in partner countries in the South (Eyben and Ferguson 2004; Jensen and Winthereik 2013; Rosemary McGee 2013).

With the (re-)emergence of South-South cooperation (SSC) in the early 2000s attention has also turned to social mobilisation in the context of Southern powers' rise as global development actors, with greater interest in their footprint in Africa (e.g., Pomeroy et al. 2016; Chichava and Alden 2017; Cezne 2019; Yeophantong 2020; Shipton and Dauvergne 2021; Waisbich 2021b). This chapter contributes to this bourgeoning field investigating SSC accountability-related mobilisation by civil society organisations (CSOs) from Brazil, China and India in domestic and transnational arenas in the 2010s. It provides a comparative analysis of the framings and repertoires used by Brazilian, Chinese and Indian civil society actors, and the issues citizen-led action brings to the forefront. Methodologically, the chapter relies on scholarship and documental analysis, as well as on interviews and participant observation conducted between 2017 and 2020.[iii]

The focus on social accountability dynamics in the context of SSC contributes to understanding the ways citizens demand and forge alternative citizen-led forms of participation and political control over this burgeoning political field of state action, policies and/or practices within Southern locomotives. While doing so, it connects the SSC-related mobilisation dynamics to evolving state-society dynamics in the context of foreign policymaking in the three countries, and to the broader African infrastructure globalities unpacked in this edited volume.

Three particularities of this study must be openly discussed before moving forward. First, the present chapter focuses on the intricacies and sociopolitical dynamics of pro-accountability national and transnational mobilisation by civil society actors in Brazil, China and India, often in partnership with other civil society groups in Africa and beyond.[iv] The explicit focus on *mobilisation dynamics* and on *civil society groups from/in 'rising powers'* departs, on the one hand, from policy-oriented accountability studies unpacking the conditions under which citizen-led efforts improve accountability in the context of international development projects, including in Africa (e.g., Fox 2020; Rosie McGee and Gaventa 2011). On the other, such focus also departs from (as much as it complements) other studies looking at contestation spatially situated in/around projects in Africa (see Kilaka's chapter in this volume).

Second, any analysis on civil society mobilisation must consider the different meanings and manifestations it takes in Brazil, China and India, beyond the more frequently mobilised (Western) assumptions of civil society as a separate political and social sphere, and hence autonomous societal groups that would take on the state and/or companies. Additionally, any time, space and context-sensitive analysis on SSC-related social mobilisation dynamics should acknowledge the diversity of state-society relations across the three countries due to variations in political regimes and historical sociopolitical trajectories (see Waisbich 2021c) and the always-evolving state-society relations (both in terms of shirking and opening of civic spaces) in all three countries.[v]

Finally, it also important to recognise the limitations of (primarily/exclusively) tracing 'organised' civil society activism *in* Brazil, China and India, which is by no means exhaustive of the variety of contentious politics in and around SSC. Alternative forms of citizen contestation include social mobilisation led or driven by African stakeholders and taking place in Africa (see, for example, Chichava and Alden 2017; Shipton and Dauvergne 2021; Kilaka in this volume)[vi]. It also includes manifestations of popular citizenship politics in Brazil, China and India, such as citizens' online activism (for a discussing on online activism in China, see Ma 2019; Waisbich forthcoming).

Once said that the chapter offers three main contributions. First, it highlights the centrality of rising powers-Africa relations to SSC-related social mobilisation inside Brazil, China and India. It argues that in-country and cross-regional mobilisation have been stronger in dimensions of Brazil, China and India 'SSC portfolio' related to development finance for infrastructure building in frontiers zones in Africa (see Hönke et al. in this volume), which includes the role of Southern-led national and multilateral development banks, extractive industries and South-South agricultural cooperation. In the case of China, activism has also largely revolved around the environment-development nexus of China's global footprint. Second, the chapter argues that while some particularly contentious development cooperation initiatives have generated cross-regional campaigns that connected civil society groups from Brazil, China and/or India to peers in other Global South countries, notably in Africa, intense mobilisation has taken place at the policy-level, at home.

Third, the chapter shows how civil society groups adopted a continuum of 'insider-outsider' mobilisation strategies and 'collaboration-confrontation' modes of engagement with national 'SSC bureaucracies' and implementing actors (public entities and public/private companies) while having to reinvent strategies to engage Southern powers in the terms of their SSC initiatives.

In the coming sections I first discuss the emergence of 'SSC monitoring movements' in Brazil, China and India. Next, I provide a comparative analysis of the main mobilisation dynamics across the three countries in and around development cooperation in Africa. In the concluding section, I locate these instances of pro-accountability mobilisation in the context of SSC inside Brazil, China and India as part of broader discussions around participating in foreign policymaking and shaping rising powers-Africa relations in the 21st century.

## The 'SSC boom' and the rise of SSC monitoring movements

SSC has gained in political, material and symbolic importance in the last two decades (Gu, Shankland, and Chenoy 2016; Mawdsley 2012). This expanded role has, at the same time, generated new forms of development cooperation politics and new social expectations (from domestic and foreign constituencies) on the so-called 'Southern providers', particularly the larger ones like Brazil, China and India (see this volume introductory chapter).

