

# Interactive policymaking in development cooperation

Input of ICCO's regional councils in policy developments

## Master's Thesis

Lise Anna Maria Janson



# Interactive policymaking in development cooperation

Input of ICCO's regional councils in policy developments

## Master's Thesis

Author: Lise Anna Maria Janson

Student number: 3253805

Institution: Utrecht University

Department: Bestuurs- en organisatiewetenschap (USBO)

Master's program: Governance and Public Policy

Date, 24-09-2012

## Supervisors

### **Dr. Wieger E. Bakker**

Associate Professor at the Utrecht School of Governance  
Utrecht University, Department, Bestuurs- en Organisatiewetenschap

*First supervisor*

### **Dr. Femke A.W.J. van Esch**

Assistant Professor in European Integration at the Utrecht School of Governance  
Utrecht University, Department, Faculty of Law, Economics & Governance

*Second Supervisor*

## Preface

*“Ubuntu: I am a person because of other persons. My humanity is tied to your humanity.”*  
(South African saying)

Dear reader,

After six months focusing on courses related to Governance and Public Policy, I was able to direct my attention to another fascinating sector with my thesis: the development cooperation sector. A sector that is dealing with poverty, humanitarian crises and underdevelopment worldwide. At the same time a sector that is struggling with financial, political, social and cultural challenges. This struggle occurs in the work of organizations in developing countries, as well as in Northern countries where most organizations are based.

Numerous topics appealed to me for this study. I wanted to do a research at a development organization, a part of the research abroad and a topic that carried a true relevancy for the sector. The difficulty was to find a topic that was not too specific, nor too broad. To begin, I want to thank my supervisor, Wieger Bakker, for sharing my enthusiasm for the development sector and stimulating me to find the right focus. Moreover I want to thank him for understanding that, to use his words: ‘life goes on, also when you are writing a thesis.’

I am looking back at a challenging half year. This research broadened my perspective on the development sector and stimulated me to start my career. Wherever that start might be. The development cooperation sector, organizations that are rooted in this sector and people who are working in this sector are never done learning. Situations are always changing and are demanding diverse approaches. Completing my Master’s degree is also not an end station. It is rather the beginning of many more things to develop, learn and discover.

At this new start, I want to thank some people who supported me during my studies and during this thesis in particular.

- Wieger Bakker and Femke van Esch, the supervisors from the university, for asking critical questions and answering my questions.
- Margot Bolwerk, Mart Hovens and Jaap Kingma, the supervisors from ICCO, for their openness and support.
- Gerard en Jeanneke, my parents, for their unconditional interest, trust and support.
- Clayton, for stimulating me to pursue my ambitions.
- Fay, for sharing many *appelflappen*, frustrations and even more laughs.
- My friends, brothers and other family members, for listening, correcting my English and creating the needed distractions.
- Wouter en Stephanie, for welcoming me in South Africa and navigating me around.

Thank you.

Lise Anna Janson

24 September 2012

# Index

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>Preface</b>  | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>Summary</b>  | <b>7</b>  |
| Participation levels  | 8         |
| Concepts for successful interactive policymaking                                      | 8         |
| <b>1. Introduction</b>  | <b>9</b>  |
| 1.1 Demarcation   | 10        |
| 1.2 Objectives and relevancy  | 11        |
| 1.3 Outline   | 11        |
| <b>2. Using input of actors: development cooperation and interactive policymaking</b> | <b>12</b> |
| 2.1 The development cooperation sector  | 12        |
| 2.1.1 Trends  | 13        |
| 2.1.2 Motivation to use input of the South  | 14        |
| 2.1.3 Turning the ambition into practice  | 15        |
| 2.1.4 Buzzwords   | 16        |
| 2.2 Interactive policymaking  | 17        |
| Diversity   | 18        |
| Clarity   | 19        |
| Power   | 19        |
| 2.3 Participation levels  | 20        |
| 2.4 Developing a frame of reference   | 22        |
| Overview 1: Participation levels  | 22        |
| Overview 2: Criteria for successful interactive policymaking                          | 23        |
| <b>3. Research design</b>   | <b>25</b> |
| 3.1 ICCO as a single case study   | 26        |
| 3.2 Demarcation of case study   | 28        |
| 3.3 Use of different methods  | 28        |
| 3.3.1 Qualitative interviews  | 29        |
| 3.3.2 Document analysis   | 29        |
| 3.3.3 Analyzing findings  | 30        |

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| 3.4 Reflection on strategic choices                     | 30        |
| 3.5 Reliability and validity                            | 30        |
| <b>4. The regional councils' model</b>                  | <b>33</b> |
| 4.1 ICCO's ambition                                     | 33        |
| 4.1.2 Structure and roles and responsibilities          | 34        |
| 4.2 Participation level of the regional councils' model | 35        |
| 4.2.1 Participation levels                              | 36        |
| 4.3 Applying the frame of reference                     | 37        |
| 4.3.1 Criteria for successful interactive policymaking  | 38        |
| Diversity   | 38        |
| Clarity   | 38        |
| Power   | 39        |
| <b>5. Regional councils at work</b>                     | <b>40</b> |
| 5.1 Diversity   | 40        |
| 5.2 Clarity   | 42        |
| Position of regional council within structure of ICCO   | 42        |
| Roles and responsibilities                              | 44        |
| Involvement of participants                             | 44        |
| 5.3 Power   | 45        |
| Uncertainty about influence                             | 46        |
| Added value of regional councils                        | 48        |
| 5.4 Regional council Southern Africa at work            | 49        |
| 5.4.1 Diversity   | 49        |
| 5.4.2 Clarity   | 50        |
| Roles and responsibilities                              | 52        |
| Involvement of participants                             | 53        |
| 5.4.3 Power   | 55        |
| Uncertainty about influence                             | 56        |
| Added value of regional council Southern Africa         | 57        |
| 5.4.4 Highlights regional council Southern Africa       | 58        |
| 5.5 Participation level of regional councils at work    | 58        |
| 5.5.1 Participation levels                              | 59        |
| 5.6 Applying the frame of reference                     | 61        |

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| 5.6.1 Criteria for successful interactive policymaking | 61        |
| 5.7 Conclusion   | 62        |
| <b>6. Conclusions, Recommendations and Discussion</b>  | <b>64</b> |
| 6.1 Sub research questions                             | 64        |
| Criteria for successful interactive policymaking       | 66        |
| 6.2 Main research question                             | 67        |
| Participation levels                                   | 69        |
| Criteria for successful interactive policymaking       | 69        |
| 6.3 Recommendations                                    | 70        |
| Diversity  | 70        |
| Clarity  | 70        |
| Power  | 71        |
| 6.4 Discussion   | 72        |
| Interactive policymaking in development cooperation    | 73        |
| Buzzword   | 74        |
| Methodology  | 74        |
| Further research                                       | 75        |
| <b>References</b>                                      | <b>77</b> |
| <b>Attachments</b>                                     | <b>81</b> |
| 1. List of interviewees                                | 81        |
| 2. List of observations                                | 83        |

## Summary

The context of the development cooperation sector is rapidly changing. The traditional relations between the global North and the global South are disappearing. It is no longer possible to speak of the rich North, who gives aid to the poor South. Poverty and prosperity are not anymore captured by regional boundaries. This stresses the importance of a global responsibility to fight poverty, in which relationships between the North and the South are based upon equality and true cooperation.

A request for more involvement of the South in the work of Northern NGOs started to grow from the 1970s. Development organizations aim to get involvement of the South to create more legitimacy, accountability to their beneficiaries and to develop more context specific work. ICCO, a Dutch development organization, established regional councils to attain more involvement of the South in its policymaking. The regional councils are embedded in the concept of co-responsibility, in which the responsibility for policy and strategy development is shared between ICCO and the South. The regional councils are appointed by the organization as the South. They provide input on policy and strategy developments and give critical and objective advice. ICCO uses this input to create a better connection to the needs and wishes of the poor.

The following main research question is examined in this study:

### **How do ICCO's regional councils lead to input of the South in the policymaking of ICCO?**

The ambition to use input of other actors in policymaking processes is not exclusive for the development cooperation sector. The discipline of organizational and policy sciences gained useful experience and knowledge relating to this ambition. Especially the knowledge on interactive policymaking appeared to be comparable to ICCO's model of the regional councils. Both want to use input of other actors in their policymaking to create policies that can better fit the needs and wishes of beneficiaries. In this study, the knowledge on successful interactive policymaking is compared to the formal model and practical use of ICCO's regional councils. A frame of reference is developed that indicates three main concepts, diversity, clarity and power, and several related criteria that are needed to attain successful interactive policymaking. Successful interactive policymaking indicates that input of other actors is used in the policymaking process. Hence, examining if the criteria for successful interactive policymaking are visible within the regional councils, leads to answering if input of other actors, the South, is used in the policymaking of ICCO. In addition, theory on participation levels is used as an instrument to name the participation of the regional councils in the policymaking process of ICCO.

Examining both the formal model and practical use of the regional councils, made it possible to compare ICCO's ambition to how this ambition is implemented in practice. The participation levels of ICCO's formal model and practical use of the regional councils are summarized in a simplified overview on the next page. The overview thereafter summarizes to what extent the concepts regarding successful interactive policymaking are visible in ICCO's formal model and practical use of the regional councils.

## Participation levels

| Regional councils' model  | Regional councils at work  |
|---|--|
| Roles and responsibilities of participants are clearly indicated.   | Roles and responsibilities of participants are ambiguous.  |
| Regional councils interact, give input and discuss with authorities.  | Participants are mainly reactive and do not interact enough.   |
| Regional councils develop the agenda for the meeting together with the regional manager and the Executive Board.                                    | Regional councils are not involved with the development of the agenda.   |
| Regional councils do not have legal power, but ICCO follows the advice of the regional councils. If it is not able to do so, it has to explain why. | Regional councils do not have any power or resources to ensure that their input is used. They feel that their input is used, although they state that ICCO also decides on topics without their input. |
| Final decision-making remains with the Executive Board.   | Final decision-making remains with the Executive Board.  |

## Concepts for successful interactive policymaking

|                  | Regional councils' model | Regional councils at work |
|------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| <b>Diversity</b> | * Yes                    | * To a certain extent     |
| <b>Clarity</b>   | * Yes                    | * No                      |
| <b>Power</b>     | * To a certain extent    | * No                      |

The formal model of the regional councils indicates most of the main criteria for making interactive policymaking successful. The right diversity is created in the policymaking process; there is clarity on the roles, responsibilities and expectations of participants, and the outcomes of the process are clearly communicated to all participants; the criteria related to the concept of power are also sufficiently present. Participants do not have the resources to hold authorities accountable, but all preconditions for sincere participation are present. Participants are asked to give input, to interact, to be involved with the agenda setting and to give critical advice. In sum, ICCO's model has the capacities to lead to input of the South in its policymaking.

The practical use of the regional councils indicates difficulties with including the criteria for successful interactive policymaking. Not all criteria for a successful process are implemented in practice. It is complicated to create the right diversity; clarity is missing on the roles, responsibilities and expectations of participants, and on the outcomes of the process; the amount of power of participants seems to be less than the formal model indicates. Participants are requested to give advice and to give input on the agenda, but they do not sufficiently respond to this request. Therefore, the regional councils in practice show that it is not yet possible to attain input of the South in the policymaking of ICCO. This research indicated that if ICCO wants to obtain input of the South in its policymaking, it can improve the implementation of the model of the regional councils in practice. The model already includes the capacities to achieve input of other actors in the policymaking. The functioning of the regional councils can be optimized to truly attain input of the South in the policymaking of ICCO. By doing this, the ambition can be achieved to develop policies that are more context specific and better reach the needs and wishes of the poor and marginalized.



## 1. Introduction

*“The cash flow should no longer be decisive in development cooperation. It should be about knowledge, expertise, and strategy and about connecting and cooperating. It is too arrogant to think that we, in the Netherlands, know what is best for Sudan, Bolivia, or any other country. It is no longer possible to think that people in the North know what is needed in the South.”*

(Interview 1, 29-3-2012)

This quote is from a former advisor of the Executive Board of ICCO<sup>1</sup>, a Dutch development organization. It indicates that Northern Non-Governmental Organizations (hereafter: NGOs) argue for more equality in their relations with Southern actors. They state that sincere cooperation is needed with an emphasis on the Southern partners, because: *“They know best what they need”* (ICCO 2012a). Equal partnerships with Southern actors will provide legitimacy for the work of Northern NGOs, local ownership and in the end more effective development (ICCO 2012b; Elbers 2012:17-19). Literature on development aid confirms the need to obtain equal partnerships and true cooperation between Northern NGOs and Southern stakeholders. Elbers (2012:169), additionally, argues that the reality of development cooperation shows a different picture: *“(…) relations that in reality are top-down rather than bottom-up and characterized by conditionality instead of ownership, control rather than trust and dependence rather than autonomy.”* Northern NGOs argue that they want to create equal partnerships. Their behavior, however, has been under intense debate for failing to practice these principles in reality.

The development cooperation sector has been searching for years to find ways to involve the needs and wishes of beneficiaries in its policy development and decision-making. Bottom-up approaches, downwards accountability and South-South cooperation are just a glimpse of the concepts that development organizations are using. They want to use the expertise and knowledge of people who are living in developing countries. One of these concepts is named ‘co-responsibility’. This concept is developed by ICCO. This NGO uses this concept to give more influence to the South in its decision-making. It shares its responsibility to develop policies and strategies with regional councils by use of this concept. The regional councils are the most concrete interpretation of this concept of co-responsibility; they consist of people who are affiliated with the development sector and have specific regional expertise. They represent the South in ICCO’s concept and are established to give voice to the interests of the people ICCO is working for. With this representation ICCO aims to achieve more context specific aid that has a closer connection with the needs of people in the South.

The search from the development sector to involve beneficiaries more in its work is not new. The request to involve people from developing countries in the work of NGOs appeared in the 1970s (Potter et al. 2008:82-115). Moreover, the idea of including beneficiaries in policymaking processes is not exclusive to the development sector. This idea is used in other sectors as well. Governments invite citizens to interact in policymaking processes to find out what they need. Public service organizations do the same. The discipline of organizational and policy sciences developed multiple models to work with this concept, such as interactive decision-making, interactive policymaking, participatory democracies and citizen participation. These models are used by (western) governments and organizations and focus on interactive policymaking: they try to involve their target group in the development and decision-making of policies. Their objective is to develop policies that

---

<sup>1</sup> ICCO was originally an acronym for 'Interchurch Coordination Committee for Development Projects' (in Dutch: *Interkerkelijk Coördinerend Committee van Ontwikkelingssamenwerking*). Nowadays it is used as an

better fit the needs of beneficiaries. This objective that public organizations or governments pursue is comparable to the objective of development organizations. In addition, a comparable model is used in both sectors to envision this objective. Both want to use input from beneficiaries in their policymaking, to better reach the needs of their target group. Organizational and policy sciences developed extensive theoretical knowledge on this subject of interactive policymaking. Because of the similarities, it is interesting to examine how a certain model in the development sector is working in comparison with the knowledge of interactive policymaking. ICCO is an example of a development organization that works with the ambition of using input from beneficiaries in its policymaking. This ambition is framed in the concept of co-responsibility, in which the regional councils have a central role. This study examines ICCO's model of the regional councils and compares it with criteria for successful implementation of interactive policymaking. It examines how the regional councils achieve ICCO's objective of using input of the South in its policymaking.

The main research question of this study is:

**How do ICCO's regional councils lead to input of the South in the policymaking of ICCO?**

Sub research questions to answer this main research question are:

- How are ICCO's regional councils a form of interactive policymaking?
- What are criteria for successful interactive policymaking?
- How does the formal model of ICCO's regional councils meet the criteria for successful interactive policymaking?
- How do ICCO's regional councils meet the criteria in practice for successful interactive policymaking?

Examining how ICCO's regional councils can be seen as a form of interactive policymaking, leads to a better understanding of the model and how it can work in practice. The criteria for successful interactive policymaking provide a frame of reference to examine the formal model and the practice of the regional councils. ICCO's regional councils are a form of successful interactive policymaking when the criteria are found in this examination. Successful interactive policymaking indicates that input of other actors is used in policymaking processes. ICCO aims to obtain input of the South and appoints the regional councils as the South. Consequently, ICCO's regional councils lead to input of the South if the criteria for successful interactive policymaking are present in the formal model and practical use of the regional councils. Examining the sub research questions leads to answering the main research question: How do ICCO's regional councils lead to input of the South in the policymaking of ICCO?

## **1.1 Demarcation**

This study focuses on the organization ICCO and examines its model of the regional councils. The regional councils exist within ICCO's concept of co-responsibility. This concept can also be understood in cooperation with partners, in the decentralization, or in cooperation with ICCO's International Advisory Council. The focus of this study is solely on the regional councils. It examines how this model and its practice lead to input from the South in the policymaking of ICCO. The South is a general concept that is differently applied within the development sector. It can, amongst others, signify partner organizations that are based in the South, people who live in the South, or the beneficiaries of development aid. ICCO appoints the regional councils as the South in its concept of co-responsibility. These councils include people who live in the regions where ICCO works. Input of

the South signifies the use of the local knowledge and expertise of the regional councils. In that way, ICCO aims to obtain work that is more context specific and better fits the needs of the poor and marginalized. This study does not focus on policy implementation, the effect of policy decisions, or realization of policy designs. One regional council is central in this study and one meeting of this council is observed in detail to examine the practical use of ICCO's model.

## 1.2 Objectives and relevancy

ICCO's model of the regional councils is placed in the wider framework of general developments in the aid sector. The search from NGOs to attain more input from Southern partners in their policy developments is central in this part. Thereafter, the regional councils of ICCO are examined in comparison with models of interactive policymaking. It is studied how a development organization uses a model of involving beneficiaries in its policymaking. It is investigated how the formal model and practical use of ICCO's regional councils use the input of beneficiaries from the South in its policymaking. To sum up, this research examines the ambition of ICCO's regional councils, the theoretical groundings of this model and the functioning of this model in reality; it compares the formal model and its practice with theoretical groundings of this model.

Relations between the global South and the global North are rapidly changing due to globalization processes. It is easier to travel, to meet different cultures, and to see what is happening in the world. Poverty is no longer something that, only, happens in one part of the world. Poverty reduction and international cooperation ask for a global responsibility and require equal partnerships between the North and the South. The focus of this research is on the model of the Northern NGO, ICCO, to involve beneficiaries of the South in its policymaking. A new way to use our global responsibility and help others in need is examined. The ideal to involve Southern stakeholders in the work of Northern NGOs has been discussed theoretically since the 1970s. Still, it is not apparent how this can work in practice. The question arises in what form the regional councils of ICCO can achieve this ideal. The concept of co-responsibility and the model of the regional councils are new concepts in the development sector. They lack a general accepted definition so far. This research contributes to a better scientific understanding of this formal model and its functioning in practice.

## 1.3 Outline

In the following chapter ICCO's model of the regional councils is explained in the wider framework of the development cooperation sector. It is explained why this theme of giving input to beneficiaries is important and how the sector is working with it. The use of regional councils is linked in this chapter to interactive policymaking, and different participation levels are explained. The theoretical knowledge on interactive policymaking and participation form a frame of reference to examine the model of ICCO. The research design is described in chapter three and explains that this study makes use of qualitative methods. The single and embedded case study, observations, semi-structured interviews and document analysis are explained. In chapter four the empirical findings of the formal model of the regional councils are described. It is explained to what extent these findings meet the criteria for successful interactive policymaking. In chapter five the empirical findings of the regional councils in practice are described. It is explained to what extent these findings meet the criteria for successful interactive policymaking. The main conclusions, recommendations and discussion of this research are described in chapter six.

## 2. Using input of actors: development cooperation and interactive policymaking

*“It has always been really important for us to get advice from the South. A characteristic of a NGO like ICCO, (....) is that it sincerely wants to listen to voices of the South and to the interests of the poor. We have to do everything we can to reach this.”*

(Interview 13, 3-5-2012)

The quest for more involvement of the South and more equal relationships between the North and the South dates long back. Still, it is of great importance for NGOs to maintain legitimacy in their work (Edwards and Fowler 2002:1-11). The regional councils of ICCO are established to *give voice to the South* in its policymaking. To understand ICCO’s ambition, it is important to examine the ideals and ambitions of the development sector. It is examined why this sector aims to achieve more involvement of the South and how it tries to do that. ICCO’s regional councils are an example of how this ambition is turned into practice. Thereafter, the ambition of the development sector is compared to the ambition of interactive policymaking. The discipline of organizational and policy sciences provides knowledge on interactive policymaking. Important criteria to make interactive policymaking successful are explained. The similarities between interactive policymaking and ICCO’s regional councils are described. It is explained how the model of the regional councils has affinity with the ambitions and models of interactive policymaking. The theoretical knowledge from the organizational and policy sciences is used in this research to examine a model in the development sector. Criteria to make a make a model of interactive policymaking successful are used as a frame of reference to examine the formal model and practice of ICCO’s regional councils.

### 2.1 The development cooperation sector

NGOs and other civil organizations form the civil society and gained an increasingly important role in development processes (Potter et al 2008: 117-119; Allen and Thomas 2000:48). Bilateral aid<sup>2</sup> and multilateral aid<sup>3</sup> is complemented by aid from NGOs. The rise of this civil society (Edwards 2001:5-7; Fukuyama 2001:7-20), shapes a third sector next to the state and the market sector. It is independent from governments; it is stated to have a more direct connection with the poor than governments or business; and it strives for bottom-up approaches, local ownership, grassroots perspectives, equal power relations, empowerment and participation (Elbers 2012:121). This sector in the North aims to use more input of the South in its policymaking. Before describing this ambition, some general developments and important trends in the sectors are described. Thereafter, it is described why the sector wants to use more input of the South and how it tries to do that. The example of ICCO’s regional councils is explained in more detail.

The development sector in the Netherlands is changing rapidly. NGOs have to deal with major retrenchments and a declining trust of the public. They have to meet strict requirements to receive funding from the government’s system MFS II<sup>4</sup>. They are forced to work in the most effective way with planned, controlled, demonstrable and concrete outcomes (Elbers 2012:57-59; 120-140). On the

---

<sup>2</sup> Aid that is given from one state to another state.

<sup>3</sup> Aid provided by a group of countries, or by an institute that represents a group of countries, to one or more countries.

<sup>4</sup> In Dutch: medefinancieringsstelsel

other hand, people feel more connected to issues in developing countries and want to contribute with private initiatives. Global changes shed light on new relationships between the North and the South. It is no longer possible to speak of the rich North who will give aid to the poor South (WRR 2010:26; ICCO 2012c:3; Zoomers 2010:200). Poverty and prosperity are no longer captured by regional boundaries, but exist in countries in the South as well as in countries in the West, North and East. While the support for development cooperation in the North is declining, the knowledge and resources in the South are increasing. This changing context is stated to be an important reason for ICCO to start working with the regional councils (Interview 1, 29-3-2012, Interview 17, 17-5-2012, Interview 4, 16-4-2012, Interview 2, 12-4-2012). Development cooperation isn't a 'one size fits all protocol' with one way to reach your goals. Instead, organizations constantly have to explore the situation, the context, the needs and have to decide what kind of assistance should be given in a specific situation (Aerts 2011; Easterly 2006:3-36, 367-384). Easterly argues (2006:368): *"Discard your patronizing confidence that you know how to solve other people's problems better than they do."* He states that it is necessary to involve people from the South in the work of Northern NGOs to be able to achieve development.

### 2.1.1 Trends

Development cooperation is a dynamic sector. It has a constant flow of new ideas and theories on how to achieve development and deliver aid the best way possible. Older ideas and theories do not disappear with the rise of new insights; they rather coexist next to other ideas and approaches (Potter et al. 2008:81-83). Potter et al. (2008:4) explain the importance of ideologies of development: *"Development processes are influenced by development planning, and most plans are in turn shaped by development theories that ultimately reflect the way in which development is perceived."* Development cooperation started around the ending of World War II and evolved during the years into different approaches and ideologies. Potter et al. (2008:82-115) follow the framework of Potter and Lloyd-Evans (1998) and present four main approaches in the development sector:

1. The classical-traditional approach;
2. The historical-empirical approach;
3. The radical-political economy-dependency approach; and
4. The alternative and bottom-up approach.

Each approach articulates a specific ideological standpoint, but the approaches also combine and use common statements, theories and ideas. The classical-traditional approach focuses on neo-classical theories, economic development, capitalism and liberal democracy. It emphasizes the need for unrestrained, polarized growth. The market has to decide for itself, without interference of the state or other political, economic or social organizations. This approach is linked to the top-down paradigm of development since the 1950s. Countries should industrialize in order to develop. Strong urban and industrial facets will achieve self-sustained growth. This will create trickle down effects; eventually the poor will benefit as well from the developments at the top.

The historical-empirical approach focuses on experiences in development by observations and empirical studies. It pays attention to the colonial and pre-independence periods of countries. Learning from those experiences is emphasized to create descriptive models for development.

The radical-political economy-dependency approach occurred in the 1960s and 1970s. It focuses on socialist and environmentally oriented paradigms. It states that underdevelopment and development

are the result of the capitalist system. The condition of developing countries is caused by their introduction to the global capitalist system: underdevelopment in a country is provoked by development in another country. The biggest obstacles of development are rooted in the international division of labor, according to this approach. It states that it is needed to focus on global changes and the position of different countries or communities within this global system.

The alternative and bottom-up approach arose in the mid-1970s as a critique on the former top-down policies. It focuses on the needs and wishes of the people themselves and tries to obtain development for all. It aims to get improvements especially for poor people instead of economic growth for only a small group of people (Potter et al. 2008: 83-115; Allen and Thomas 2000:24-48). The economic growth that was promoted by other development approaches seemed to cause relative poverty, argues this approach. *“Development, it appeared, was failing to improve conditions for the poorest and weakest sectors of society”* (Potter et al. 2008:115).

Alternative and bottom-up approaches are one of the first signals that more involvement of the South is necessary in development cooperation. Bottom-up approaches emphasize the need for self-reliance and public participation in development cooperation. Successful aid is assumed only to be possible when it meets the needs of the poor (Zoomers in Schulpen 2001:53-74). Easterly (2006:369) emphasizes that it is necessary to focus particularly on the poor and their way of living. Local habits, knowledge of the context and existing theories should be central in development work. The focus on the South and the poor people emphasizes that people from developing countries know best what is needed in their country. Or as WRR (2010:246) quotes Easterly (2008): *“The ones most likely to save Africa are Africans themselves.”*

### **2.1.2 Motivation to use input of the South**

The development cooperation sector wants to use more input of the South in its policymaking for several reasons. It aims to create participatory development and local ownership, which is stated to create successful development. Development aid without participation, is stated to make people passive, unknowing and leaves them to be poor (Reijngoud 2009:48; 52-53; WRR 2010:152-153; Lopes and Theisohn 2003:xii; Molund 2000). More involvement of the South is meant to create new ideas that are more suitable to the context and are more capable of meeting specific needs of a region, country and of the poor (WRR 2010:144).

Development work includes several actors who are responsible for different aspects of the work. The work is rooted by trusteeship. One actor is entrusted to try to ensure the development of another actor. Normative questions surround the work of development agencies. The concern the moral justification, acceptance and legitimacy of one actor to act on behalf of another actor (Allen and Thomas 2000:40-41; 189-190; Atack 1998). Mosse (2011) states that many international development workers are not naturally well connected to the poor or specific local circumstances. The experience of a retired Malawian who was working among delegates of the World Bank highlights this: *“(...) being bewildered by their ‘lack of insight into local conditions (...)’* (Anders 2005:83-84 in Mosse 2011:6). It can be difficult for big international development organizations to be accountable to their beneficiaries. A great amount of their work is centered in offices and focused on paper work due to rules and regulations. They can lose a direct connection with the local context and the poor and marginalized; while accountability requires long term attention for the characteristics and the dynamics of the local context (Bakker 2010:4-5). A certain lack of accountability and



legitimacy arises when organizations do not have extensive contact with the poor. Banerjee and Duflo (2011:viii) state that it is important to pay more attention to the poor, and their specific conditions, to be able to achieve development: “(...) *we have to abandon the habit of reducing the poor to cartoon characters and take the time to really understand their lives (...)*”. Development organizations try to create legitimacy for their working processes, and local ownership of their programs, by making people the agents of their own development.

### 2.1.3 Turning the ambition into practice

The ambition to use more input of the South in the policymaking of Northern NGOs is theoretically discussed since the 1970s. It remains a challenge how this ambition can best be turned into practice. *The Voices of the Poor* of Narayan (1999) is a good example: it includes three books that focus on the poor and their experiences and wishes. More than 60.000 poor women and men are consulted for these books to create a complete image of their situation. The Dutch scientific council of government policy (hereafter: WRR) emphasizes the need to have more specific knowledge on developing countries. It states that the development sector is always looking for examples of effective development, although situations are never comparable. There is often a focus on western ideals, systems and models, while these are not naturally applicable in developing countries. Specific attention and research are needed in each situation. The WRR suggests that some sort of institution like the World Bank should be placed in the developing countries to develop local knowledge (WRR 2010:67;110;122;144). So far, this suggestion is not implemented. Zoomers (2001) adds that there has to come more attention for new ways to examine the needs of the poor.

Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (hereafter: PRSPs) are a way of the International Monetary Fund (hereafter: IMF) and the World Bank to get more involvement of people in developing countries. Countries have to write a PRSP before they can get funding from the World Bank or the IMF. PRSPs are intended to create more ownership and participation of people in developing countries. They should encourage countries to develop a poverty-focused strategy that is developed in close cooperation with the population. Creating participation, ownership and more equality in development cooperation encounters a lot of difficulties. The relationship between donor and beneficiary is in itself uneven; the beneficiary depends on the donor, which makes the relationship from the beginning unequal (WRR 2010:33 and Elbers 2012:78-97). Elbers (2012:48) states: “*The result is a power difference in which private aid agencies can do to their partners what their partners cannot do to them.*” The West is still the leading force with the use of PRSPs. Only papers that fulfill the criteria of the West are eligible for funding. The persons who have to make the documents will make sure that they have the outline that the western donors want to see. In addition, policymakers are often people of high standards who do not have a direct connection with the poor or the average citizens. NGOs are sometimes involved, but they have to react so fast that it is almost impossible for them to get in contact with their beneficiaries about the concerning topics. The PRSPs were a step towards using a question-based approach; towards a different balance between the givers and the takers. In practice this approach did not seem to work out well. The WRR (2010) explains that a question-based approach cannot work because there is a request for everything in a world where poverty exists. People are stated not to be capable of deciding what is best for them, simply because they do not know all the possibilities (Reijngoud 2009: 48-53). The WRR explains this with an example of the founder of Ford: ‘When you ask a cowboy what kind of vehicle he would think is best, he would always answer, a horse.’ (WRR 2010:151-152).

It is described in general how the development sector is trying to implement its ambition of using more input of the South in practice. Development organizations emphasize the importance of bottom-up approaches. The challenge of how to use these approaches in reality remains important as well. The regional councils of ICCO are one example of turning this ambition into practice. The first ideas about involving Southern stakeholders in the policymaking of ICCO were developed in the 1970s. It remained an important theme for the organization since then. In 2008, ICCO decided to change its organization structure to implement its ambition of using more input of Southern actors. 'ProCoDe' became the leading model. This stands for Programmatic approach, Co-responsibility and Decentralization. The programmatic approach means that organizations and companies have to cooperate in a coalition on one collective objective. This should create more consistency and a bigger added value in solving an issue related to poverty or injustice. ICCO acts as a broker and financier in this approach. Local partner organizations are responsible for the implementation of the programs. Co-responsibility is developed because ICCO believes that the principle of 'who pays, decides' is no longer suitable. ICCO established eight regional councils. They are co-responsible for the development of regional policy and strategy and advise the Executive Board about the performance of the regional offices. Decentralization stands for the establishment of seven regional offices. Ninety percent of the employees of the regional offices are from the region itself. The regional offices seek funding in the countries where they work and try to find a wider platform to fight injustice and poverty (ICCO 2012b). The regional offices are responsible for the activities and control the performance of the partner organizations. The global head office is no longer solely responsible; it is rather supporting and stimulating the decisions of the regional councils and the work of the regional offices (ICCO 2012d). ICCO changed towards this model of 'ProCoDe' to achieve more equal relationships between the North and the South. It wants to attain more participation of people from developing countries, a broader fundament for legitimacy and more accountability to the poor. It wants to create more context specific- and better development cooperation. These objectives are similar to the ambitions in the development sector in general.

#### 2.1.4 Buzzwords

The model of the regional councils is embedded in the concept of co-responsibility. There is not one overall definition or understanding of co-responsibility that can be used in practice. Different understandings on this concept and on the model of the regional councils exist within ICCO. It is an abstract concept that represents ICCO's ambition to use more input of the South in its policymaking. The difficulty in research on subjects related to the development sector is that there are a lot of common ideas, concepts and ideals without an exact understanding. These concepts, ideas and ambitions lack a clear definition (Lewis 2006:370 in Elbers 2012:123). Cornwall and Brock (2005) describe this as *buzzwords*; certain words or terms that are used without knowing exactly what they mean. Buzzwords play an important role in policy designs of development organizations. They are convincing, positive and give development policies a sense of purposefulness. The question remains what the exact meaning of those concepts is. It is unclear what kind of effect they will have on the implementation of policy designs and therefore on the development work (Cornwall and Brock 2005:iii).

Buzzwords are used by organizations to frame solutions (Cornwall and Brock 2005:2; Allen and Thomas 2000:42). They can be used as a political means to reach an objective or to position yourself, or the vision of your organization in a certain way. Stone (2002) argues that words can be used as a



powerful instrument to convince others and to reach goals. Words can tell a story or can function as a symbol, for instance, to give meaning to something. A buzzword is especially a strong instrument. The one using it can give meaning to it. The person or organization that uses it determines where it stands for, when it is used and how it is explained. The interpretation of policymakers and practitioners in the field determines in what way concepts are used in reality (Ambro 2006:2). ICCO's concept of co-responsibility is another concept that has a positive and persuasive sound. At the same time it leaves questions behind about its exact theoretical and practical interpretation. The regional councils are the most tangible result of how co-responsibility works in practice. They give input on policymaking processes and create co-responsibility in ICCO's cooperation with the South. The input of the regional councils is based on their knowledge of the regional context. The regional councils are appointed by ICCO as the South. ICCO wants to create more context specific aid that has a closer connection with the needs of the poor. ICCO can use this concept of co-responsibility and its model of the regional councils, to frame how it is striving for its ideals. The functioning of the regional councils, which is examined in this research, indicates if ICCO's model does lead to input of the South in its policymaking.

The ambition of the model of the regional councils creates a significant connection with the ambitions of the development sector in general. There is still a quest for finding ways to involve actors from the South in development work. Organizations are searching how they can truly involve people from developing countries in their work so they can understand the local conditions and needs of the poor better (WRR 2010:67; Banerjee and Duflo 2011; Mosse 2011). More involvement of southern actors in development work is stated to cause more legitimacy, more accountability to the poor and more context specific aid. In sum, it is stated to improve the development work in a way that it can better reach the needs and wishes of the poor and marginalized.