As widely discussed in the accountability literature, negotiations between states and citizens over rights and/or entitlements to accountability reflect broader constructions of citizenship and the always evolving agreements on the contours of the social contract in a particular time and space (Grant and Keohane 2005; Hickey and King 2016). Development cooperation, and foreign policy more broadly, are policy fields with their own citizenship dynamics, their own forms of negotiated entitlements to explanations, justifications or redress, and their own expectations of 'good', 'just' and/or 'appropriate' state behaviour (Eyben and Ferguson 2004; Hill 2003; Waisbich 2021a). How these rights, entitlements and expectations are currently being built in the context of SSC, reflects a series of confounded dynamics. First, the disputed and incomplete institutionalisation of SSC in most Southern providers, including Brazil, China and India (Waisbich and Mawdsley 2022). Second, the uneven and contested nature of development in these Southern providers and the interconnectedness between social expectations on the state role in promoting development at home and abroad (van der Westhuizen and Milani 2019; Waisbich 2021a). Third, the nature and practices of interaction between actors within rising powers (including governments, civil society and businesses) and actors (governmental and non-governmental alike) elsewhere in the global South (see Hönke et al. in this volume).

In the early days of SSC (re-)emergence, in the early 2000s, rising powers' global development ambitious received strong support from several domestic constituencies: from domestic businesses to rights-based and development groups (Mawdsley and Roychoudhury 2016; Shipton and Dauvergne 2021). Many CSOs hoped rising powers' diplomatic rhetoric to reform global governance would (or could) bring about greater 'justice among states' but also 'justice within states' (Mawdsley 2014). They also expected Southern-led development cooperation to be different (and better) than traditional North-South development aid. As official SSC engagements increased, however, tensions and contradictions became more visible and civil society groups adopted more critical engagement with, when not open resistance to, official Southern-led development cooperation initiatives.

Throughout the 2010s, social mobilisation in and around SSC expanded as civil society groups based in (or working on) Southern powerhouses came together – in more or less formal national and transnational networks – to shape the policy-institutional frameworks for managing and delivering SSC, influence SSC initiatives on the ground, and participate in policy debates around development cooperation and foreign policy (Pomeroy et al. 2016; Waisbich, Pomeroy, and Leite 2021). *SSC monitoring movements*, as I label them, emerged as key actors in demanding accountability from major Southern providers in their engagements with other Southern countries, in particular in Africa. They did so by building – to employ a notion widely used in participatory studies – 'spaces for participation' (Gaventa 2006) and spaces for contestation of SSC policies and projects at the national and transnational levels. These spaces had to be crafted both emulating and departing from existing mobilisation and participation repertoires found in the so-called 'North-South cooperation'.

*From 'aid monitoring movements' to 'SSC monitoring movements'*

Social mobilisation in 'traditional/Northern donor' countries, often in partnership with groups in 'Southern/recipient' countries, has been an integral part of the development cooperation landscape since the 1990s. Social mobilisation challenged the purposes and impacts of North-South development aid, contested projects negatively impacting on the lives and livelihoods of local populations and championed greater transparency (in particular budgetary transparency) in the sector through the use of information technologies and information politics as a tactic (Fox 2020; Jensen and Winthereik 2013; Rosemary McGee 2013). In most Northern/Western aid donors, spaces for participation were crafted along the intertwined policy realms of foreign policy and development assistance, usually gravitating towards the latter. Indeed, throughout the 20th century, development assistance grew as an autonomous policy field within these countries with specialised 'aid bureaucracies' (Lancaster 2007). Despite the recent wave of institutional changes and mergers of foreign relations and development cooperation bureaucracies in countries like Australia, Canada, and the United Kingdom, civil society international development accountability-related mobilisation in most Northern donors is still largely shaped by somewhat aid-specific policy dynamics.

There are well-defined aid-related budgets, programmes and institutions and even aid-specific accountability mechanisms, such as the UK Independent Commission for Aid Impact, Japan's NGO-JICA Desk, the World Bank Inspection Panel and beyond.

In this context, pro-accountability social mobilisation within aid donors has often revolved around three major understandings of donorship-related state duties and responsibilities. First, domestic accountability to taxpayers in donor countries for spending in development abroad. Second, international accountability to global non-binding commitments donor countries agreed on, notably the 0.7 % ODA/GNI target. Third, legal and para-legal responsibility for 'doing-no-harm' and eventually redressing socio-environmental damages and misconducts incurring from development projects abroad.[vii] Mobilisation and participation dynamics in large SSC providers exhibits, nonetheless, its own set of underpinning logics. CSOs based in rising powers had to develop their own ways to engage Southern providers in the particularities of their (re)emerging global developmental roles, as discussed next.

## Monitoring rising powers' global development footprint in Africa

An important feature of SSC monitoring movements is the interconnectedness between foreign policy and SSC in the context of major Southern providers, like Brazil, China and India, engagement in Africa. Networks of activists across Brazil, China and India have joined existing global 'aid monitoring groups' and used the political opportunities provided by transnational networks (Keck and Sikkink 1998; Tarrow 2005) to boost SSC/foreign policy-related advocacy at home and in partner countries. Africa has been a major site for this transnational activism. The African continent not only harbours an ever-expanding multidimensional presence of rising powers (Alden 2019; Moyo, Jha, and Yeros 2019; also Hönke et al. in this volume) but is also the quintessential site of attention and concern for many in the international development community (Roy and Crane 2015).