## 2.2 Interactive policymaking

Participation is an important concept within the ambitions of the development cooperation sector. This concept is also embedded in ideas about new forms of governance within the discipline of organizational and policy sciences. Models of interactive policymaking, which have their origins in organizational and policy sciences, illustrate the involvement of different actors in policymaking processes. The ambitions of the development cooperation sector and the ambitions of the organizational and policy sciences show similarities. Both want to involve other actors in their policymaking processes to develop policies that better fit the needs of their beneficiaries. Therefore, it seems useful to apply the knowledge of interactive policymaking to the ambition of the development cooperation sector.

In the coming paragraphs the purpose and practical use of models of interactive policymaking are described. Three main concepts of diversity, clarity and power are highlighted as important for making interactive policymaking successful. Furthermore, the concept of participation is explained by describing different participation levels. The three main concepts and related criteria that are needed to make a model of interactive policymaking successful are summarized in a schematic overview. The participation levels and the overview of the most important aspects of interactive policymaking, make it possible to check whether these aspects are taken into account in ICCO's model of the regional councils. This frame of reference is later used to examine how the formal model of ICCO's regional councils and its practice lead to input of the South in the policymaking of ICCO.

Interactive policymaking processes aim to use input of other actors in policymaking processes of an organization, or government. It is argued that policymaking processes are improved by using input of other actors than the policymakers. Developed policies in an interactive process should better reach the needs of the beneficiaries of the policy. Participation and involvement of citizens are even argued to have positive effects on the quality of democracy. It increases knowledge of citizens and policymakers; it enlarges public engagement; it gives people a feeling of more responsibility for public matters; it contributes to more legitimacy of decisions; it enhances social cohesion; and it contributes to support of citizens and participants for taken decisions (Michels 2011; Michels and de Graaf 2010; Marissing 2005). In sum, citizen participation in policymaking processes leads to a healthy and active democracy.

## Diversity

Theory on interactive policymaking underlines the importance of diversity within policymaking processes. It is of such vast importance that it cannot be ignored. Diversity in interactive policymaking processes enables other perspectives and creates new solutions and possibilities. New input is used to get new insights. It is important to find the right participants for interactive policymaking processes. They need to be involved with the subjects that are up for discussion. Participants need to be motivated to interact and should have sufficient knowledge on the discussed content. In that way, they bring useful input in the policymaking process. On the other hand, participants need to have a certain distance to the discussed content. They should not be too involved; otherwise they may only participate to defend their own interests. Decision makers are searching for a correct balance between independence and involvement of participants of interactive policymaking. Participants have to be informed to know what is going on, but they should not be too involved to keep their objectivity (van Woerkum 2002).

Certain groups are totally excluded from interactive policymaking processes. It is difficult to attract new people to get involved. Therefore, participation remains often with a similar group of people. Citizens are mainly motivated to participate in policymaking processes out of self-interest. They only interact if they see advantages for themselves. In most cases citizens do not participate to get new insights, but to fight for their own point of views (Michels and de Graaf 2010). Different forms and formats are used to attain participation of citizens, or of a specific group of people. New forms are often not developed from a top-down perspective, but from a bottom-up perspective. Citizens themselves are initiating formats via, for example, the internet. The question remains if these new forms create more involvement and participation. It is not clear if it involves a new group of people, or that it is still the same group that is simply using a different format (Amna 2010).

Decision-makers should be aware of the diversity within their policymaking process. They should explicitly make use of it instead of ignoring it, or taken it for granted. It is no longer possible to plan and monitor everything beforehand; the perspective of diversity cannot be planned. Informal processes should be decisive because the possibilities that diversity create, cannot be captured within formal processes (van Woerkum 2002). Edelenbos et al. (2003) state that the biggest constraints with interactive policymaking are the ongoing emphasis on the formal side of policymaking processes. Interactive policymaking processes flourish in informal settings. Useful interaction, for instance, occurs mostly in the informal processes. This should be included in some way in the formal process to make sure that the interaction is used in the final policymaking.

## Clarity

Participants of interactive policymaking processes need clarity to successfully fulfill their role. It should be clear from the beginning in what way the interaction can influence the decision-making. Expectations, possibilities and wanted outcomes should be appointed and should be clear for all participants. It is of great importance that it is apparent how the interaction that occurs will be used in the actual decision-making on the final policy formation. Too often it is not clear how the input from participants is used in the actual policymaking. The total process of the policymaking and the substantive outlines of the discussed content should be apparent. Actors will know in what kind of framework they have to work and will understand their role. The roles and responsibilities of different participants should be clear so they know what is expected from them and what they can expect from others. This creates clarity on the obligations and the possibilities of participants in the policymaking process. It is important that professionals, politicians, directors and other people from the highest level of the organization are included to make the interaction meaningful. They have the competences to appoint how the interaction can be used in the policymaking. In addition, it is important for them to experience the interaction, to value the process of interactive policymaking. The outcomes of the interaction should have an important place in the formal decision-making to make the interaction meaningful (Edelenbos et al 2003; Michels and de Graaf 2010).

## Power

A certain fear exists that participants will have too much to say in interactive policymaking processes. Decision makers are always searching for a balance in involving citizens and keeping them at a safe distance. Michels and de Graaf (2010) argue that democratic citizenship is more important than participation of citizens because sincere participation is not possible to reach. Citizens do not have much to say about the final decision-making and the roles and responsibilities in the policymaking remain unchanged. For instance, civil servants in governments make the final decisions. They use the information they get from professionals and citizens, but they are responsible for the taken decisions. It remains important that people can give input on the policymaking and that policymakers receive sufficient and correct information. It is not important that citizens themselves participate. Forms of public engagement should rather be emphasized to create active discussions. In that way it is possible to gain the right information, while the actual decision-making stays with the policymakers (Michels and de Graaf 2010). Power is an important concept while working with models of interactive policymaking, because these processes aim to use input of other actors. The amount of power that participants have, determines to a great extent how much of their input is used in the total process. Arnstein (1969) states that power is inextricably linked to participation processes: “(...) *participation without distribution of power is an empty and frustrating process for the powerless.*” This corresponds with the difficulty that exists in the development cooperation according to Elbers (2012): ‘The relationship between the donor in the North and the partner organization in the South is in its beginning unequal, because the partner organization is depending on the resources of the donor.’ The question arises if it is possible to get participation from the South, when the power relations between the North and the South remain the same. This will be examined with the empirical findings of this study.

## 2.3 Participation levels

Arnstein (1969) developed a ladder of participation (see figure 1). It describes eight steps that indicate eight different levels of participation. The lowest step indicates the least participation. These levels can explain the amount of participation of actors in, for example, interactive policymaking processes. They are used in this research to examine the participation of the regional councils in the policymaking process of ICCO. It helps to describe the amount of input of the regional councils on ICCO's policymaking.

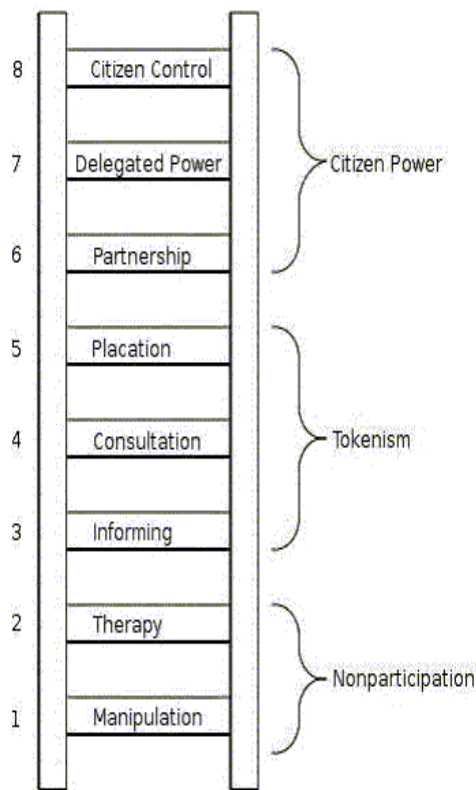


Figure 1

The first two levels are described as Nonparticipation; the participants are involved in the process to be educated rather than to give input. The people in power inform, convince and influence the people who do not have any rights. They try to influence their thoughts and wishes.

The third, fourth and fifth level are described as Tokenism; the powerless are heard and may listen to what is been said. They do not have the vigor or power to make decisions or ensure that something will happen. Level three, Informing, is a one-way form of communication with barely any space for feedback or attention to what the participants want or need. The used vocabulary is often so difficult that it is not possible for participants to understand what is discussed. Level four, Consultation, asks participants to interact and to give their opinion. This request will only become significant if there is any power related to their opinion. This level still does not include a lot of influence because participants often do not know what kind of different options there are. The people in

power determine which options will be explained to the participants. Therefore, participants are capable of giving their opinion, but this opinion is not based on an overall view. Level five, Placation, gives the participants a certain level of influence, although authorities can easily overrule them. The rights and responsibilities of participants are often ambiguous and not clearly defined. If participants are meant to be representatives of a certain group, often they do not represent that group at all.

Level six, seven and eight are described as Citizen Power. Level six, Partnership, indicates that participants can negotiate with the authorities. They have their own financial, technical and substantive resources to hold the authorities accountable. Level seven, Delegated Power, indicates that participants possess most significant cards and resources to hold the authorities accountable. They can ensure their own needs, wishes and rights. Level eight, Citizen Control, indicates that participants have the amount of power to decide what they think is needed. They can govern programs and institutions by themselves. Participants are in charge of policy and management and can determine which other actors can influence their process (Arnstein 1969).

Edelenbos and Monnikhof (1998) describe another participation ladder with five levels. This one is closely related to the participation ladder of Arnstein. The five levels are described below:

1. Inform: participants are informed about the policy developments and final decisions. The decision-makers formulate the agenda and determine which subjects are discussed.
2. Consult: participants are used as partners in the policy developments, but the results of the discussions are in no way compulsorily for the decision-makers. The agenda is still formulated by the decision-makers.
3. Advice: participants may suggest problems and discussion points and may formulate solutions. Decision-makers commit themselves to the outcomes, but can change their point of view in the final decision-making. If they change their viewpoint in the end, it will be examined and explained.
4. Co-producing/co-creation: decision-makers and participants are developing the agenda together. They determine which subjects will be discussed. Solutions are developed in consultation with each other and the decision-makers make serious use of the input from participants.
5. Self-management: participants formulate the policy. Decision-makers directly use the outcomes of the policymaking by participations, if they fit into the overall framework and main conditions. The management is no longer the decision-maker, but takes a role of advisement.

The levels are described as fixed, although in reality the amount of participation often differs and fluctuates within one and the same context. In reality it is not possible to indicate different groups and appoint their amount of participation, power or influence in a definite manner. It is useful, however, to get a first impression on the different levels of participation. The formal structure of a group of participants often shows a different picture than how it works in reality. For example, participants are often labeled as an advisory board, without getting the space in reality to truly give advice. This study first focuses on the formal model of the regional councils and examines what kind of participation level is present in this model. Thereafter it is examined what kind of participation level is visible in the functioning of the regional councils.

The objective of interactive policymaking is to use input of other actors in policymaking processes. Using input of other actors is stated to lead to development of better policies that can better reach the needs and wishes of beneficiaries. To make a model of interactive policymaking successful it is important to create the right diversity with the participants; to make use of the diversity that exists in the group; to create clarity on expectations, possibilities, outcomes, roles and responsibilities; and to find the right balance of power with the diverse participants. Participation is an important concept with interactive policymaking. Theory on participation levels provides an instrument to examine the amount of participation from different participants.

## 2.4 Developing a frame of reference

The development cooperation sector also aims to use input of other actors in its policymaking processes. ICCO, for instance, wants to use input of regional councils in its policymaking. With this input it wants to develop aid that is more context specific and has a better connection to the poor and marginalized. In other words, it wants to create better policies that can better reach the needs and wishes of its beneficiaries. ICCO's ambition and their model of the regional councils show many similarities with interactive policymaking. It is interesting to use the theoretical findings on interactive policymaking, to examine the formal model and the practical use of ICCO's regional councils. The models of Arnstein (1969) and Edelenbos and Monnikhof (1998), that indicate different levels of participation, are combined in the schematic overview below. This overview is later used to examine the participation level of the formal model and the practical use of ICCO's regional councils. Literature indicates three main concepts and several criteria for successful interactive policymaking. These concepts and criteria should be taken into account while working with a model that uses input of other actors in policymaking processes. These criteria are summarized below in another schematic overview and form a frame of reference. This frame of reference is used to examine how the knowledge of interactive policymaking is visible in the formal model, and in the functioning of ICCO's regional councils.

### Overview 1: Participation levels

---

#### 1. Inform

The participants are involved in the process to be educated rather than to give input. The people in power inform, convince and influence the people who do not have any rights. They influence what participants want. It is a one-way form of communication with barely any space for feedback or attention to what participants want or need. The decision-makers formulate the agenda and determine which subjects are discussed.

---

#### 2. Consult

Participants are used as partners in the policy developments and are asked to interact and to give their opinion. The results of the discussions are in no way compulsorily for the decision-makers. The participants do not have the vigor or the power to make decisions. The agenda is still formulated by the decision-makers. This level does not have a lot of influence because the participants often do not know which options there are. They are capable of giving their opinion, but this opinion is not based on an overall view.

---

#### 3. Advice

Participants may suggest problems and discussion points and may formulate solutions. They get a certain level of influence, although the authorities can easily overrule them. Decision-makers commit themselves to the outcomes, but can change their point of view in the final decision-making. If the point of view does change in the end, this change will be examined and explained. The rights and responsibilities of the participants are often ambiguous and not clearly defined. If the participants are meant to be representatives of a certain group, often they do not represent that group at all.

---

#### 4. Co-producing/co-creation

Decision-makers and participants develop the agenda and determine the subjects that are up for discussion. Participants can negotiate with the authorities. Solutions are sought in consultation with each other and the decision-makers make serious use of the input from participants. The participants have some sort of their own financial, technical, and substantive resources to hold the authorities accountable. In that way they can ensure their own needs, wishes and rights.

---

#### 5. Self-management

The participants formulate the policy. Decision-makers use the outcomes directly if they fit into the overall framework and conditions. Participants have the amount of power to decide what they think is needed. They can govern programs and institutions. The participants are in charge of policy and management and can determine which other actors can influence their process, instead of the other way around. The management is no longer the decision-maker but rather takes a role of advisement.

---

The participation levels are used as an instrument to examine the participation of the regional councils in ICCO’s formal model and in the practical use of the regional councils. It helps to indicate how the regional councils lead to the potential of using input of the South with the formal model and the actual use of input of the South in practice.

**Overview 2: Criteria for successful interactive policymaking**

| Concepts         | Criteria  |
|------------------|---|
| <b>Diversity</b> | Create diversity in a group and promote the possibilities of diversity in policymaking processes.                                     |
|                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Be aware that motivation of actors to participate is mainly self-interest.</li> </ul>        |
|                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Be aware that only a small group of people is willing and capable to participate.</li> </ul> |
|                  | Include informal processes in formal process.   |
|                  | Create the right balance between involvement and independence of participants with the subjects that are under discussion.            |
| <b>Clarity</b>   | Create clarity on roles, responsibilities and possibilities of different actors.  |
|                  | Create clarity on how the input from different actors is used in the final decision-making.   |
|                  | Involve the highest decision-making body in the interaction of the policymaking.  |
| <b>Power</b>     | Keep final decision-making with the policymakers.   |
|                  | Participants have a form of power to hold the decision-makers accountable.  |

Literature on interactive policymaking indicates that creating diversity is important. A diverse group of people enables the wanted interaction and creates new and critical insights. Useful interaction often takes place within informal processes, according to the literature. Promoting an informal setting can therefore be useful. The interaction that takes place in these informal processes needs to be included in the formal process of the policymaking. Literature furthermore argues that participants should be affiliated with the content that is discussed. At the same time, they need a certain distance from the topics. They need to be involved and stay independent. They need to have sufficient knowledge to interact, but their own interests should not prevail. Clarity on all aspects related to the interaction and policymaking, enhances certainty for participants, according to the literature. Participants know what they can expect from the process, from other actors and what is expected from them. They know how their input can be used and is used in the final decision-making. The involvement of the highest decision-making body shows participants more directly what is possible and how their input is used. Participants can be stimulated if they see how their input is used. Participants should have enough power to ensure that their input is used. The final decision-making, nevertheless, remains with the policymakers. The participation and interaction within the policymaking process provide the policymakers with information and knowledge from citizens and beneficiaries. The concepts of diversity, clarity and power create criteria that are important to be taken into account while working with a model of interactive policymaking.

The overviews of the participation levels and the criteria for successful interactive policymaking are used as a frame of reference. They are used to examine the formal model of ICCO’s regional councils and how the model functions in practice. In chapter four it will be described how the formal model of the regional councils shows similarities with the theory on interactive policymaking. It is described which participation level is found in the formal model and if the model leads to input of the South in

the policymaking of ICCO. In chapter five it is described how the functioning of the regional councils shows similarities with the theory on interactive policymaking. It is described which participation level is found in practice and if the practical use of the regional councils leads to input of the South in ICCO's policymaking. These empirical findings lead to answering the main research question: How do ICCO's regional councils lead to input of the South in the policymaking of ICCO?



### 3. Research design

*“The case study method allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events.”*  
(Yin 2003:4).

The model of the regional councils of ICCO is central in this research. ICCO’s ambition with, and the model of the regional councils is closely related to the ambition and models of interactive policymaking. Both aim to use input of other actors in policymaking processes to improve policy developments. Literature on interactive policymaking argues that using input of other actors, especially the input of beneficiaries, leads to policies that better fit the needs and wishes of the beneficiaries. ICCO established regional councils to attain input of the South in its policymaking. By using this input, it aims to develop policies that better reach the needs of its beneficiaries. This study is an exploratory research about the ambition, the formal model and the practical use of ICCO’s regional councils. The objective of this study is exploratory and descriptive; it is explored how the regional councils lead to input of the South in the policymaking of ICCO. It is examined if the knowledge on interactive policymaking is applicable to the formal model and the practical use of the regional councils. It is investigated if ICCO’s model of the regional councils, which is embedded in the development sector, can be regarded as a form of interactive policymaking.

Two main facets are central in this study. First, it is examined whether the formal model of ICCO’s regional councils can be considered as a form of interactive policymaking. Theoretical and practical experiences with interactive policymaking, that are rooted in the discipline of organizational and policy sciences, are examined. It is explored what is needed to make an interactive policymaking process successful. Three concepts of clarity, diversity and power are indicated with related criteria. This formed a frame of reference which illustrates what is needed to make a model of interactive policymaking successful. This frame of reference is used to compare the formal model of the regional councils with the knowledge on interactive policymaking. Second, it is examined if the practical use of ICCO’s regional councils is comparable to successful models of interactive policymaking. The second part of this study is divided in two facets as well. First, it is examined in general how ICCO works with the regional councils and how they function in practice. The experience of different employees of ICCO, who are related to the regional councils, is leading in this part. Thereafter, the regional council of Southern Africa is examined more specifically. This part highlights how this regional council functions in practice. One specific activity of this council, the regional council meeting of May 2012, is central in this examination. The meeting and its preparation are observed in detail. The practical use of the regional councils in general and the regional council of Southern Africa are both examined with use of the frame of reference on successful interactive policymaking. In sum, it is examined if the formal model of ICCO’s regional council can be regarded as a form of successful interactive policymaking; and it is examined if these similarities are visible in the practical use of ICCO’s regional councils. Successful interactive policymaking implicates that input of other actors is used in the policymaking. Examining if the criteria for successful interactive policymaking are visible in the formal model and practical use of ICCO’s regional councils, therefore, leads to examining the main research question: how ICCO’s regional councils lead to input of the South in the policymaking of ICCO.

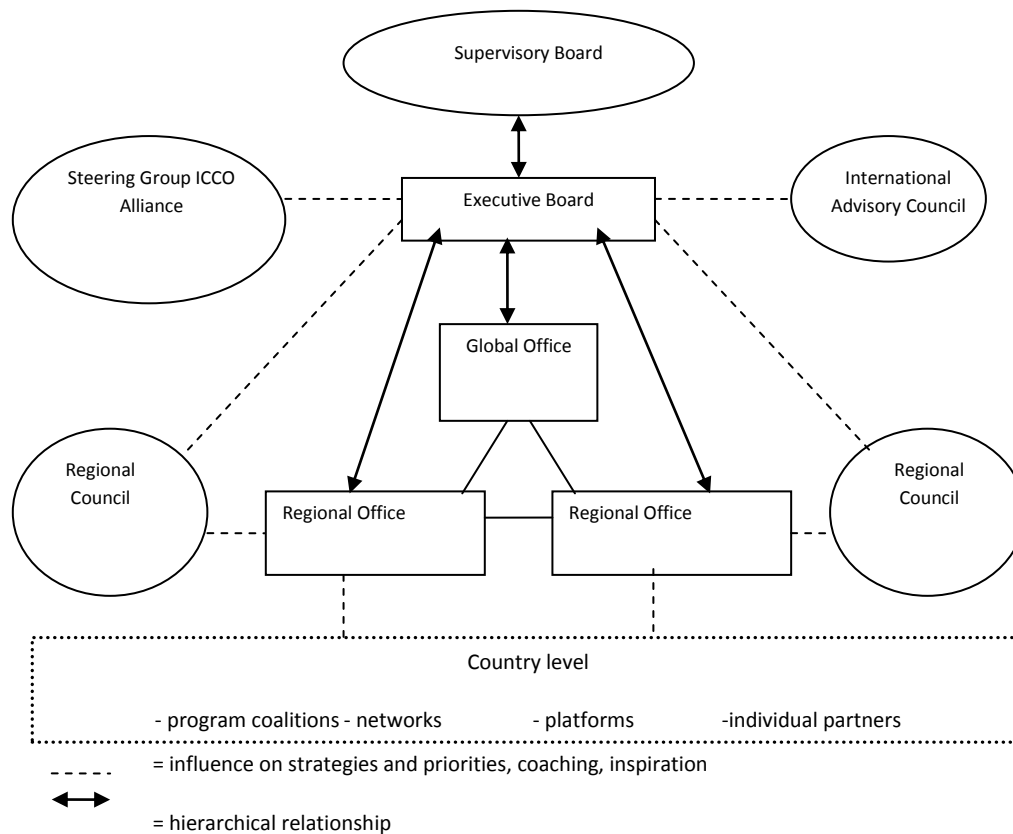
This research design begins with a description of the choice of case study. ICCO, the organization that is central in this research, is described to get a better understanding of the context of this study. The regional council of Southern Africa is described to explain the embedded case study. Next, the different qualitative methods that are used in this study and the way they are analyzed are explained. This chapter is finalized by describing a reflection on strategic choices made during this research and the reliability and validity of this research.

### 3.1 ICCO as a single case study

A case study is used in this research because the main research question is a 'how' question and because the study focuses on a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context. The regional councils are only functioning since a couple of years within ICCO. Their existence becomes meaningful during regional council meetings, where they are asked to give input on strategic and policy developments of ICCO. The researcher has little control over the events related to the main question. The functioning of the regional councils, or the way that input is used by ICCO, cannot be controlled by the researcher (Yin 2003). This research needs a case study to fully examine the main research question. Document analysis and interviews give insight in how ICCO's model of the regional councils leads to input of the South in its policymaking. But this will give a partial sight on how the South provides input and how its input is used. Only practice can demonstrate all ways, both formal as informal, of input of the South on the policymaking of ICCO.

The case study on ICCO is a single case; it represents a *unique case* because ICCO is the only Dutch development organization that made regional councils part of its governance structure. Lessons learned in this research can be informative for other development organizations that want to use more input of the South (Yin 2003:46-49). ICCO is an interchurch organization for development cooperation. The organization comes from a Protestant-Christian tradition, but is open to other beliefs and religions. It works in forty-four countries located in Africa, Asia, Latin-America and Eastern Europe. Its focuses on the themes sustainable development, food security, climate, peace building and democratization, and emergency assistance and reconciliation. Its mission is to work towards a world where people can live in dignity and prosperity; a world without poverty or injustice. Three words that are central to ICCO's approach are compassion, stewardship and justice. To better achieve its mission and to react on the changes in the development sector, ICCO made people in developing countries co-responsible for its policy and strategy developments. Eight regional councils were established to fulfill this ambition (ICCO 2012d and ICCO 2012e).

The Executive Board has final responsibility over the organization and over all strategic and policy related issues. The supervisory board controls the functioning of the Executive Board. The eight regional councils include independent experts from social organizations, companies or governments in developing countries. They determine the regional priorities for policy and strategy, are co-responsible for the regional policy plan and control the work of the regional office. The International Advisory Council consists of five members from four continents. It provides new ideas and discusses the corporate priorities of ICCO with the Executive Board. The regional offices are responsible for the implementation of regional policy and development programs. The head office is situated in the Netherlands and is responsible for substantive and organizational support for the regional offices. The Executive Board and the departments of Communication, Fundraising, Lobby, Financial control, Policy and Development and the Advisory Boards are situated in the Netherlands (ICCO 2012d). The organization structure of ICCO is summarized in figure 2.



**Note: This is a simplified image, showing only 2 regions. With 8 regions,**

**Figure 2, Source: ICCO 2010**

The single case study on ICCO’s regional councils is examined in three ways. The formal model of the regional councils is examined. After that, the regional councils are explored in practice. First, the practical use of the regional councils is examined in general, by interviews with people who are connected to this model in practice. Second, the practical use of the regional councils is explored by an embedded case study on one of the regional councils. The regional council of Southern Africa is central in this embedded case study. Attention is given to this subunit to examine in more detail how this regional council functions and how it gives input on the policymaking of ICCO (Yin 2003:50-52). The regional councils are an important facet of the ambition of ICCO to give more influence to the South in its decision-making. They are appointed by ICCO as the Southern actors who should give input on its policymaking. A regional council meeting, which is held twice a year, facilitates input from the regional council members on the developments of the policy and strategy of ICCO. The regional councils create fresh ideas and new insights that ICCO can use to achieve work that better suits the context of the regions. The regional manager and (representatives of) the Executive Board are also present at these meetings.

The regional council of Southern Africa includes eight members, who are coming from Zimbabwe, South Africa, Malawi, Madagascar and Angola. The regional office of Southern Africa is situated in Lilongwe, Malawi. The regional council meetings usually take place in South Africa because there are better flight connections with South Africa. This case study focuses on one of the meetings of the council of Southern Africa. The meeting was on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> of May 2012 and was situated in Pretoria, South Africa. The meeting was attended by six regional council members, the regional manager and a representative of the Executive Board of ICCO. This last person is based in the

Netherlands at the head office and is responsible for the communication between the Executive Board and the regional councils. The second day of the meeting, the regional office employees joined the afternoon program to discuss and interact with the regional council. The third day, the 11<sup>th</sup> of May 2012, which was no longer part of the official meeting, was concentrated on a visit to a partner organization. Regional office employees and two regional council members joined this visit.

### **3.2 Demarcation of case study**

Successful case studies require a clear demarcation of which actors are part of the case study and which actors belong to the context. It is important to differentiate between phenomenon and context (Yin 2003). This study focuses on ICCO and how it implements the ideal of 'using more input of the South' with its regional councils. Other organizations are working with this ideal as well. The outcomes of the single and embedded case study cannot be generalized to other forms of using more influence of the South, or to the other regional councils of ICCO. This research can function as an example. It shows how ICCO's model of the regional councils is functioning and how this can be generalized to the frame of reference on successful interactive policymaking, which is developed in chapter two. It gives insight in one way of working with this ideal from the development sector (Yin 2003:15).

The regional councils and all actors that were, or are involved in the implementation, development and functioning of the regional councils are important for this study. Members of the Planning Implementation Team (PIT) are of importance because they were responsible for the establishment of the regional councils; they are the driving forces behind the ideal of the regional councils. People who currently work with the regional councils are of importance, for instance: regional managers, regional office employees, the Executive Board Support Office, the Executive Board and regional council members. Other employees who work, or worked at ICCO during the implementation and development of the regional councils, belong to the context of this case study. People who are, or were involved with other forms of involving the South more in policymaking of the North belong to the context of this case study as well.

### **3.3 Use of different methods**

A cyclic process is used in this research. Certain levels are determined in the organization structure of ICCO to examine the research questions. Based on the findings, new levels in the organization are determined that need examination to answer the main research question (Boeijs 2005:50-51). The unique strength of a case study is that it can make use of different forms of evidence. For instance, document analysis, interviews and observations are used. Observations of a case study alone always provide more information than needed; this makes it hard to define the relevant information. By using different sources it is possible to define which information is useful for the research (Yin 2003:40-45). First, the formal model of ICCO's regional councils is examined by document analysis and by interviews with the founders of this model and employees of ICCO who are currently working with this model. Thereafter, interviews with the Executive Board, employees of the Executive Board Support Office, employees of the global office and regional managers describe how the regional councils function in practice. The interviews show how people, who are working with the regional councils, experience this model. Observations at the global office are used to get a better understanding on the formal model and practical use of the regional councils. The embedded case study examines in detail how the regional council of Southern Africa is functioning in practice. Interviews with the regional council members, regional office employees and the regional manager

of Southern Africa indicate how they experience the formal model and practical use of ICCO's regional councils. Observations of one meeting of the regional council of Southern Africa provide detailed indications on the functioning of this regional council in practice.

### 3.3.1 Qualitative interviews

The interviews are done in a semi-structured way; there is a combination between structure and flexibility (Elbers 2012:40). Questions and topics to discuss are prepared before the interview. During the interview, there is enough space for new questions or new subjects to discuss. This way of interviewing makes sure that the researcher collects the information he or she needs. At the same time, it allows the respondents to share own experiences or interpretations (Legard 2003:141-142). Twenty-three interviews are held for this study. Seven interviews were with employees of the head office of ICCO; two of these interviewees were part of the leading forces who introduced co-responsibility and the regional councils within ICCO; four of the interviews were with employees who were active with the implementation of co-responsibility; and one was with someone who was already working for ICCO in the 1970s, when the organization tried working with a first form of co-responsibility. Five interviews were with regional managers; two of these interviews were with the regional manager of Southern Africa, because the embedded case study focuses on this region. The other interviews were with managers of other regions. One interview was with a researcher and professor of the Centre for International Development Issues Nijmegen, who wrote a paper about the changes towards co-responsibility within ICCO. One interview was with the former and first director of ICCO, who was involved with the first attempts of ICCO in the 1970s to use a form of co-responsibility. Three interviews were with regional council members of Southern Africa. There were six regional council members present at the meeting. Conversations with the other regional council members are written down as observations. Three interviews were with regional office employees; two of them are program officers and one is responsible for policy and advocacy. The last three interviews were with the managers of Save the Children Sweden, The Red Cross South Africa and Hivos South Africa. All three NGOs are situated in South Africa and are also working with some form of using more input of the South.

### 3.3.2 Document analysis

Document analysis is done on existing documents within ICCO. The documents are about ICCO in general, its change towards using the regional councils and about the formal understanding of the model of the regional councils. This made it possible to compare the findings of the formal model with the understanding of employees and with the way it is used in practice (Ritchie 2003:35). Document analysis gave insight in the ambitions of ICCO with the regional councils and on the formal organization structure of ICCO. It provided clarity on the formal mandate and responsibilities of the regional councils, without getting different interpretations from interviewees. Or as Elbers (2012: 41) refers to Verschuren and Doorewaard (1999:121): *"One of the key advantages over other data-sources is that documents are drawn up without their producers realizing that they will be used in a research project."* After that, it was possible to compare the formal model of the regional councils with the practical use of the regional councils. Furthermore, document analysis gave insight in the preparation and outcomes of the regional council meetings of Southern Africa.

### 3.3.3 Analyzing findings

Outcomes of the first set of interviews and document analysis, on the model of the regional councils, its formal process, its meaning and its objectives for ICCO, are analyzed by open coding. Research material was the start to formulate common themes that could be important in the further research. Or as Boeije (2005:85) quotes Strauss and Corbin: *“breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing and categorizing data”*. The document analysis and interviews on how the regional councils work in practice are done by axial coding. Codes found in the first set of research, are used to study the new material. This method examines which elements and themes are of importance to answer the main research question. Eventually the material that is constructed with the interviews, observations, document analysis and ways of coding, is analyzed by selective coding: *“selecting the core category, systematically relating it to other categories, and filling in categories that need further refinement and development.”* (Boeije 2005:105). Findings of the data analysis are described in a written report.

### 3.4 Reflection on strategic choices

Due to time restrictions it was only possible to do a single and one embedded case study. A comparative case study, on for example two different regional councils, would have given a more complete understanding of ICCO's model of the regional councils. The choice of the embedded case study on the regional council of Southern Africa was caused by practical and substantive arguments. The meeting from this regional council took place within the timeframe of this research. In addition, employees of ICCO argued that this regional council can be seen as an average regional council. It is not one of the best, but surely also not one of the lesser regional councils. This council is already functioning since the pilot period of ICCO's model of the regional councils; it has enough experience in being a regional council and functioning within the organization of ICCO.

### 3.5 Reliability and validity

Reliability of a research depends on unplanned or unsystematic faults ('t Hart et al. 2001). A great extent of precision of methods for data collecting leads to more reliability. Faults during the examination can be reduced by standardization of methods and by using sufficient examinations (Boeije 2005). This study made several efforts to increase the reliability. The observations could not be standardized because it was unknown beforehand which observations would be useful for the study. The main observations are elaborated in written notes. During the regional council meeting of Southern Africa, the researcher made as many notes as possible to appoint the most important topics afterwards. The interviews were done in a semi-structured way, which gave all the interviews a different turn. It was possible to ask more questions about topics that turned out to be important during the interviews. Some questions, however, like how would you describe the model of the regional councils, were asked in all interviews. All interviews were held in a room that was as intimate as possible to minimize distractions. Unfortunately this was not always possible during the regional council meeting in South Africa. All interviews were also recorded and transcribed afterwards; hence it was not possible to miss important things that were said. In addition, this increases the reliability of this research because it is possible to verify all the findings. A brief report has been made after every interview before transcribing the whole interview. In that way the main findings could be used in the upcoming interviews. The results are described as much as possible with quotes of the different interviewees to display the findings with the words of the interviewees, instead of using the interpretation of the researcher.

Systematic faults influence the validity of a research. Boeije (2005:144) describes validity as the extent to which the researcher measures or explains what he aims to measure or explain. There exists a difference between internal and external validity. Internal validity signifies the realization of the objective of the research and its methodological principles. It appoints if the examination is correctly done and if the used variables in the study have a causal relation with each other. Internal validity means that the empirical findings were caused solely by the appointed independent variable, and not by other external variables. The independent variable in this research is the model of ICCO's regional councils. The dependent variable in this research is input of the South in the policymaking of ICCO. The South is appointed in this research in the manner that ICCO uses it, as the regional councils. Other interviewees argued, on the other hand, that the South cannot be appointed solely as the regional councils. Cooperation with partner organizations and the decentralization process of ICCO are stated to cause input of the South in the policymaking of ICCO as well. This study took notice of the different understandings of the South, but kept the focus of this research on the regional councils as the South. The interviews, observations and document analysis all focused on the input of the regional councils. In addition, it is difficult to appoint with certainty which input came from which actors in the policymaking of ICCO. Many actors are involved in the policymaking process. ICCO uses input of different actors without clearly appointing which input is used in what way. The examination of this research focused on the experience of people. It focused on how people experience that the regional councils have input on the policymaking of ICCO. Furthermore, a frame of reference with criteria for successful interactive policymaking is used as an instrument. This frame of reference examined if the regional councils lead to input of the South in the policymaking of ICCO. Successful interactive policymaking indicates that input of other actors is used in policymaking processes. Therefore, visible criteria for successful interactive policymaking within ICCO's regional councils indicate that input of the regional councils is used. This research asked open questions to examine how participants experience the model of the regional councils and how they think it leads to input of the South in the policymaking of ICCO. Asking open questions made it possible to discover other manners of using input of the South besides the manners that literature on interactive policymaking indicated.