During the early 2000s, CSOs from Brazil and India (and to a lesser extent from China) have actively participated in global 'Aid Effectiveness' debates alongside many others in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Around the same time, some organisations also turned to monitoring their countries' own foreign and development engagements abroad. Their activism benefitted from a surge in global attention (and even obsession with) BRICS countries (Zarakol 2019; Zoccal and Esteves 2018) and with the (potential and actual) negative impacts of BRICS-led major infrastructural development projects in countries and communities elsewhere in the Global South (Mohan 2014; Moyo, Jha, and Yeros 2019). In countries like Brazil, monitoring development cooperation and its negative impacts in the region and in Africa also fed into growing civil society mobilisation around 'democratising foreign policymaking' (Cabral and Leite 2015). Activism, therefore, revolved around foreign policy (and Brazil-Africa relations) as much as around development and development cooperation *per se* (Waisbich 2021b).

*Debunking SSC myths: transparency, accountability and participation claims*

Social mobilisation by CSOs in Brazil, China and India monitoring their countries' official development engagements in other Southern countries combined transparency, accountability and participation claims. Demands for transparency have been a central tactical 'rally point' (Gheyle and Ville 2017) and sometimes even 'the lowest hanging fruit' for advocacy in and around rising powers-led development cooperation. The lack of transparency and participation of the Mozambican communities affected by the triangular agricultural development programme ProSavana (jointly implemented by Brazil and Japan in Northern Mozambique) (see Sambo and Bussler in this volume) were major issues for the 'No to Pro Savana' transnational campaign from the start. Civil society groups from Brazil, Japan and Mozambique denounced, for instance, the absence of official communication on the project to local communities in Nampula and the mismatch between the information publicly available and what was being shared with potential investors (Shankland and Gonçalves 2016). Transparency claims were used not only to support civil society claims (in the three countries) around a right to participate in project design but also to dispute the meaning of South-South and triangular agricultural cooperation. Mobilisation over project transparency reinforced civil society contestation of ProSavana's overall agricultural transformation model, based on concerns with land displacement and resettlements.[viii] Advocating for greater transparency was equally important for activists as a discursive tool to unveil and challenge a perceived 'state-capital nexus' driving the project and Brazilian SSC more broadly (Durán and Chichava 2017; Funada-Classen 2019). By doing so, anti-ProSavana mobilisation echoed global debates on agricultural development opposing smallholders/family farming and agribusiness on both sides of the Atlantic, as well as on land-grabbing and the Green Revolution in Africa (Milhorance and Bursztyn 2017; Shankland and Gonçalves 2016).

Transparency was also a major entry point in the case of mobilisation related to national and multilateral Southern-led development banks. Brazilian and Indian groups exhorted national public banks, such as Brazil's National Development Bank (BNDES) and India's Exim Bank, to abide by the highest transparency and socio-environmental standards when using export credit tools to assist national companies in exporting services and implementing projects abroad (Sierra and Hochstetler 2017).[ix] Another example of transparency-based advocacy is found in civil society efforts to influence the Shanghai-based BRICS-led New Development Bank (NDB). NDB's overall transparency (i.e., disclosure policies and public availability of project documents) was perceived by civil society watchdogs as a priority.[x] Transparency was both a goal in itself and a prerequisite for CSOs to be able to influence and participate in NDB's decision-making processes during its set-up phase and first operational cycle (2016-2020). Fighting for greater transparency was strategic to activists in order to open-up dialogue with NDB since its inception while waiting for projects to be actually implemented on the ground (Waisbich 2021a). It was also a necessary entry-door for

CSOs to initiate the dialogue and enable other procedural and substantial issues, including participation in decision-making and negative impacts of NDB-funded projects on local communities, to emerge.

Activists have, moreover, denounced what they saw as SSC-specific transparency politics. In Brazil, the non-monetary/non-grant nature of SSC technical cooperation exchanges made SSC almost invisible in national policy debates and budgets and thus very hard to track (Lopes and Costa 2018). Along similar lines, in India, the economic and trade-based South-South exchanges (conceived to foster the internationalisation of national companies and services) were deemed not easy to discern and account for (Mitra 2018).

Overall, the ways the transparency issue has been framed and claimed in the context of SSC, particularly for Brazilian and Indian organisations, has revolved not only around classic budgetary concerns with 'taxpayers' money being spent abroad' but also around a 'right-to-know' and a 'right-to-participate' in (foreign/SSC) policymaking. Such approach to transparency relates to the very nature of SSC as a policy field in these countries, which is not necessarily perceived by domestic constituencies as 'taxpayer-funded grants to beneficiaries abroad' as in the classic aid model. The reasons for that are many fold: first, the invisibility of SSC in domestic politics in the three countries; second, the prevalent official 'mutual development'/'win-win cooperation' narratives underpinning South-South exchanges; and, third, the lack of internationally agreed upon financial obligation from 'Southern providers' towards meeting global poverty alleviation targets (Bracho 2017).