External validity signifies the extent to which the findings of the research can be generalized to other groups or settings. External validity is present if the findings of the study are applicable to other situations (Boeije 2005 and 't Hart et al. 2001). The external validity of this research shows some limitations. A single case study on how ICCO aims to achieve more input of the South in its policymaking is leading in this study; the findings are not naturally applicable to how other organizations try to attain more input of the South in their policymaking. Nevertheless, the research provides useful information for other organizations when they want to implement the principle of using more influence of the South in their work. An embedded case study on one of the regional councils is leading in examining how the regional councils function in practice; the findings are not naturally applicable to other regional councils. The external validity is increased, however, by examining the regional councils in general within ICCO. This indicated similar findings to the findings of the embedded case study. People, who are closely related to the other regional councils, described similar experiences with their regional councils. This strengthens the findings of the embedded case study and indicates that these findings might be applicable to other regional councils. This cannot be stated with certainty, however. The embedded case study is done on an average regional council that exists from the start of the model of ICCO. The findings are, therefore,

based on a regional council with enough experience. This gives an average image of how the regional councils function in practice and strengthens the external validity. The findings of this study are useful and relevant for further research. It can be used in additional research on the regional councils and in further research on the ambition of the development sector to attain more influence of the South in their work.

A combination of observations, document analysis and interviews is used to achieve more reliability and validity of this study. The theoretical knowledge on interactive policymaking formed a frame of reference. This is used to examine the formal model and the practical use of ICCO's regional councils. The empirical findings are described, with the use of this frame of reference, in the following two chapters.



## 4. The regional councils' model

*"I am from Malawi, I am a Malawian and I work in Malawi (...). I know the context, because I have lived here and because I am working here now. I am involved in the context and can therefore make a better choice in what is needed in the region."*

(Interview 17, 17-5-2012)

The formal model of ICCO's regional councils is the main subject of this chapter. The ambition of ICCO with the regional councils is described. The formal structure and the rules and regulations of the regional councils are highlighted in this part. The formal model of ICCO's regional councils is compared to the frame of reference that is developed in chapter two. In other words, it is examined how the formal model meets the criteria for successful interactive policymaking. The participation levels indicate what kind of participation is present in ICCO's formal model. It is described if the formal model of the regional councils can lead to input of the South in the policymaking of ICCO.

### 4.1 ICCO's ambition

ICCO changed its organization structure in 2008 by implementing a concept of co-responsibility. The current director of ICCO describes co-responsibility as follows: *"The model is developed to give our target group influence on the policy development of the organization. This influence is mainly focused on strategic developments within ICCO."* (Interview 24, 10-7-2012). He states that the concept is meant to give voice to the target group of ICCO. The organization underlines that it is no longer possible to work in an unequal way with Southern stakeholders. It argues that it is important to internationalize more and to give people of the South a central place in the policymaking of ICCO (ICCO 2007). The concept of co-responsibility implies that the Executive Board of ICCO has to share its responsibility on policy and strategy development with regional councils. These regional councils are the most concrete manifestation of the concept of co-responsibility in practice. Their role is to advise ICCO in an open, critical and neutral way.

Every region where ICCO is working has a regional council. These regional councils consist of a maximum of seven members who are coming from diverse backgrounds and different countries. Each council tries to include a diverse group of people, with a mix of ethnicities, genders, occupations and experiences. ICCO wants independent regional council members to avoid conflicts of interests. They should not be connected to the work of ICCO. The organization searches for the right balance in the councils, so they are as representative as possible for the region and can give valuable advice on the policymaking of ICCO. The current director of ICCO emphasizes that it is a pressing question how the regional councils represent the South and how they have a connection with the beneficiaries of ICCO. *"The ultimate question is the legitimacy of the councils. It is not a democratic system. We selected people with a specific profile that we find important; that they are socially involved etc., but it remains the question if they can fulfill this in practice as well (...). In the end we want to create more legitimacy and ownership with this model (...). We want to work with a more question-based approach (...). We want to examine where we can truly have an added value with our work."* (Interview 24, 10-7-2012). ICCO argues that the regional councils represent the South. The input of the regional councils is argued to create a better understanding on what is important for the beneficiaries and what is needed in the regions. ICCO wants to obtain more context specific work that can better reach the needs and wishes of the poor and marginalized.

#### 4.1.2 Structure and roles and responsibilities

The regional councils are officially part of the governance structure. They give direct advice to the Executive Board on regional policy and strategy developments and monitor the work of the regional offices. The Executive Board is responsible for the development of the strategic corporate policy plan and is assisted by the Policy and Development department. The head of the Executive Board Support Office explains that this strategic corporate policy plan functions as a framework for the development of regional policies and strategies (Interview 3, 12-4-2012). The regional manager has an important say in regional policy development and gets inspiration from the regional council. The regional office elaborates on the ideas from the regional council and the regional manager. Formally, the regional councils give advice to the Executive Board on the regional policy plan. The Executive Board communicates this feedback to the regional manager, who fits the suggestions into the regional policy plans. Before putting the policy into practice, the department Policy and Development checks the policy to see if it suits the corporate plan and if it follows the general developments of the sector. After that, the regional policy plan is sent to the Executive Board, who has to approve it (ICCO 2007).

The guidelines state that the opinion of the regional council has to be heard *“before the Executive Board takes decisions of strategic importance for the region and/or the functioning of the regional office.”* ICCO follows the advice of the regional councils or has to give an explanation why it did not, when it was not possible to do so. It has to *“enter in a dialogue with the regional council in case of differences of opinion regarding significant issues (...). If the issue cannot be resolved the Executive Board provides the regional council with a proper explanation.”* The Executive Board has the final responsibility in all decision-making, even though the regional councils became co-responsible for policy and strategy developments. The role of the regional councils is based on influence rather than formal regulations.

The regional councils meet twice a year during a regional council meeting for two or three days. Most of the time a visit to a partner organization of ICCO is organized by the regional office on the third or fourth day; this day is not officially a part of the regional council meeting. In between the meetings the regional councils stay in contact with the regional managers, give advice on current topics and read the most important documents about ICCO to stay informed. All the travel and accommodation costs made related to regional council meetings are compensated by ICCO and the regional council members receive a fee of 500 Euros per attended meeting. The regional manager, the chairperson of the regional council and the Executive Board prepare the agenda for the regional council meeting together. The regional manager is the secretary of the regional council. He or she is responsible for the minutes of every meeting and for *“the communication and interaction with the regional council members; the preparation of the agenda with the Chair of the regional council and the Executive Board; ensuring that a report of each meeting is made and distributed; facilitating the regional council in its operation; and facilitating the regional council with the recruitment of new members.”* (Observations 18, Guidelines). The chairman of the regional council is one of the regional council members and is elected by the regional council.

The main responsibilities of the regional council, as stated in the guidelines (Observations 18) are:

- “1. To participate in the preparation of the policy framework of the overall strategic 5-year plan.*
- 2. To outline the policy for the region (within the framework of the overall strategic plan), which in turn will be worked out by the regional office in the regional strategic plan and annual plans.*
- 3. To provide input regarding subsequent annual plans of the regional office, which will be presented to the Executive Board for final approval.*
- 4. To provide feedback to the Regional Manager (RM) and the Executive Board regarding the implementation of the annual plan and the performance of the regional office.*
- 5. To provide (asked and unasked) advice to the regional office in case of major changes of the (social-political, economic, environmental, security, etc.) context (in countries) of the region.*
- 6. To propose new ideas and initiatives as to how to promote and support change processes in connection with sustainable development more effectively.*
- 7. To define, together with the Executive Board, the profile of the regional manager and to participate in the selection process.*
- 8. To agree upon rules and regulations regarding its own functioning, taking into account the guidelines as formulated in this document.”*

Responsibilities of ICCO towards the regional council are to provide sufficient policy space and sufficient information to fulfill their role to *“contribute to a more effective program of ICCO in the region aimed at social injustice and structural poverty alleviation.”* The regional councils are created to bring a new, Southern perspective in the policy and strategy development of ICCO. With this input, ICCO aims to improve its work. It wants to create a closer connection to the needs and wishes of its beneficiaries.

#### **4.2 Participation level of the regional councils' model**

The participation levels are a useful instrument to examine the participation and influence of actors in a process of interactive policymaking. It can indicate how much influence they have and can explain their way of participating in the total process. The participation levels are used in this paragraph to name the role of the participants within the formal model of ICCO's regional councils. The following schematic overview describes the participation ladder that is formed for this study in chapter two. The rows under the participation levels explain to what extent the different levels are found in the examination of ICCO's formal model of the regional councils.

## 4.2.1 Participation levels

---

### 1. Inform

The participants are involved in the process to be educated rather than to give input. The people in power inform, convince and influence the people who do not have any rights. They influence what participants want. It is a one-way form of communication with barely any space for feedback or attention to what participants want or need. The decision-makers formulate the agenda and determine which subjects are discussed.

#### **Regional council's model**

ICCO explicitly indicates that it wants to get input and new ideas from the participants. That is what the concept is all about. Therefore, it does not correspond to this participation level. The formal model indicates that the agenda is made in cooperation with the regional manager, the Executive Board and the regional council. In that respect it also does not correspond to this level of participation.

---

### 2. Consult

Participants are used as partners in the policy developments and are asked to interact and to give their opinion. The results of the discussions are in no way compulsorily for the decision-makers. The participants do not have the vigor or the power to make decisions. The agenda is still formulated by the decision-makers. This level does not have a lot of influence because the participants often do not know which options there are. They are capable of giving their opinion, but this opinion is not based on an overall view.

#### **Regional council's model**

The formal model aims for interaction with the participants and states that ICCO wants to hear their opinion. The decision-makers should follow the advice of the regional councils and if they are not able to do so, they have to explain why they did not follow the advice. They still make the final decisions, but they have some sort of obligation to the councils to take their advice serious. In the end, the participants do not have the vigor or power to make decisions themselves. The agenda is not solely made by the decision-maker; this does not correspond to this level of participation.

---

### 3. Advice

Participants may suggest problems and discussion points and may formulate solutions. They get a certain level of influence, although the authorities can easily overrule them. Decision-makers commit themselves to the outcomes, but can change their point of view in the final decision-making. If the point of view does change in the end, this change will be examined and explained. The rights and responsibilities of the participants are often ambiguous and not clearly defined. If the participants are meant to be representatives of a certain group, often they do not represent that group at all.

#### **Regional council's model**

ICCO's formal model corresponds to a great extent with this participation level: participants are involved in the development of the agenda and they are asked to give input and to create ideas. The final decision-making remains with the authorities, although they intend to follow the advice of the regional councils. If they cannot do so, they have to explain why. The rights and responsibilities of the participants are clearly defined in the guidelines of the regional councils, which is contradictory to this level of participation. The composition of the regional councils is also a challenging point for ICCO because it wants to represent the Southern perspective in some way with the regional councils.

---

### 4. Co-producing/co-creation

Decision-makers and participants develop the agenda and determine the subjects that are up for discussion. Participants can negotiate with the authorities. Solutions are sought in consultation with each other and the decision-makers make serious use of the input from participants. The participants have some sort of their own financial, technical, and substantive resources to hold the authorities accountable. In that way they can ensure their own needs, wishes and rights.

#### **Regional council's model**

The formal model of the regional councils indicates that the agenda is made in cooperation with the decision-makers and participants. The authorities make serious use of the input from the participants, although the final decision-making remains with the authorities. The participants do not have their own resources to hold the authorities accountable.

---

---

## 5. Self-management

The participants formulate the policy. Decision-makers use the outcomes directly if they fit into the overall framework and conditions. Participants have the amount of power to decide what they think is needed. They can govern programs and institutions. The participants are in charge of policy and management and can determine which other actors can influence their process, instead of the other way around. The management is no longer the decision-maker but rather takes a role of advisement.

### Regional council's model

The formal model of the regional councils does not indicate that the participants formulate the policy themselves. They rather give input and advice. Participants do not have the power to guarantee their decisions and they are not in charge of policy and management. Hence, this level of participation does not correspond to ICCO's formal model.

---

ICCO's formal model of the regional councils corresponds for the most part to the participation levels 'Advice' and 'Co-producing/co-creation'. The regional councils are asked to interact, to give feedback and input, and to create new solutions for policy and strategy developments of ICCO. The regional councils meetings are the most important moments where participants come together. This is where regional councils give input on the policymaking processes of ICCO. The agenda for these meetings is made in cooperation with the regional manager, the regional council and the Executive Board. The regional councils are asked to give input on the agenda and to share their ideas. The authorities of ICCO follow the advice of the regional councils and have to explain if they could not do so. The final decision-making remains with the authorities, although it is influenced by the participants. The regional councils do not have any legal power or resources which ensure them that their input is used. Their role is based on influence and inspiration. In contrast to the level of 'Advice', the rights and responsibilities of the regional councils are clearly stated in the guidelines. The formal model of ICCO's regional councils states that the councils include a correct composition to form a good representation of the region and of the work that ICCO is doing.

### 4.3 Applying the frame of reference

ICCO's ambition to work with the regional councils corresponds to a great extent with the ambition of interactive policymaking, as earlier described. Both want to use input of other actors in their policymaking to develop policies that can better reach the needs of their beneficiaries. The coming paragraphs compare the formal model of ICCO's regional councils, with the frame of reference that is formed in chapter two. This frame of reference indicates the three concepts of diversity, clarity and power and several related criteria. These concepts and criteria are important to take into account while working with a model of using input of other actors in policymaking processes. The following schematic overview demonstrates the comparison between interactive policymaking and ICCO's model of the regional councils. The right column indicates if the criteria for successful interactive policymaking are found in the formal model of ICCO's regional councils.

### 4.3.1 Criteria for successful interactive policymaking

| Concepts         | Criteria  | Regional councils' model                                    |
|------------------|---|---|
| <b>Diversity</b> | Create diversity in a group and promote the possibilities of diversity in policymaking processes.                                     | Yes   |
|                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Be aware that motivation of actors to participate is mainly self-interest.</li> </ul>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Unknown</li> </ul> |
|                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Be aware that only a small group of people is willing and capable to participate.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Unknown</li> </ul> |
|                  | Include informal processes in formal process.   | Unknown   |
|                  | Create the right balance between involvement and independence of participants with the subjects that are under discussion.            | Yes   |
| <b>Clarity</b>   | Create clarity on roles, responsibilities and possibilities of different actors.  | Yes   |
|                  | Create clarity on how the input from different actors is used in the final decision-making.   | To a certain extent   |
|                  | Involve the highest decision-making body in the interaction of the policymaking.  | Yes   |
| <b>Power</b>     | Keep final decision-making with the policymakers.   | Yes   |
|                  | Participants have a form of power to hold the decision-makers accountable.  | To a certain extent   |

#### Diversity

The formal model of ICCO's regional councils displays many similarities with the developed frame of reference. Diversity is a concept that plays an important role within the regional councils. ICCO tries to create diversity within the regional councils and tries to use this diversity in its policymaking process. It searches for a right balance in the councils. It wants to get the best representation of the region and wants to select people who are able to give useful advice. The formal model does not indicate if ICCO is aware of the difficulty that people mainly participate out of self-interest. ICCO pays 500 Euros per attended meeting and compensates all travel and accommodation costs related to the meeting. This may indicate that ICCO does take into account that people may participate out of self-interest. By doing this, it reduces financial obstacles that regional council members may encounter. In addition, ICCO makes sure that it selects participants who do not only cooperate for their own interests. People should have enough knowledge on ICCO and its work, but they should not be too involved. Their own interests should not prevail. The formal model does not indicate how outcomes of informal processes are included in the formal process of the regional councils. It is not clear if ICCO aims to achieve this.

#### Clarity

Creating clarity on roles, responsibilities, expectations and possibilities of different participants is important in models of interactive policymaking, according to literature. The formal model of the regional councils describes the roles and responsibilities of the regional councils in a concrete and clear manner. The roles and responsibilities of other actors within ICCO, who are related to the regional councils, are described in a more general manner. The guidelines for the regional councils indicate the most important facets for all participants; everyone knows what they can expect from each other. All participants accepted the guidelines. Participants know that their input is used, because the Executive Board has to explain when it did not follow their advice. However, the formal model does not indicate how the Executive Board communicates if and how it used the input of the

regional councils. The formal model does not create clarity on which input came from which actors in the total process of policymaking. The highest decision-making body of ICCO, the Executive Board, is formally part of the interaction with the regional councils. They are involved with the functioning of the model, can see what the interaction brings, and can create clarity on what is possible to do with the provided input.

### Power

Power is an important concept while working with interactive policymaking processes, according to the literature. The amount of power of participants affects if their input is used in the final decision-making. The final decision-making stays with the Executive Board in the formal model of the regional councils. The input of the regional council members is, nevertheless, actively used to improve policy developments. The regional councils do not have a legal form of power in the formal model of ICCO. It remains unclear if their participation and input is used in reality; the model does not indicate resources for the councils to hold the decision-makers accountable. The formal model describes that the input of the regional councils is based on influence. Practice has to show how the regional councils are able to use their influence in the policymaking process.