As for participation claims, the very notion of participation in the context of SSC exchanges encompasses several distinct country-specific expectations on state-society relations and civil society practices. Hence participation in SSC has been claimed and negotiated differently both across the different countries and within countries depending on the nature of the issue or the civil society coalition. While civil society demands to act as implementers of official SSC projects and initiatives on the ground, including in Africa, were present in the three countries (Waisbich, Pomeroy, and Leite 2021), claims to participate in policymaking were more visible in Brazil and India, though these are equally growing within China. In campaigns against Brazil's ProSavana Programme, Brazilian giant mining company Vale's mining operations in Mozambique or the China-funded Lamu coal-power plant and port in Kenya, participation in policymaking meant having local communities 'in the other Southern country' being consulted about and having a say on initiatives immediately affecting their lives and livelihoods (Cezne 2019; Lesutis 2019; Njunge 2019; Shankland and Gonçalves 2016. See also Kilaka's, and Sambo and Bussler's chapters in this volume). In others it meant having a seat at high-level policymaking tables, such as in the case of the NDB (Waisbich 2021a).

Different conceptions of participation and different perceptions about the normative and strategic value of institutionalised participation (in other words, of seating at the table with 'SSC bureaucracies' and

policymakers) impacted on the tactics and repertoires employed. Brazilian and Indian CSOs adopted what Mdlalose and Thompson (2018) termed 'tree shakers and jam makers' mobilisation strategies and carved, not without tensions, both (insider) institutionalised spaces for dialogue with those in charge of SSC initiatives and (outsider) autonomous spaces for contesting when not resisting them. Chinese organisations, on the other hand, have mainly adopted an insider and largely non-confrontational approach, along the lines of the 'embedded activism' (Ho 2007), to carefully foster a space for their (critical) participation on perceived safe(r) issues such as the ever-growing 'green agenda' in China's international relations (Waisbich forthcoming).

India is the country where civil society organisations have secured the most formalised space for participation. In 2013, the Indian Ministry of External Affairs through its affiliated think tank Research Information System for Developing Countries (RIS) created the Indian Forum for International Development Cooperation (FIDC). The Forum came to existence a year after the set-up of India's development agency, the MEA-affiliated Development Partnership Administration. FIDC works since as an 'invited space' (Gaventa 2006), hosted by RIS, that gathers key-representatives of the Indian MEA and of a selected group of CSOs representatives and academics.[xi] While some of FIDC participants recognise it as a unique space (or rather 'socio-state interface'[xii]) in a context where social participation has become more challenging, others believe the space remains limited and controlled.[xiii] Other development experts in Indian civil society believe the Forum is somewhat co-opted and insufficiently radical. They believe FIDC is 'too civil', 'too civilised', alluding to other formal governmental-led participation processes, like the C20 (at the G20) or the Civil BRICS (at BRICS Summits).[xiv] Such critique echoes Chatterjee's (2004, 33) own seminal characterisation of 'civil society' as 'sanitized and palatable' forms of participation in the Indian context, as opposed to other popular forms of mobilisation in what he calls 'political society'. Another critique by outsiders is that FIDC lacks representativeness, as it remains very elite-dominated and reproduces engrained gender and caste dynamics found elsewhere in Indian politics.[xv]

Such multi-layered views on FIDC and its value as a participation space illustrate even deeper divisions within the already small group of CSOs monitoring Indian global development role (Mawdsley and Roychoudhury 2016). Diversity in terms of political views and tactics mirror, on the one hand, the plurality of voices and conceptions of development, development cooperation and social participation in India. On the other, divisions were also reflective of evolving political views on whether and how to engage the Indian state under Narendra Modi's BJP rule. Altogether, divisions hindered the creation of a larger SSC monitoring movement in India. Organisations like Oxfam India, Action Aid India, VANI, PRIA (as well as informal coalitions like the BRICS Feminist Watch and the People's Forum on BRICS) became leading voices on matters related to India's development cooperation during the second half of the 2010s. They were active mobilising at the policy-level during the 2015 India-Africa Forum Summit and also in the context of particular projects, such as the Indian agricultural investments in Ethiopia (Chenoy and Joshi

2016; Mawdsley and Roychoudhury 2016). Since then, however, citizen engagement seems to be fading away. Demobilisation is a result of a combination of factors, including a slowdown in India's official development finance and cooperation since 2017 (as discussed in the introduction to this volume), growing domestic social turmoil and pressure over the voluntary sector under Modi's second term (Chacko 2018), and shrinking international funding for Indian groups to work on and watchdog 'Global India'. All together these factors contribute to further rendering invisible India's development cooperation footprint in Africa among national groups already overburden with domestic developmental issues.

In Brazil, the coalition monitoring SSC has secured less institutionalised spaces for participation but encompassed a wider range of actors and networks (professionalised NGOs, critical academics, social movements, labour unions and/or foundations) tracking different dimensions of 'Global Brazil': multinationals in the extractive industry, agribusinesses, foreign policy and the internationalisation of state social policies and their bureaucracies (Waisbich 2021b). For most of the 2010s, these groups self-identified as a coalition of 'progressive social voices' and acted along the dual-line of 'critical collaboration' and 'contestation' (Waisbich, Pomeroy, and Leite 2021). As critical collaborators, activists worked for certain policy issues and policy instruments to be included in Brazilian SSC cooperation (Milhorance and Bursztyn 2017) and partnered with state institutions (including the Brazilian Cooperation Agency, the Brazilian National Development Bank and certain line-ministries) to design, implement and evaluate SSC initiatives. Such 'insider-like' forms of mobilisation had an impact on SSC accountability dynamics in Brazil, as they helped forging and/or strengthening incipient transparency and accountability mechanisms, including official quantification and reporting tools such as the COBRADI report or *ad hoc* external evaluations of South-South cooperation initiatives.[xvi] As for 'outsider-like' forms of mobilisation, they included open contestation, 'naming and shaming', and resistance repertoires, like the 'No to ProSavana' or the 'Affected by Vale' campaigns in Mozambique (Cezne 2019; Durán and Chichava 2017). Just like in India, activism on international issues, including on the Brazil-Africa agenda, also decreased considerably since 2016, mirroring the retreat of Brazil's official SSC and a growing sense of urgency, among CSOs, to look and work domestically (Waisbich 2021b).