This chapter examined the formal model of ICCO's regional councils. It corresponds to the ambition of interactive policymaking to use input of other actors in policymaking processes. Literature indicated that this lead to development of polices that can better reach the needs of beneficiaries. The formal model of the regional councils shows many similarities with the frame of reference on interactive policymaking. The concepts of diversity, clarity and power are highly important in ICCO's formal model and most of the criteria related to these concepts, are found in its formal model as well. In other words, ICCO's formal model of the regional councils meets the criteria for successful interactive policymaking to a great extent. The participation levels showed that the reasonably high participation levels of 'advice' and 'co-producing/co-creating' are present in the formal model of the regional councils. In sum, the content of this chapter presented that the formal model of ICCO's regional councils can lead to input of the South in the policymaking of ICCO. Most of the criteria to make such a model successful are present and the available participation level assures that the input of the participants is used and will affect the policymaking.

Practice will show how the regional councils function in reality and to what extent this is consistent with the formal model. Edelenbos and Monnikhof (1998) indicate that reality may create another picture of the participation levels of actors than the formal model showed. The next chapter examines if the participation level and the functioning of the regional councils differ in reality from its formal model.



## 5. Regional councils at work

*“The implementation of the concept may be changed, but the principles and the objectives of the concept should stay the same.”*

(Interview 1, 29-3-2012)

The frame of reference that is described in chapter two is formed by the knowledge on interactive policymaking. The three main concepts in this frame of reference are diversity, clarity and power. These concepts are important to be taken into account while working with a model that aims to use input of other actors in policymaking processes. In this chapter, the practice of ICCO's regional councils is examined by these three concepts and the criteria they underline. It is described how the regional councils work in practice and what kind of participation level is most comparable to the regional councils in practice.

First, it is examined in general how the regional councils function in practice. Next, the embedded case study on the regional council of Southern Africa is described. This part highlights how the regional council works in practice and indicates how it participates in the policymaking process of this region. The meeting in May 2012 of this regional council is central in the examination. The meeting and the preparation of it are observed in detail. Thereafter, the findings on the practical use of ICCO's regional councils are compared to its formal model, to the frame of reference on successful interactive policymaking and to the participation levels. In sum, it is examined how the practice of ICCO's regional councils show similarities with the frame of reference on successful interactive policymaking. It is described if the regional councils lead to input of the South in ICCO's policymaking. This chapter closes with a short conclusion of the main findings of the examination of the regional councils in practice.

### 5.1 Diversity

The importance of creating and using diversity to develop new insights and creative ideas is underlined in the frame of reference on successful interactive policymaking. The challenge is to find the right people to participate in policymaking processes. Not everyone is capable, or able, to participate and most participants will strive for their own ideals while participating. It is important that they have sufficient knowledge to participate, yet, they should not be too involved with the topics that are discussed. ICCO's formal model of the regional councils highlights these criteria. It does not appoint how it includes informal processes in the formal policymaking process, although literature on interactive policymaking indicates this as important.

ICCO wants to make use of diversity in its policymaking by using the input of the regional councils. The right composition of the regional councils is essential in forming the requested diversity. The selection of the regional council members was not followed by a concrete profile, according to a person who was responsible for the selection for two regions (Interview 11, 26-4-2012). He explains: '(...) the profile of the regional council members was not perfectly clear to me in the beginning, but I am sure that one of the founders of ProCoDe<sup>5</sup> had an exact profile in mind.' One of the founders argues that it was complicated to select the right people who could realize ICCO's ambition with the regional councils. 'ICCO wanted high profile persons with a lot of knowledge on the sector and

---

<sup>5</sup> ProCoDe stands for the programmatic approach, co-responsibility and decentralization that ICCO is using.



region. But these big shots do not have a lot of time, which makes it difficult to fulfill their tasks as a regional council member.’ (Interview 1, 29-3-2012). He states that the councils should include a right balance between different sectors, gender, age, and experience. ICCO wanted to have people who are objective, neutral and independent from the organization. Partners of ICCO were not allowed as members, and participants were not allowed to be involved with the work of ICCO. Although these measures were effective, they caused difficulties as well. Participants needed to have sufficient knowledge on the work of ICCO to be able to function as a regional council member. In addition, there was a big chance that participants were affiliated with the work of ICCO in some way; they were directly suggested for the recruitment process by people working with, or for ICCO (Interview 11, 26-4-2012). Two regional managers state that the regional council should be as representative as possible for the region and for the work that ICCO is doing. Even though it is impossible to be representative of a region with only a handful of people (Interview 10, 25-4-2012 and Interview 12, 26-4-2012). Interviews with regional managers and the Executive Board Support Office indicate uncertainty about the composition of the regional councils. One interviewee states (Interview 3, 12-4-2012): *“The regional councils are not meant to represent a target group and they are not able to represent the region or their country in any way.”* while another interviewee states (Interview 10, 25-4-2012): *“The regional council should be as representative as possible. It should be a reflection of society.”*

The first step of the selection process was making a list of recommended people by an advisement board, partners and other important people for ICCO. The advisement board included employees of ICCO who wanted to assist in the selection process. Thereafter, the advisement board made a selection on the profile that existed. *“It was not a fixed profile, rather an idea that was formed along the way.”* (Interview 11, 26-4-2012). ICCO wanted people with a regional vision from different sectors. One condition was that there had to be a minimum of one leader of the protestant church in the regional council. The interviewee about the selection process describes in general terms how a candidate was selected (Interview 11, 26-4-2012): *“A good candidate had to stand out, had to have a strong personality. We only needed five minutes to see if someone was suitable for the council. They had to have a regional vision, a helicopter view. And they had to have a view on development cooperation, on ICCO, on the region and on the priorities of the region.”* The exact meaning of these criteria and how they were tested remained undefined.

Regional managers argue that they stimulate informal processes. ‘I always encourage regional office employees to get in contact with regional council members when they are travelling for work.’ (Interview 20, 24-6-2012). A regional manager argues that the functioning of the councils is not depending on structures but rather on relationships. *“My relation with my council is really good, so the functioning of my council is also good.”* (Interview 4, 16-4-2012). Communication between the regional council members and regional managers happens often by informal manners as well. The regional managers have contact with the chairs of the regional councils before the meetings and try to keep in contact with them in between the meetings. Keeping in contact in between the meetings with regional council members is not very successful according to several regional managers. *“We tried everything, made appointments about it and all, but nothing works.”* (Interview 12, 26-4-2012).

ICCO’s formal model of the regional councils indicates that ICCO created a diverse composition in the regional councils. The reality of the selection procedure on the other hand, indicates difficulties with finding the right people. The members should be involved, but not too involved with the topics that

are discussed; ICCO wanted high profile people, but not too high profile; members should be representative of a region, although this is almost impossible with such a small group; and finally, only a small group of people was willing and capable of becoming a regional council member. The functioning of the regional councils in practice indicates all criteria from the frame of reference on successful interactive policymaking. ICCO aims to create the right diversity in the councils, where actors not only participate out of self-interest. It is aiming for a right balance in involvement and independence of participants and regional managers try to include informal processes in their communication with the council members. Moreover, practice shows that these criteria are not naturally found in practice. It is a challenge for ICCO to take these criteria into account and to find the right way to implement this in the functioning of its regional councils.

## 5.2 Clarity

Literature about interactive policymaking indicated that it is important to create clarity on several subjects before, during and after the policymaking process. It has to be clear for all participants what their roles, responsibilities and possibilities are. It has to be clear what is expected from them, what they can expect from other actors and how their input is finally used in the decision-making of the policy development. The highest decision-making body should be involved in the process to experience the added value of the interaction. In addition, he or she can directly create clarity on how input can be used since the final decision-making should remain with the highest decision-making body.

The guidelines of the regional councils precisely describe the formal roles and responsibilities of participants in the policymaking process of ICCO. Interviews with regional managers, employees of the global office, regional council members and regional office employees show that these responsibilities are less clear in practice. *“The implementation of co-responsibility is not exactly clear. There is no clarity on the expectations, the responsibilities and the roles of the regional council and of other actors that are involved with the concept of co-responsibility.”* (Interview 8, 20-4-2012). The interviews show that there is not one, overall understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the regional councils. During a regional council meeting in South Africa, a question was raised by a regional council member: *“What is it that ICCO wants to achieve with co-responsibility? What is it that ICCO wants to achieve with us, the regional council?”* (Observations 7, 9-5-2012).

## Position of regional council within structure of ICCO

The formal model of the regional councils shows that the regional councils advise the Executive Board. Practice creates another picture. *“The formal relation between the regional council and the regional manager, or the regional office is strictly divided. The regional council can criticize the work of the regional office, but this can only happen in a direct line with the Executive Board. In reality this works off course differently. In practice, the Executive Board does not play a role in the advisement of the regional councils.”* states a global office manager (Interview 3, 12-4-2012). Another global office employee confirms this: *“(…) they have a direct, personal and substantive relation with the regional manager. In practice, they work for the regional manager.”* She adds that the advisement of the regional council is more important for the regional manager, because he is responsible for the regional level. *“There exists a contradiction in the formal structure and the practice of the current construction of the regional council, which has consequences for meeting the expectations and for the interpretation of the expectations.”* (Observations 13, 22-5-2012).

The guidelines clearly state that the regional council is part of the governance structure of ICCO. However, there are conflicting views on this within the organization. One regional council member and one regional office employee agree that the regional council is part of the governance structure (Interview 16, 12-5-2012 and Interview 19, 17-5-2012); two other regional council members and another employee of a regional office state, on the other hand, that the regional council is not part of the governance structure of ICCO (Observations 8, 10-5-2012 and Interview 17, 17-5-2012). Indistinctness exists as well about which topics requests input of the regional councils. A regional manager and a regional council member state that the regional councils have a say in corporate and regional issues (Interview 10, 25-4-2012 and Interview 15, 10-5-2012). A global office employee, on the other hand, argues that the responsibility of the regional councils is on a regional level, not on the corporate level. He states that he does not notice the input from the regional council in his work (Observations 5, 23-5-2012): *"We are working on a corporate strategic level and the regional council has nothing to do with this. We are setting the frames that are going to be used to develop regional policy."* The current director of ICCO states as well that the model of co-responsibility mainly focuses on the regional level (Interview 24, 10-7-2012). The guidelines describe the role of the regional councils clearly; the understanding of their role in reality, nevertheless, differs per person.

The global office has an important role in the functioning of the regional councils. Some regional managers and global office employees state that this role is too big and that the global office dominates the concept. Some regional council members argue, on the other hand, that this is the role that the global office should take. They argue that it is ICCO that has initiated this model. Therefore it should be ICCO who decides what it wants to achieve with it. Meanwhile, the Executive Board actively uses the input of the regional councils. One of the founders of co-responsibility states that ICCO works with the principle of comply or explain. The Executive Board has to follow the advice of the regional council when it fits into the overall frame of ICCO. When it is not able to follow the advice, it has to explain why it was not able to do so (Interview 1, 29-3-2012). A regional office employee puts a critical note to this principle (Interview 19, 17-5-2012): *"ICCO has to explain why it did not follow the advice, but the explanation does not have to be acceptable. The explanation does not have to make any sense."* Regional council members, regional managers, and employees of the global office all emphasize that it is important to realize that the Executive Board always has the final say in decisions. *"Our role is to advise and to give input, but the Executive Board decides what it wants to do with it."* (Interview 16, 12-5-2012) The director of ICCO also states: *"In the end it is the Executive Board and the Supervisory Board that has to be accountable towards the ministry and towards its back donors. That has to be clear. We cannot say: 'I am sorry; I know that we made these agreements but our regional councils do not agree'."* (Interview 24, 10-7-2012).

All interviewees, who are asked about the roles and responsibilities of regional council members and employees of ICCO, agree that ICCO is responsible for making an overall framework. This should explain the context in which the regional councils have to work. One regional office employee adds (Interview 17, 17-5-2012): *"But this frame is so general, it can mean everything. We have to give meaning to it. That is our responsibility because we understand the context and we know best how we can deal with certain matters here."* She argues that the regional council gives advice and input on the strategy of the regional office. Together they can have an even stronger contextualization.

## Roles and responsibilities

It remains unclear what kind of decisions should be directed to the regional councils. The regional councils *“play a crucial role regarding policy development and have an important responsibility in assessing the implementation of the approved policy plans in the region”* (Observation 18, Guidelines). They are co-responsible for strategic decisions on a high level, according to the Executive Board Support Office. They are not responsible for operational decisions, decisions about funding, choosing partner organizations or implementing programs. The question is whether it is an operational choice or a strategic choice. There is, for instance, disagreement about decisions related to retrenchments. ‘The fact that we had to withdraw from countries was due to retrenchments and was an operational choice. Hence, it was not the responsibility of the regional councils.’ state a manager within the global office and a regional manager (Observations 19, 27-4-2012 and Interview 12, 26-4-2012). The manager within the global office adds that ICCO did consult the councils, but that they did not respond, or gave as advice that ICCO could not withdraw from any country. ‘That was no longer an option, we had to withdraw. So we made a proposal and send it to the regional councils, but we never heard anything from them again. We are not going to sit back and wait, so we made our own choices.’ (Observations 19, 27-4-2012). The manager states on one hand that it is not the responsibility of the regional councils, because it is an operational choice; but states on the other hand that they did consult the regional councils, and that they did not respond and did not take their responsibility relating to this item. Another interviewee states that it was a remarkable choice to not involve the councils with this topic (Interview 11, 26-4-2012): *“Probably you think now that these are the big strategic questions where the regional council is responsible for. Yes, that is a shame. The global office has its own argumentation, but the people from the region, like the regional council members, have specific information that can really help with making these decisions.”* A regional manager tells that he does not know what happened when ICCO had to withdraw from countries. *“I wonder if ICCO has asked the regional council for advice.”* (Interview 8, 20-4-2012). This last remark indicates again the uncertainty about the roles and responsibilities of the regional councils.

## Involvement of participants

One thing that was mentioned in almost every interview about the regional councils, is that the council members are all really busy people. Regional managers, the Executive Board Support Office, employees of the global office, employees of a regional office and the council members themselves emphasized many times that the members are extremely busy and that their functioning is influenced by this fact. This remark was most of the time not made as a complaint, however, but rather as an explanation of the functioning of the regional councils. It is mentioned as something that ICCO has to be aware of and should anticipate on: *“Constantly we have to think what we can ask the regional council members, because they are very busy”* (Interview 9, 23-4-2012).

The regional councils are supposed to give input on the work and policy of ICCO. They are supposed to give asked and unasked advice to ICCO. However, there are no clear agreements on when, how and how often this should happen. Therefore it is also difficult for employees of ICCO to hold the regional council accountable or to control if they are doing their work. An answer of the person responsible for the communication between the Executive Board and the regional councils illustrates this (Interview 9, 23-4-2012): *“I am not going to act like a schoolteacher. I cannot control what is happening with the regional councils. Some regional managers tell me about it, others do not. I just do not know.”* The director of ICCO and global office employees state that they want the regional

councils to be more proactive and to take more initiative. Several regional managers and employees of the global office describe that regional council members are not taking their responsibilities and do not live up to the guidelines. Especially giving input on the agenda for the regional council meeting is something that does not happen a lot: *“The Executive Board Support Office makes the agenda in cooperation with the regional manager. This agenda is approved by the Executive Board and send to the regional councils, so they can give input as well. But we almost never hear something from them”* states an employee of the global office (Interview 9, 23-4-2012). A regional manager confirms this and explains how she anticipates on this fact (Interview 12, 26-4-2012): *“When the regional council members are gone, they are really gone and no longer occupied with ICCO. (...) No matter what we try. But when they are here, they are really here. So I make use of them on that moment and I make sure that there is always some space on the agenda so we can add their points as well. And if needed, we just discuss a bit longer in the evening.”* The person responsible for making the agendas for the regional council meetings, describes that it is frustrating that a lot of members do not respond, nor give any input on the agenda. But she also adds (Interview 9, 23-4-2012): *“They know their responsibilities. They know that they are coming to the meeting to give input on the policy etc. So they know what they are supposed to do and they know what their role is.”* This statement is conflicting with the responsibility of the regional councils to give input on the agenda. It raises questions about one of the objectives of the regional councils. The regional councils have been developed to give an objective, independent and critical view on the work of ICCO. Their role is to raise new topics that are of importance for the region and to give asked and unasked advice. The space to do this is limited, however, when ICCO decides what will be discussed during a meeting.

An important role for the chairperson is appointed by different interviewees. *“The chairperson has to make sure that an active discussion evolves during the meetings. It is not an easy task, but it is extremely important”* argues a regional manager (Interview 20, 24-5-2012). The director of ICCO states: *“Being a chairman is a very important task. It is sort of a linking pin between the global office and the regional managers.”* (Interview 24, 10-7-2012). An employee of the global office expresses her opinion about the facilitation of a meeting in an email after a regional council meeting (Observations 13, 22-5-2012): *“Chairpersons do not make use of their role in the best way possible. They do not cause the triple down effect to the other members as we thought they would.”* She states that a lot of times the chairperson does not know the exact agenda and is consequently not the best person to fulfill this role.

The formal model of the regional councils describes the roles and responsibilities of the regional councils clearly. The functioning of the regional councils is affected by a lot of uncertainties, however. The Executive Board, the highest decision-making body of ICCO, is part of the participation with the councils. Nevertheless, it does not lead to clarity on how the input of the regional council members can be used, or is used in the final decision-making. Regional council members, regional managers, regional office employees and global office employees all create a different picture of the roles, responsibilities, and possibilities of the councils. Sometimes their understanding shows a slightly different picture. More often their understanding shows contradicting views between different employees and between the formal process and the implementation of it in reality.

### 5.3 Power

So far, the importance of clarity is underlined. Literature argues that there has to be agreement on the roles of the participants, the possibilities to influence and on what happens with the given input.

The participants in ICCO's model of the regional councils indicate that exactly these points are not clear to them. Different opinions exist about the role of the regional councils. In addition, participants do not know how much influence they are supposed to have, they do not know how much influence they are able to have and they do not know how much influence they eventually have in the total process of the decision-making. They are not aware of the amount of power they have in the policymaking process of ICCO.