The breadth and diversity of Brazilian civil society engagement with SSC finds no parallel in the other two countries. It also strongly contrasts with the dynamics in China, where a fairly small group of development and environmental CSOs, China-based INGOs, think tanks and independent journalists have been carving spaces for participation around China's *Going Out* and its developmental and environmental initiatives and impacts. Unlike Brazil and India, the trend since the mid-2010s for China-based organisation seems to be upwards. There is a growing demand by Chinese NGOs, such as China Foundation for Poverty Alleviation, to act as implementers of state projects (Hsu, Hildebrandt and Hasmath 2016; Qiang 2019). Besides acting inside China, the Foundation currently works in a few countries in Asia and Africa, such as Ethiopia and Uganda.

There are also more and more organisations willing to monitor and participate in 'Global China' policymaking, including in the context of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Chinese and China-based organisations (like the Beijing-based Greenovation: Hub, the International Institute for Green Finance, World Resource Institute China and WWF China) have, for instance, secured a place at Green Belt and Road initiative, launched by the Chinese government in 2019. This multi-partner initiative, which includes United Nations agencies, academic institutes in China and from overseas, businesses and other partners such as the German development cooperation agency GIZ, aims at achieving green development in the context of BRI investments and assisting BRI countries in integrating SDGs-related environment and development concerns into their BRI-related connectivity projects. So far most of the BRI-related engagements are still fairly policy related and largely concentrated in Chinese/China-based think thanks and research centres. An example is the recently launched Green Development Guidance for BRI Projects (from 2021).[xvii] Yet, this could potentially evolve to project monitoring on the ground, including in Africa, in case there is appetite for this kind of role among China-based and/or Africa-based organisations.

While certainly growing, mobilisation in and around China's SSC initiatives has its own particular dynamics and challenges. Contrasting with Brazil and India, social mobilisation in China was not openly framed as a 'right-to-scrutinise' China's international development, to demand state officials to explain policy choices, to participate in foreign policy-related decisions, or to openly dissent. Rather, and following the 'embedded activism' paradigm, organisations took longer to mobilise and are cautiously doing so by acting closer to the state and framing their role as civic partners helping Chinese state institutions and companies to 'improve' their international development engagements, making then greener and eventually more responsive to local communities' needs (Waisbich forthcoming).

Chinese organisations are late comers to BRICS/NDB issues and have so far adopted a very low-profile. This is visible inside the Coalition for Human Rights in Development, in the context of the NDB advocacy, but also in the fact that groups in China have had a very limited participation in BRICS-related grassroots mobilisation by networks of activists under the loose umbrellas of the BRICS-from-below or the People's Forum on BRICS. This is not unique to BRICS-related dynamics, as China-based NGOs have been largely absent from major solidarity campaigns taking place in other developing countries in Asia or Africa against China-led or China-funded initiatives, notably in the extractive sector (Shipton and Dauvergne 2021; Yeophantong 2020). Whether this is due to lack of interest or capacity (including political constrains and language barriers), the truth is that without Chinese organisations transnational advocacy coalitions will most probably struggle to navigate Chinese institutions and actors on the ground and back in China, limiting the potential of campaigns for policy and project change (Shieh 2022; Waisbich forthcoming).

Against all the odds, however, organisations in China have shown growing appetite to craft politically safe ways to mobilise around Chinese overseas investments in recent years, notably within China. China's new international development cooperation agency (CIDCA) might also facilitate this dialogue with certain civil society groups in China in the years ahead, creating a single focal point for organisations to engage with.

*Politicising SSC 'from below' and the challenges of speaking 'from within'*

How to make sense of more than a decade of mobilisation by SSC monitoring movements in rising powers like Brazil, China and India and what it can offer as insights of (critical) engagement dynamics both at home and on the ground, alongside African peers?

Despite the many practical challenges faced by monitoring movements to track SSC initiatives on the ground and forge dialogue spaces at home, an important achievement of SSC monitoring movements so far has been at the level of discursive politics. In other words, changing the agenda and the terms of the debate around SSC, notably at home. As mentioned before, pressure groups in rising powers have joined others critical voices inside 'SSC champions' to debunk some of SSC official myths (Aneja 2018; Bergamaschi, Moore, and Tickner 2017). While doing so they brought politics back to SSC: 'from within' and 'from below', evoking a way of being in the world differently and doing SSC differently (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Daley 2019; Yeophantong 2020).

Activism by CSOs based in rising powers, alongside partners in other Southern countries and beyond, brought to the forefront challenges to policymakers of 'whose demands count' in the South-South partnership, exposing tensions, factures and inconsistencies in official SSC 'win-win' framings. In many ways, civil society-led campaigns and advocacy efforts exposed the limits of what Rottenburg (2009) calls the 'official script' that, in the case of Southern providers, equated the differential nature of SSC vis-à-vis ODA with its alleged benign effects on the ground. Particularly in Africa, civil society mobilisation made visible the tensions between official South-South narratives around 'horizontality' and 'transferability' and their practical translations on the ground. It also openly questioned rising powers' own domestic and exported developmental models, be that export-led agricultural transformation or coal-based energy development. (Shankland and Gonçalves 2016; Waisbich, Pomeroy, and Leite 2021; Shieh 2022)

Social mobilisation revealed, moreover, a range of unfolding domestic social justice battles and their connection to persistent forms of national and global inequalities. Acting on SSC and forging ties with African-based stakeholders allowed, for certain domestic issues (such as land dispossession or state and business-driven environmental degradation) to be rendered global and for actors based across the North-South divide to generate common forms of resistance. Challenging SSC socio-economic and environmental

footprint was therefore seen as part of an interconnected discussion between development and dispossession at home and abroad in different countries of the Global South.

This became visible across different mobilisation instances in the 2010s regarding specific projects (be that Brazil-sponsored agricultural and mining activities in Mozambique or India-Ethiopia agricultural partnerships) or regarding infrastructure projects funded by Southern-led development finance institutions (including national and multilateral development banks like BNDES, India Exim Bank, China Exim Bank, the BRICS-led NDB, and the China-initiated Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank - AIIB). In all those cases, social mobilisation helped creating a discursive and symbolic bridges between groups self-identified as 'those who loose' from large infrastructure developmental processes in both rising powers and Africa, as many activists in Brazil, China and India had experienced (or still experience) similar projects at home (Huber and Joshi 2015; Hochstetler 2016; Cezne 2019; Atkins 2019).

When bringing to the forefront the voices of those 'negatively affected' by certain South-South initiatives, activists asked for 'democratic ownership' of SSC, discursively countering state-centred understandings of 'national ownership' in development cooperation. They did so by positioning themselves in global development debates as critics of both North-South and South-South cooperation. Rather than solely mimicking existing 'aid accountability' framings, repertoires and tools, Southern-based CSOs acting transnationally have generated their own forms of SSC accountability politics.

While their pro-accountability mobilisation generated new dynamics within existing global advocacy networks and new ways to think about accountability in development cooperation, their activism was inescapably shaped by specific power dynamics and dilemmas of speaking 'from within'. Southern activists found themselves having to navigate what they thought were fair political claims about the 'differential' and 'transformative' role of rising powers-led development initiatives (vis-à-vis 'traditional aid') and the deviations, found on the ground, from what they believed to be 'good' development cooperation practice or even universal social justice values.

From a mobilisation tactics point of view, it also meant having to reinvent their own 'theories of change'. Activists had, for instance, to find ways to discuss (international) public responsibilities that would resonate with how rising powers conceive their roles and identities in global development. This can be observed in the case of Southern-led development banks lending and/or operating abroad. There, civil society watchdogs – who had historically criticised the World Bank's 'weak' or 'tokenistic' socio-environmental safeguard system – end up finding themselves taking these safeguards as a benchmark. Indeed, they started to look at existing safeguards systems as a minimum-denominator of existing international standards the new Southern-led multilateral banks should adhere to. This included making project documents available, setting-up civil society liaison focal points and consultation procedures, adopting socio-environmental

frameworks and operational safeguards to ensure 'doing-no-harm', and creating independent accountability mechanisms where affected groups could file complaints and seek redress.[xviii]

Besides having to negotiate standards and responsibilities, another set of practical challenges relate to the always evolving, and still very much under consolidation, nature of the policy realm of development cooperation inside large Southern providers like Brazil, China and India. Such policy field in-the-making not only creates obstacles for CSOs to forge spaces to engage (and question) state policies and actions but also hinders their ability to use strategic communication. Mobilising the media or general public opinion on SSC-related issues is rather complex as these initiatives are often not perceived as relevant enough, or worst: a waste of public resources when there is still great amount of poverty and inequality at home.[xix]

Not unrelatedly, mobilisation around SSC remained limited to specific sections of civil society, which already worked internationally or on international affairs, and to specific issues that fluctuated across the years (Waisbich, Pomeroy, and Leite 2021). While civil society groups in *Aidland* have developed over the decades a clearer self-identified identity and resources to work as 'aid watchdogs', national CSOs mobilising around SSC issues (knowledge groups, development and environmental NGOs, rights groups, labour unions, social movements and representatives of 'affected communities') not necessarily self-identified as 'SSC monitoring movements' or had the means (including human and financial resources) to institutionalise a work stream around SSC or relations with Africa. Whereas the more professionalised national groups within rising powers were able to secure funds with existing thematic transnational networks (not uncommonly Northern-led/Northern-funded networks and foundations) to sustain some kind of advocacy work, to watchdog the BRICS countries or their development banks footprint (notably in Africa), others only participated in fewer instances. Their engagement was, hence, limited to few issues and instances: BRICS Summits and other high-level summits with African head-of-states (e.g., China-Africa FOCAC or the India-Africa Summit); Southern-led international financial institutions (e.g., the BRICS-led NDB or the China-led AIIB); or project-specific transnational campaigns (e.g., the 'No to ProSavana Campaign' in Mozambique and the campaign against Indian agricultural investments in Ethiopia).