It is described in chapter two that it is necessary for participants to have some sort of power to be able to have influence in a policymaking process. Participants should have some resources to hold the decision-makers accountable; otherwise their input is irrelevant. At the same time, policymakers are searching for the right balance with interactive policymaking processes. They want to use the input of participants, even though they want to keep the final decision-making with the authorities.

### Uncertainty about influence

The guidelines for the regional councils describe: *"Its power is based upon influence and inspiration rather than upon legal formalities."* (Observations 18). Three regional council members, two regional managers and four employees of the global office agree that the regional council members are not decision-makers and have no formal powers, but do have possibilities to influence. The amount of influence, however, is not clear for many interviewees (Interview 14, 9-5-2012, Interview 17, 17-5-2012; Interview 19, 17-5-2012; Interview 12, 26-4-2012). One regional council member and two regional managers confirm that the regional council has influence on the regional policy formulation (Interview 15, 10-5-2012, Interview 4, 16-4-2012 and Interview 10, 25-4-2012). Others add that the regional councils do not have power to hold ICCO accountable and that ICCO can do with their advice what it wants. There is no certainty of influence (Interview 16, 12-5-2012, Interview 14, 9-5-2012, Interview 10, 25-4-2012, Interview 8, 20-4-2012, Interview 3, 12-4-2012, Interview 11, 26-4-2012, Interview 5, 17-4-2012, Interview 17, 17-5-2012 and Interview 2, 12-4-2012).

A global office employee states that the regional councils are only advisors (Interview 5, 17-4-2012). He argues that it is important that ICCO is honest about this role and states that ICCO creates false expectations by saying that the regional councils are co-responsible for the regional policy. Two regional managers tell that their regional councils thought that their role was more than advisement. 'They thought they had the power of decision-making (...). This understanding is changed and they know now that they can advise the Executive Board, but that the Executive Board makes the decisions.' (Interview 12, 26-4-2012). *"The council members got the impression that they would be co-responsible for the decision-making of the policy. I do not think that this was the intention of the model. (...) It is our intention that we listen to the councils and that we use their knowledge and input. But the final decision is taken by the Executive Board."* (Interview 8, 20-4-2012). Another regional manager states instead that co-responsibility has to be applied in the entire process of the organization (Interview 4, 16-4-2012). She states: *"Co-responsibility has to be applied in all facets. In the decision-making, planning, monitoring, evaluation, it has to be applied within everything."* The founders of the regional councils state that the regional councils should have a bigger role than advisement (Interview 1, 29-3-2012 and Interview 2, 12-4-2012). *"The term co-responsibility indicates that the global office is no longer exclusively responsible. They have to share this responsibility now"* states one of the founders (Interview 1, 29-3-2012). In addition, he is open about his doubts about how it works in reality (Interview 1, 29-3-2012): *"I am afraid that the regional councils are drifting away from their responsibilities and are left to be only advice. But that is not enough."* Several

interviewees complain about the big role that the global office plays in the concept of co-responsibility. *“The concept is too much about presenting and asking if the regional council agrees. It should be about inspiring and creating new ideas.”* states a regional manager (Interviewee 10, 25-4-2012).

The current form and functioning of the regional councils can be expanded according to several interviewees. Two regional managers state that ICCO can make more use of the regional councils. Another regional manager states (Interview 4, 16-4-2012): *“The regional council said that we do not use their expertise enough.”* One regional manager and a manager within the global office explain that ICCO has to take a stronger lead in asking advice. An employee of the global office oppositely states that ICCO has to take a step back to make space for new insights and creative ideas (Interview 2, 12-4-2012): *“There has to be more space for new ideas (...). In the end the Executive Board formulates the entire program of a regional council meeting. They should ask themselves what they want with the councils. Do they want some sort of approval? I do not think this should be the role of the councils.”* Three regional council members criticize that a lot of topics are already decided on before they are asked about it. *“The fact that we had to lose two members due to cut backs, for example. We talked about the retrenchments and came up with some other solutions but the global office already decided that two members had to leave.”* (Interview 14, 9-5-2012). Regional council members, regional managers and global office employees state that the frame of the global office often dominates the meetings, and therefore the outcomes.

Interviewees state that the regional councils in their current form are reactive. A regional council member states (Interview 16, 12-5-2012): *“We give advice to ICCO on subjects that ICCO thinks are of importance. ICCO decides what it wants to discuss and we react.”* Council members see this as a good thing, but a regional manager has another feeling: ‘The global office takes a lot of space on the agenda. Sometimes I really have the feeling that I have to fight for items about the region.’ (Interview 20, 24-5-2012). One of the founders of the regional councils adds (Interview 1, 29-3-2012): *“The Executive Board finds it difficult to adopt ideas that do not completely fit its mental framework. That is uncomfortable. All of the sudden, it did not hear what the regional council was saying, or it did not understand their point of view. If you are acting like that, you get a self-fulfilling prophecy; the Executive Board is saying that not much useful is coming from the councils and the councils are not saying anything anymore because they know that the Executive Board decides on its own in the end.”* A global office employee states that she wants to get more input from the region: ‘I am happy to get input and in fact, I am explicitly asking for it. Unfortunately the regional councils do not respond so I cannot use their input.’ The point that the regional councils do not respond is emphasized more than once by several regional managers and global office employees. ICCO wants the regional councils to become more proactive and to take more initiative in creating the agenda, but the regional councils do not respond to this request. Employees of the global office try to optimize the functioning of the regional councils in cooperation with the regional managers and the regional councils. In 2011 the global office changed the fee of 1000 Euros per year into a fee of 500 Euros per attended meeting. If they are not able to attend, they will not receive their fee. Besides this, there are no concrete ways for ICCO to hold the regional council members accountable for their functioning and for living up to their roles and responsibilities.



## Added value of regional councils

Interviews with the director of ICCO, with regional managers, global office employees, regional council members and regional office employees show that the regional councils especially have an important role in the context analysis for the regional strategic plan. One regional manager states (Interview 10, 25-4-2012): *“The regional council made the first steps for the regional strategic plan by making a comprehensive context analysis. With five or six meetings we came to two or three priority areas that became leading in our policy plan.”* A former employee of a regional office (Observations 6, 8-5-2012) puts a critical note to the experiences of the regional managers: *“The program officers are mainly responsible for the country interpretations. It is not clear which input is from the regional council and which input is from other actors. In addition, the global office already developed a lot of programs that should be implemented anyway, despite the advice of the regional councils.”* Most of the interviewees state that the regional councils did have an important say in the context analysis, although it remains unclear for different interviewees what input is used in which way. Therefore it remains unknown how much influence the regional councils actual have on the policymaking of ICCO.

The director of ICCO and several employees of the global office state that the functioning of the regional councils differs per council. ‘Some councils are really strong and really proactive and others are less strong and less proactive.’ (Interview 24, 10-7-2012). Most regional managers are enthusiastic about the regional councils, even though they have some critical remarks about their functioning. One regional manager states (Interview 20, 24-5-2012): ‘I can feel pretty lonely in my function. The regional council is like a sparring partner for me; they provide me with useful feedback and make me stronger in my role.’ Another regional manager confirms this function of the regional council (Interview 4, 16-4-2012): *“I am really happy with my council. It is good to debate intensely and to exchange visions and opinions on our work and on what is happening in the development sector and in our region... the regional council definitely helps to make the policy more contextualized. The regional council makes you see the context better so you can better understand the region and what is needed.”* A third regional manager explains that she is happy with her regional council, but that it does not have extreme or conflicting debates with her regional office (Interview 12, 26-4-2012): *“There has never been a strong contradiction between my regional office and my regional council. (...) We agree on the most important problems in the region; we agree on the fact that we should work regionally instead of nationwide; we agree on the themes that we should work on; and we agree on how we should react on cutbacks.”* She explains that this is probably the case because the regional council was closely involved in the total process of the development of the regional strategy plan. The question arises if the regional council can still fulfill its role of providing an objective and critical view on the organization if they agree on almost everything that ICCO is doing.

Two regional managers describe that the councils do give useful input, but that this is mostly about little things and making nuances. *“I see the regional council somehow as an extra. We have our team, we have consultants, we read, we discuss, etc., and we have the council now. It is another way of checking if we are doing the right things.”* (Interview 4, 16-4-2012). One regional manager is pretty pessimistic about his regional council (Interview 8, 20-4-2012): *“It is no use whipping a dead horse. There is almost nothing useful coming out of the councils (...). If I am looking at the last meetings, the results are so abstract, so general. It is not clear what the concrete topics or definite decision points were. One result was that we had to pay more attention to youth in our policy. But this is so obvious; it is a bit superficial to see this as a result.”* He explains that the regional council is way too



independent in his opinion. *“I wish they came close to becoming too involved with ICCO, because this means that they are involved. I rather have a member that is too involved, than not involved at all.”*

In sum, there is no overall agreement on the role of the regional councils and their power. It is not clear what is expected from them and how they can influence the policymaking process of ICCO. Participants do not have any form of power to hold the decision-makers accountable. The Executive Board takes the final decisions and decides to what amount it will listen to the input of the regional councils. The global office has an important role in the functioning of the regional councils. Some regional managers and global office employees state that the global office dominates the concept. Some regional council members state that this is the role that the global office should take. The director of ICCO and global office employees state that they want the regional councils to be more proactive and to take more initiative in the functioning of the concept. The regional managers and global office employees so far do not notice a difference in the behavior of the regional councils. The need for clarity that is emphasized before is missing in the functioning of the regional councils. This creates uncertainty about the position of the regional councils and the amount of power they have in ICCO's policymaking.

#### **5.4 Regional council Southern Africa at work**

In the following paragraphs the empirical findings of the embedded case study on the regional council of Southern Africa will be discussed. This illustrates how ICCO's model of the regional councils operates. It explores the experiences of regional council members, employees of this region, and other employees related to this regional council. The regional council meeting of May 2012 and the preparation of it, is observed in detail. The meeting was attended by a representative of the Executive Board, the regional manager and six regional council members. A part of the meeting was attended by the regional office employees. The frame of reference that is developed in chapter two indicates three main concepts of diversity, clarity and power. This is used to examine the practical use of the regional council of Southern Africa.

##### **5.4.1 Diversity**

The people selected to be a regional council member, are all in some way connected to ICCO. Some of them are therefore not capable of truly creating critical, objective and new insights. Most of the regional council members are well educated with decent professions. According to different interviewees they are seen as an elite group instead of reflecting ICCO's target group.

Diversity in a group is important to stimulate the right interaction. It is not possible to formally plan interaction; a lot of interaction takes place in informal processes. The regional council and the regional office communicate both in a formal and informal way. Formally, they communicate before, during and after a meeting. This contact is always through the regional manager. *“He communicates with us what he is going to discuss with the regional council members and afterwards he briefs us about the outcomes. In addition, there is always someone from the regional office partly present at the meeting to talk about subjects that directly concerns our office”* explains a regional office employee (Interview 17, 17-5-2012). Informally, they communicate when someone from the regional office is traveling. *“We always try to meet with a council member when we are in their country. If it is not possible to meet, we phone each other or we will have contact in another way.”*, states another regional office employee (Interview 18, 17-5-2012). The agenda of the regional council meeting has a tight time schedule. There is no room left for new topics that may come up and the time set per topic

is most of the time a maximum of forty-five minutes. During the meeting it appears that this is not sufficient for many topics. Discussions are often stopped before everyone was able to give his or her input. The chair or regional manager may decide to extend some discussions. This affects the other subjects that need to be discussed. The time planned for the breaks, and the scheduled time to stop in the evening, nevertheless, remains more or less the same. The representative of the Executive Board emphasizes the importance of informal processes to continue or promote discussions. She states that a lot of useful interaction takes place during dinner or in the lobby of the hotel. 'For that reason, it is important to have good accommodation and to have a nice place to sit where conversations are stimulated.' (Observations 8, 10-5-2012).

The developed frame of reference on successful interactive policymaking indicates that people only interact and participate when they can benefit in a way from it. The regional council members get a fee for being present at a meeting. In that way, they do benefit from participating. They cannot be held accountable for the amount of input they give during a meeting.

#### 5.4.2 Clarity

Literature on interactive policymaking indicates that roles, responsibilities, expectations, possibilities and outcomes of the interaction, should be apparent to all participants. Clarity is one of the preconditions to make a model of interactive policymaking successful. The examination of the regional councils in general, indicated that uncertainty surrounds the model of the regional councils. In the following paragraphs it is described if there is enough clarity on the model of the regional councils for the participants of the regional councils Southern Africa.

The minutes of the regional council meetings, communicate the main outcomes and action points towards the Executive Board. Clarity on the outcomes of the interaction should consequently become apparent in these minutes. These reports show what is discussed during the meetings. The exact influence of the regional council in the policymaking process of ICCO does not become apparent however. Regional council members emphasize more than once, that they do not know how their input is used. They argue that there has been a lot of uncertainty about the roles and responsibilities of the regional council and about how their influence is used. The minutes show that participants ask for more contact between the regional council and the regional office, and for a clearer link between the Executive Board and the regional council. The second meeting created more clarity on the roles of the regional council, as stated in the minutes. One of the directors of ICCO explained that the regional council is not a decision-making body, but can use *recognized influence*. The minutes do not appoint what this would exactly mean. The Executive Board sent a letter at the end of the year, to indicate how the input of the regional council is used in the decision-making process. The description remains general. It is difficult to see how much influence the regional council had in comparison with other actors in the policymaking process (Observations 24). Since 2012, the Executive Board writes a report after each regional council meeting. These reports describe how ICCO used the input of the regional councils and describe what is going on within the organization. This can create more clarity on the outcomes per regional council.

The agenda of the regional council meeting indicates what is expected from the regional council members. Every topic on the agenda indicates its own objective (see Observations 13). These objectives change during the meeting and are experienced differently by diverse participants. For instance, the discussion about the investment fund of ICCO has as objective to get input and ideas

from the regional council. The discussion, however, is mainly about the structure of the investment fund. A manager at the global office explains after the regional council meeting that the decisions about the structure already have been made. Someone from the global office visited South Africa to talk about it, but this is apparently not communicated with the regional council members. 'At this moment, it would only be useful to talk about ideas for specific projects or organizations which can be of importance for the investment fund. This example indicates the way of working between the global office and the regional councils. We, the global office, have thought everything through before we present it to the regional councils.' (Observations 14, 11-6-2012). The regional manager explains that this topic was only discussed to 'get some ideas' (Interview 20, 24-5-2012). He indicates that this was also the case with the topic of becoming an Entrepreneurial Innovator, 'these topics are so abstract.' He states that this subject was not his priority. This is contradictory with the way the subject was communicated to the regional council. In the emails in preparation of the meeting, the regional council was explicitly asked to think about experiences with becoming an Entrepreneurial Innovator. This is a direct form of asking for input. In addition, this was the only subject that was marked in the emails with a direct quest for input. This indicates that it was a priority for ICCO.

During the second day of the meeting, the regional office joins for a discussion about lobby and advocacy. The regional council members are clearly more present and a lively discussion arises. The discussed content is closer related to the actual work of ICCO. Regional council members raise critical questions and share their point of view. It seems that the regional council members feel involved with the topics discussed during this part of the meeting. The guidelines of the regional council, however, indicate that the main responsibility of the regional council is to advice on a high strategic level. The regional office has planned a visit to a partner organization of ICCO, on the third day of the regional council meeting. Only two regional council members were able to join. After the field visit, there was time for reflections and to ask questions about the partner organization. The two regional council members took an active role in the debate about the work of the partner organization. Regional council members gave more input during the discussion with the regional office, and during the visit to the partner organization, than they gave during the meeting in general.

The regional council members and the regional manager state that they are satisfied with the process and outcomes of the meetings. The regional manager stated before that he could use more critical input from the regional council members (Interview 10, 25-4-2011; Interview 20, 24-5-2012). Especially the advice of the regional council, on how the regional office should react to the upcoming retrenchments was helpful for the regional manager. Reading back the observations of the meeting (see Observations 8, 10-5-2012) and the minutes of the meeting, the advice of the regional council can be summarized as follow: 'You are the regional manager and you have the knowledge that is needed to make the decisions, we support you in the choices you are going to make. (...) You have to look to your objectives and decide what is possible to do while still reaching your goals (...). It is important to keep in mind which way ICCO wants to develop. Then you can see what is possible to do.' In other words, the regional council argues that the regional manager is the one who has the knowledge to decide what is needed in this matter. Still, this is useful advice for the regional manager.

Although the objectives are stated in the agenda per subject, the achievement and understanding of the objectives change during the meeting. This creates uncertainty for participants. They do not know what is expected from them or how they can influence the policymaking process.

## Roles and responsibilities

The regional council members of Southern Africa are in general happy with their role and with the functioning of the model. At first glance it looks like the roles and responsibilities are clear. Three regional council members state that they are in the council to give advice. ICCO has to decide what it wants to discuss. *“It has always been clear that we are only advisement. We do not make the final decisions.”* (Observations 7, 9-5-2012). Another regional council member states (Interview 16, 12-5-2012): ‘The mandate of the regional council did not change, but our performance did because we got a better understanding of our roles and responsibilities.’ An employee of the regional office expresses that the regional office wants to make more use of the regional council members: *“There is not enough clarity on the role of the regional council (...) how can we use their expertise and knowledge?”* (Interview 17, 17-5-2012). A new employee of the regional office states that she has the feeling that she can make use of the regional council members for advice or assistance in any way. *“That is also why I want to know more about them, so I know on which topics I can ask something.”* (Interview 19, 17-5-2012). Later during the meeting, the roles and responsibilities and the possibilities of the regional council to influence decisions of ICCO are discussed. It seems that there does in fact exist different and contrasting opinions about its mandate. A discussion during the meeting on the change of ICCO towards becoming a cooperative instead of staying a foundation illustrates this. The change has a lot of impact on the organization and on the position of the regional council. This subject was put on the agenda to inform the regional council about the current developments of ICCO, but the regional council rapidly reacts in another way. It begins discussing this new structure of ICCO.