Mobilisation around SSC also failed to involve and consolidate stronger and lasting transnational linkages with groups based 'in the other Southern partner'. Not only there have been few sustained joint campaigns but also Africa-based civil society voices were rarely present in domestic policy debates and in autonomous civil society spaces within Brazil, China and India. The ties between Brazilians and Mozambican organisations were perhaps the major exception to this during the 2010s and even there have been power imbalances and problematic assumptions about shared struggles and aspirations (Cabral and Leite 2015; Chichava and Alden 2017), including a somewhat patronising approach of 'activist coaching' along the lines of 'we need to teach them' how to contest.

A last element of the challenges to re-invent 'theories of change' includes funding for monitoring movements in working in/on Brazil, China and India. Southern-based CSOs have decades of experience in participating in global debates, partnering with Northern donors and Northern-based CSOs, and navigating the implications of doing so. However, building SSC monitoring movements in the 2010s has generated its own set of politics. Brazil, China and India-based CSOs close connections to, and strong reliance on foreign funding from the traditional development apparatus created different degrees of governmental resistance and suspicion. Although Southern governments themselves received funds from industrialised countries to improve their development cooperation systems (see Waisbich 2021c), SSC monitoring movements (alleged) proximity to Northern/Western donors was often used to de-legitimise or curb social mobilisation. Governments challenged activists' ties to 'the North/West' in more or less open ways, as in the case of ProSavana or in the recently updated legal restrictions for non-for-profits to operate in India and China while receiving foreign funding. More than ever, over-dependence on Northern/Western funds and networks is now a hindrance for Southern-based groups. Hence the challenge to build domestic support for this kind of citizen oversight role within Brazil, China and India and to sustain this policy field in-the-making in the years ahead.

## Conclusion

This chapter discussed how civil society groups from Brazil, India and China sought to engage and contest official South-South cooperation initiatives in a rapidly growing policy field within rising powers. By revisiting a range of mobilisation instances by CSOs in and from Brazil, China and India in the last 10 to 15 years, the chapter shows that pro-accountability mobilisation on SSC initiatives taking place in Africa are inseparable from two sets of policy and political dynamics: mobilisation on foreign policy issues within rising powers and social disputes over 'development models', and over how rising powers share them with other countries in the South.

SSC-related civil society activism by groups based in Brazil, China and India brings to the forefront context-specific questions of social accountability and state-society relations in the context of global development cooperation policymaking in rising powers. Over the last decade, mobilisation has not only engaged with prevalent issues for traditional 'aid monitoring movements' (such as aid measurement, reporting, budgetary transparency, and development cooperation ownership by 'aid beneficiaries') but also contributed to politicising SSC 'from within and from below'. Rendering SSC problematic, from a national civil society point of view, meant questioning the very assumptions of 'horizontal' or 'win-win' cooperation embedded in official narratives around South-South relations, in general, and South-South development cooperation between rising powers and African counterparts, in particular.

These SSC monitoring movements, as I called them here, also represent emerging 'constituencies' for SSC in Brazil, China and India that carry their own inter-subjective perceptions of the growing sociopolitical and material effects of SSC initiatives inside rising powers. By unpacking the nature of social mobilisation, the chapter underscores that SSC pro-accountability mobilisation has not always grown out of clear shared expectations by citizens (in Brazil, China and India) of their governments fulfilling international development-related commitments or responsibilities (such as a duty to reduce global poverty or help least developed countries in Africa). Rather mobilisation happened out of a sense of social entitlement to engage with foreign policy priorities and impacts on the ground (notably in frontiers zones in Africa) and to shape the very content and contours of official development cooperation initiatives.

Looking at the issues of contention, I have suggested that certain SSC modalities have generated more contestation, enabled by the material and political visibility of particular SSC exchanges related to infrastructure building and agricultural development, and the role of Southern-led national and multilateral development banks in Africa. Salience in those cases was also due to the presence of transnational networks already mobilised around these very issues in Africa. Growing disputes around South-South development finance, particularly for infrastructure building, points to a direct link between the *materiality* of this form of South-South exchange and its national and global *political salience* (and significance) to a range of domestic and international stakeholders. Moreover, disputes related to South-South infrastructure building abroad, and notably in Africa, were not treated by rising powers-based civil society groups as stand-alone issues. Rather they fed into broader internal and global policy and public debates on the developmental state, private-public collusion and corruption, or on sustainable/green development models. Through different strategies, civil society organisation in Brazil, China and India have challenged overly optimistic 'win-win' narratives of Southern development finance being able to deliver 'much needed infrastructure' to Africa while also supporting key-economic actors or creating jobs inside rising powers. While modest in size and impact and not always capable to penetrate mainstream political and policy debates, these critiques 'from within' and 'from below', are already shaping the debates regarding several SSC initiatives and tend to grow in tandem with SSC own expansion.

At the same time, the chapter also shows variation across the three countries and within countries in mobilisation practices in and around SSC-accountability. The chapter highlights that mobilisation has occurred along a continuum of embedded or institutionalised collaboration and contentious politics, with Brazil and India landscapes being more internally diverse than the Chinese one in the ways different organisations self-identity and engage the state on SSC issues. Not all groups employed rights-based accountability language or self-identified as 'negatively affected' by projects. Rather some self-identified as watchdogs or (critical) partners. In India the most prevalent mode of engagement was the one of 'friendly critique', in Brazil of 'critical collaboration' and in China of 'constructive engagement'. In all three countries, however, there are several groups willing to partner with the state and SSC implementing actors to promote

accountability reforms, through what Fox and Brown (1998) once described as 'internal-external reformist alliances'. This meant, in all three cases, having to navigate the tensions of acting both through showing disagreement and dissent and, at the same time, acting as partners in 'improving' SSC institutions to consolidate the field domestically. This is the case of Brazilian think tanks and CSOs partnering with 'SSC bureaucracies' to improve their development cooperation sectoral policies and monitoring and evaluation frameworks. This is also the case of Indian organisations in FIDC or Chinese NGOs and think tanks working along policy banks and companies to improve socio-environmental regulations for overseas operations or partnering with the Chinese government to 'green BRI'.

Finally, this collection of social mobilisation instances in and around SSC provide a rich illustration of the unfolding politicisation and consolidation of this field in rising powers. Civil society mobilisation illustrates the socially contested nature of foreign policy in emerging powers and its intersections with current globalities, with more or less political space for national civil society groups to articulate their expectations and objections, and with particular national configurations that allow for certain disputes to be thought and fought and others not. What is more after having expanded in the early 2010s, based on a favourable set of conditions, including the attention devoted to SSC by 'traditional' donors and 'aid watchdogs' worried about the negative footprint of rising powers in Africa, SSC-related social mobilisation itself is going through its consolidation phase.

This brings a new set of challenges for SSC accountability mobilisation 'from below' from CSOs in rising powers in the years ahead. First, to sustain and expand mobilisation in times of change and uncertainty going beyond the professionalised development and rights-oriented NGOs and increasing the popular basis of domestic SSC-related debates. This is a key element for the continuity of SSC-related mobilisation in the years to come, as most CSOs within rising powers do not necessarily self-identify as 'SSC constituencies'. Rather they seem to advance identities and *modus operandi* of highly transnationalised social justice groups, which have encountered global Brazil, China and/or India acting in Africa as part of their work and will keep acting on and reimagining domestic and global justice simultaneously. Second, to connect with groups beyond borders 'negatively impacted/affected' by Brazil, China and India in a more sustained manner. This is particularly important for China-Africa relations, as Chinese presence in Africa is continuously expanding and ties between organisations remain insufficiently developed to be able to exert pressure and influence on both sides of the South-South cooperation equation, and to read and navigate China in an increasingly China-dominated SSC landscape.

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[ii] This category refers to the members of the Development Assistance Committee from the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD-DAC) and to the multilateral development finance institutions they led, such as the World Bank.
[iii] It draws largely on the author's doctoral research at the University of Cambridge (2017-2021). Empirical data centres on actors and dynamics within Southern powerhouses (notably Brazil, India and China). African perspectives were mostly sourced from documental and media reviews and a few additional interviews and ethnographic observations in South Africa, Mozambique and Ethiopia (see Waisbich 2021c). Parts of this research is published elsewhere and thus cited here, when appropriated.
[iv] A similar approach can be found in Fox and Brown (1998) and Newell and Wheeler (2006).
[v] Contemporary dynamics include a perceived 'de-democratisation' wave in Brazil and India and a more challenging environment for social mobilisation and dissent within both countries moving towards more 'illiberal democratic' configurations (Chacko 2018; Hunter and Power 2019). As for China, more recent configurations include both the expansion of public and social engagement on 'China in the world/China *Going Out*'-related affairs and non-for-profit groups expanding their own work beyond borders (Hsu, Hildebrandt, and Hasmath 2016; Qiang 2019), as well as renewed forms of state control of society under Xi Jinping (Kuhn 2018).
[vi] For a similar discussion in South East Asia, see Yeophantong (2020).
[vii] For a comprehensive discussion on the genesis of these conceptions of 'aid accountability' within *Aidland*, see Waisbich (2021c).
[viii] See Aguiar and Pacheco (2016).
[ix] See Chakrabarti and Bandyopadhyay (2017) and Conectas Direitos Humanos (2018).
[x] See Coalition for Human Rights in Development (2017).
[xi] For more on FIDC, see https://fidc.ris.org.in/
[xii] For the concept of 'state-society interface', see Pires and Vaz (2014).
[xiii] Interview with Indian development experts, working mostly for Delhi-based civil society organisations (2018-2019).
[xiv] The Civil BRICS, proposed and held for the first time by the Russian government in 2015, was set-up mirroring the 'civil-society track' or 'civil society summit' increasingly found in other intergovernmental processes like the C20 in the G20. For a discussion on the Civil BRICS and other autonomous civil society spaces related to BRICS, see Waisbich (2021a) and Bond and Garcia (2015).
[xv] Interview with Indian development experts, working mostly for Delhi-based civil society organisations (2018-2019).
[xvi] See Lopes and Costa (2018).
[xvii] On the Guidance, see Green Finance and Development Centre. 'News: International Roundtable on the Green Development Guidance for BRI Projects', Green BRI Centre, 24/05/2021. Retrieved at https://greenfdc.org/news-international-roundtable-on-the-green-development-guidance-for-bri-projects/ (last access: 10/06/2022).
[xviii] See Coalition for Human Rights in Development (2017, Kaushik (2018), NGO Forum on ADB (2015) and Sampaio (2019).
[xix] See United Nations Programme China (2017).