The representative of the Executive Board and the regional manager explain why ICCO chose this new structure. In addition, they point the regional council on the fact that this item was already discussed during a meeting in November in the Netherlands. A discussion took place in November between all the chairpersons from the regional councils and the Executive Board. The representative of the Executive Board explains that this was briefed several times to the regional councils per email and that the chairpersons were supposed to communicate this with the rest of the regional council as well. The reaction of the regional council members clearly shows that they were not aware of this meeting and that they did not read the reports about it. A regional council member reacts: ‘we are gathered here as an impulse of ICCO. The fact that we are reacting on this topic indicates that we feel involved. ICCO asked us to give more input on strategic subjects and to look more broadly than only subjects related to the region. ICCO wanted to create ownership, the fact that we are responding to this topic indicates that there is ownership now.’ Due to the time schedule the discussion was stopped reasonably fast. One regional council member expresses his questions about this topic and asks if it is possible to talk about it more at another moment. Other regional council members agree that the subject was not yet closed and that a further discussion is needed. The regional council members, the regional manager and the representative of the Executive Board decide to talk about it during lunch and to discuss it the next day as well. The regional council members chose to write a letter directly to the Executive Board to describe their concerns about the cooperative, adding advice and input from their perspective. During lunchtime the regional council member that suggested continuing the discussion chose to sit with the regional manager and the representative of the Executive Board. They sat at a table without any room for others, so they excluded the other regional council members from their conversation. The other regional council members sat at a big table and had a loose conversation about the topic that was just under discussion.

After the meeting, the regional manager and the representative of the Executive Board express their views on the discussion that just took place. The regional manager states: *“This was actually exactly what I wanted. I wanted them to be more critical; that they would stand up and would say what they thought was important. This is happening now. The hardest part is that they cannot do anything about it anymore. The subject has already been decided on.”* The representative of the Executive Board adds: *“And that is what frustrates me, apparently no one has read the reports of the November meeting. Otherwise they would have asked questions before. That is also their own responsibility.”* One regional council member states in his interview (Interview 15, 10-5-2012): *“In this case it is the question whose responsibility it is. Did ICCO have to inform us more directly? Or did we have to do more with the documents ICCO has sent us?”* The director of ICCO states that it is not the task of the councils to discuss if the form of a cooperative is the best form for ICCO, *“This is something that the Supervisory Board has to do and it is not something that is related to the mission of the regional councils.”* (Interview 24, 10-7-2012). This statement is contrasting the statements of the representative of the Executive Board and the regional manager; they emphasize that ICCO did consult the regional councils with little response.

### **Involvement of participants**

During the meeting there is a notable difference in involvement of the members in giving input, participating in discussions and asking questions. Two regional council members give the most input, also when the regional manager or the representative of the Executive Board is not explicitly asking for it. These members are also taking initiative in bringing up new items and asking critical questions. Two other members are participating in discussions when they are directly asked, sometimes give unasked advice or comments and ask questions. One regional council member is quiet and seems a bit absent during the meeting. He makes a few, long statements that are difficult to follow. His statements do not necessarily suit the subject that is under discussion during that moment and most of the times it remains unclear what he wants to achieve. His English is difficult to follow and the other regional council members, regional manager or representative of the Executive Board rarely react on him. It is difficult to observe the involvement of the regional council members while they are not actively discussing. Some regional council members are sending emails, writing a report or surfing on the internet during the meetings. Although some members still interact with the discussions while also doing other things, others are not completely present and remain quiet.

The chairperson is reasonable quiet during the meeting and does not participate strongly in discussions. He tries to keep to the time schedule and tries to move on to new topics when possible. He does not stimulate other regional council members actively to participate in the discussions and is not always aware of the content of the topics that are on the agenda. While presenting the agenda the first day, the regional manager and the representative of the Executive Board take over to explain the topics that are going to be discussed. In the beginning of the meeting there are several moments that the regional manager, the representative of the Executive Board and the chairperson consult each other privately to decide on the progress of the meeting. Later, the regional manager and the representative of the Executive Board discuss without the chairperson and take more lead in presenting the agenda and coordinating the meeting (Observations 7, 9-5-2012 and Observations 8, 10-5-2012). The representative of the Executive Board expresses her doubts about the role of the chairman in an email after the meeting (Observations 13, 22-5-2012). She states that there is some confusion about who can take lead in the meeting: ‘Actually it is the role of the chairperson, but the

regional manager and I know more about the agenda.’ She states (Observations 13, 22-5-2012): “... Subsequently I ask myself the question, who’s responsibility is it to appoint members to their responsibilities? In theory this is the chairman, together with the Executive Board, but what if the chairman has barely read the articles or prepared the agenda?”

The regional manager addressed a regional council member one time personally during the meeting to ask for input (Observations 8, 10-5-2012). The question was already raised to the regional council as a group, but no one was responding. The regional council member in question did respond with a useful answer, which raises the question why he did not come up with this answer before. In general there is little guidance in creating a critical debate during the meeting. The representative of the Executive Board criticizes more than once that the regional council did not prepare sufficiently. ‘They did not bring the minutes, did not respond to questions asked in emails, did not give input for the agenda and did not read the articles and reports to prepare themselves for the meeting.’(Observations 7, 9-5-2011). A regional council member admits during breakfast on the first day of the regional council meeting: “I had planned to prepare last night, but I got caught up in a conversation about the situation in Zimbabwe. I totally forgot about the time. So I was not able to prepare properly.” (Observations 7, 9-5-2012). The regional manager on the other hand explains that he is content with the preparation of the regional council members. “Yes they do prepare sufficiently, take for example someone like J. She is to perfection prepared for the meeting.” (Interview 20, 24-5-2012). Surprisingly the regional manager is talking about the same person that told during breakfast that she was not able to prepare properly. The format of the meeting seems to be adjusted to the fact that the regional council members do not prepare. The information that was sent to the members to prepare is explained again. A large amount of time is used to inform the regional council about topics where ICCO is dealing with.

Uncertainty about the roles and responsibilities of different participants creates uncertainty about who can hold others accountable for their tasks, presence and involvement during the meeting. regional council members are not addressed when they are not interacting during a meeting; they are not addressed when they are busy with other things like sending emails or reading a magazine; they are not addressed when they do not respond to emails, questions, reports or direct quests for input or advice on the meeting; and they are not addressed when they do not keep in contact in between the meetings. On the other hand, ICCO does invest in the regional councils. Every regional council member gets a fee of 500 Euros per attended meeting and all the costs for travelling and accommodation is paid by ICCO. One discussion about the quality of the dinner was contrasting the roles of the regional council and the roles of ICCO. Members of the regional council complained about the quality of lunch and asked the regional manager why it was not possible to go out for dinner or lunch. This discussion was, half-jokingly half seriously discussed before lunch. Maybe it was already planned, but the next day the regional council and the regional office went out for dinner. The regional council is not afraid to hold ICCO accountable for a good lunch and decent accommodation, while ICCO is not addressing the regional council directly on their roles and responsibilities.

According to literature on interactive policymaking, it has to be clear how the input from the regional council is used and what kind of effect it will have on the final decision-making. In that way the interaction within a regional council meeting becomes relevant. The regional manager is responsible for making the minutes of the meeting. The representative of the Executive Board made the minutes

from the meeting in South Africa. She states in an email that she experienced the difficulties with making the minutes, although she has a lot of knowledge about the subjects that were discussed (Observations 16, 7-6-2012). She argues later in a conversation at the global office that there are often problems with the minutes of regional council meetings. 'Sometimes there is too much written down, without giving meaning to what was important. And sometimes there is just too little written down, so it is almost impossible to understand what was under discussion.' The regional manager of Southern Africa states that most of the times he makes the minutes himself, so he also knows directly what he should do and how he can use the information from the meeting. In addition there is always an action list after every meeting, so everyone knows what he or she should do. The regional manager explains that he tries to make notes and discuss as soon as possible with his regional office the points that are important for his team. He adds: "*And other subjects or remarks are just things that you keep in the back of your head.*" (Interview 20, 24-5-2012).

The empirical findings on the regional council of Southern Africa so far indicate that there is no clarity on the roles and responsibilities of the different participants. There is not one person who takes the responsibility for the functioning of the meeting. The chairman does not take an active role in leading the meeting; the regional manager and the representative of the Executive Board do not take lead in the meeting because they feel this is not their task. There is also a lack of certainty regarding expectations of different participants. The representative of the Executive Board is disappointed that the regional council members did not prepare sufficiently, while the regional manager states to be satisfied with the preparation, for instance. Participants underline their roles, responsibilities, expectations and possibilities to influence differently. Subsequently, the functioning of the model of the regional councils is experienced differently per person as well.

### 5.4.3 Power

The regional council is developed to give input on the policymaking of ICCO. What happens with the input is related to a certain amount of power or influence that participants have. The participation levels described in chapter two are a useful instrument to name the position of the participants. It remains difficult to appoint which input is used in the total process, because there are many actors involved with the policymaking. Dahl (1957:202-203) describes influence as one actor getting another actor to do what it otherwise would not do. To be able to influence a process, or an actor, it is important to be able to see an overall picture of what is discussed. It is also important to know which subjects did not make the decision-making agenda, but were of importance for the subjects that are discussed. A precondition for participants to truly participate is to have influence on the agenda and to have some sort of resources to hold the authorities accountable. This can ensure participants that their input is used.

The regional manager of Southern Africa and an employee of the global office together developed the agenda for the regional council meeting in May 2012. The employee of the global office got input from the Executive Board and other departments from the global office; the regional manager got input from his regional office and his regional council. Formally, the regional council and the regional manager develop the agenda for the meeting together. This process is formally facilitated by an employee of the global office. Email contact in preparation of the regional council meeting between the regional manager and the global office employee indicated how the agenda setting went in practice. The agenda is developed without direct input from the regional council. The global office employee and the regional manager tried to get input from the regional council members. This will,



according to the global office employee, lead to more active input and a better prepared group during the meeting. In that way the regional council members will become more involved. Several emails describe that there is still room for input from the regional council members on the agenda. The regional council members are asked to give input on the agenda and to give final feedback on the regional policy plan. None of the regional council members responded to these emails.

They state to be satisfied with the agenda that is developed by ICCO. ICCO wants the regional council to give input on the agenda and to be more proactive. It wants to create possibilities for the regional council to have more influence in the total process of the policymaking of ICCO. The regional council does not utilize this possibility and is neglecting the chance to participate on a higher level.

The Executive Board of ICCO has final responsibility in all decision-making. The Executive Board, in cooperation with the regional manager, mainly decides which topics are going to be discussed, when this will happen and to which amount the regional council can still have influence on the topics. It is remarkable that important subjects like the change towards becoming a cooperative, retrenchments within the regional councils or withdrawal from countries are not discussed before the main decisions are already taken. The majority of the regional council argues that it is not a good sign after ICCO presents topics to them when the Executive Board has already decided on those topics. A regional council member illustrates: *"It is like you want to discuss how a house should look like, while it is already build."* (Observations 7, 9-5-2012). This indicates also the power of ICCO in comparison with the regional council. ICCO knows what is going on in the organization and can decide to put items on the agenda to discuss. When ICCO decides not to discuss certain subjects and to make the decisions on its own, the regional council does not know what is going on. It does not have the knowledge, experience and resources to see everything going on within ICCO and thus rely on the information that ICCO provides.

### Uncertainty about influence

A discussion arises during the regional council meeting about the role of the regional council members and on which level they can influence decisions of ICCO (Observations 7, 9-5-2012 and Observations 8, 10-5-2012). Several members state that they should not get more power because 'more power means more responsibilities and we do not have time to live up to these responsibilities.' Another regional council member adds that they already have a lot of possibilities to influence, but that they do not make sufficient use of it: *"We can for example take more initiative in setting the agenda, but I never did that and I do not get the impression that one of you did."* Most of the regional council members agree that they have a role of advisors. Two members state that they are happy with this role and that they cannot give an example of advice that ICCO did not follow. Two other members express their dissatisfaction with their role as advisement because they cannot hold ICCO accountable for what it does with their advice. Two employees of the regional office express their doubts about the amount of influence the regional council has: *"I wonder how much weight the advice of the regional council has in the global office"* (Interview 17, 17-5-2012). Another employee raises the same doubts: *"I think the regional councils have a great potential to play a pivotal role in presenting the vision from the ground (...), but I wonder if these voices go up in the organization and if they carry any weight (...). Because at the end of the day, we all know that the Executive Board is taking the decisions."* (Interview 19, 17-5-2012).



This research did a survey about the perception of regional council members, the regional manager and regional office employees on the amount of influence of the regional council on several topics related to ICCO, and on the different phases of the decision-making of strategic regional policy and the regional annual plan. There was a lack of cooperation of participants. Only two regional council members immediately filled in the questionnaire; the others replied that they would give it back later. None of them gave it back without the researcher asking for it. The outcomes of the questionnaires gave really diverse answers on the amount of influence of the regional council on several subjects and in different phases of decision-making processes of ICCO. The main similarity was found in the answer, “*I don’t know*” which related to the amount of influence of the regional council. This indicates once more that there is not an overall understanding on the amount of influence or power of the regional council in the policymaking of ICCO.

### **Added value of regional council Southern Africa**

The regional manager of Southern Africa says he is happy with the council and that it really creates an added value to his policymaking (Interview 10, 25-4-2012 and interview 20, 24-5-2012). “*The regional council made the context analysis so we would know what the regional council members highlighted as important and what was going on in the region. This was really the start of the policymaking. Later, we looked what was needed and what was possible in every country (...). Our policy is based on several things: first, the context analysis of the region by the regional council. Second, the frames of the MFS and other donor requirements and third, our current programs. These last two items were also requested by the regional council. They did want to create new things, but did not want to recreate things that were already there.*” The regional manager tells that the regional council gives useful advice and that he tries to use its input directly (Interview 20, 24-5-2012): “*We do listen to its advice, but we do not groundlessly follow it.*” He states that the regional council may be a bit more critical, although this is also an important task of the facilitation of ICCO. “*I would want them to take more initiative, but at the same time I know I cannot expect this because they are all really busy people.*” He argues that there was more space for regional topics and initiative of the council members in the beginning of the forming of the regional councils. Currently, the Executive Board is taken over more and more space during the meetings. ‘The meetings are nowadays more about informing the regional council members than getting input from them.’

Several regional council members and employees of the regional office confirm that the regional council had a lot of impact on the development of the regional strategy plan. The regional office employees state that they do notice the influence of the regional council. “*The basic lines are already set by the regional council; we just have to give color to it.*” (Interview 17, 17-5-2012). “*The regional council has set the priorities, decided on the organizations we should work with and the partners we should hold on to. The regional council sets the exact regional priorities and gives a Southern perspective.*” (Interview 18, 17-5-2012). Some conflicting views exist at the moment of influence. The regional manager states that the regional council made the first outline of the context analysis and really took the first steps (Interview 20, 25-4-2012). A regional office employee meanwhile explains that the regional office made the first outline of the regional strategy plan (Interview 17, 17-5-2012). And three regional council members on the other hand state that ICCO made the first outline (Interview 14, 9-5-2012, Interview 15, 10-5-2012 and Interview 16, 12-5-2012). After several interviews it did not become apparent which input was caused by whom. Several interviewees were

not sure in general how it was possible to see which input was given by which actor. This uncertainty makes it difficult to appoint how much influence the regional council had on the policymaking.

Arnstein (1969) stated in his article about the participation ladder that participants should have some sort of power to give meaning to their interaction. The empirical findings indicate that the regional council does not have any power to ensure its influence. They are depending on the information that ICCO gives and they do not have the power to hold the decision-makers accountable. It is not clear for the participants how, when and to what amount the different input is used in the final decision-making. ICCO makes the agenda for the meeting and determines which information reaches the councils. The regional council therefore has to give input based on a picture that might be incomplete. ICCO does ask the regional council to give input on the agenda, however. But the regional council does not respond to this request. Therefore, ICCO offers the regional council more influence than it is willing to take.

#### **5.4.4 Highlights regional council Southern Africa**

The embedded case study on the regional council of Southern Africa indicates that there are still a lot of uncertainties surrounding the functioning of this regional council. The roles, responsibilities, possibilities and expectations of the different participants that are involved in the policymaking processes of ICCO remain unclear. The representative of the Executive Board and the regional manager want the regional council to take a more proactive role. The amount of input from the regional council members varies per person. Uncertainty exists on whose responsibility it is to take lead during the meeting. There is a chairman who should be taking this role, but it appears that he does not have sufficient information or knowledge about the subjects under discussion or about the objectives of the meeting. The agenda setting for this meeting showed that ICCO asked the regional council members several times for input. The regional council members did not respond and did not provide subjects that they wanted to discuss. The regional manager and regional office employees experience an added value of the regional council, especially on the development of the regional strategy plan. It remains unclear, however, where this added value of the regional council exactly becomes visible. The councils do not have the vigor or the resources to hold the decision-makers accountable; the Executive Board takes the final decisions and decides which subjects are discussed on what moment with the regional council. The outcomes of this embedded case study are not by definition applicable to other regions. The results indicate many similarities with the results on the regional councils in general. This is discussed in more detail in the coming paragraphs.

#### **5.5 Participation level of regional councils at work**

Uncertainty surrounds the formal model and functioning of ICCO's regional councils. Roles and responsibilities are not always clear and participants cannot appoint how their input is used in the final policymaking. Participation levels are useful instruments to examine the role of participants in a policymaking process. The coming schematic overview compares the empirical findings on the regional councils in practice per participation level. It describes to what extent the participation levels are visible in the functioning of the regional councils. The description of ICCO's formal model according to the participation levels, as described in chapter four, is also included in this overview. This makes it possible to compare the formal model with the functioning in practice.

## 5.5.1 Participation levels

---

### 1. Inform

The participants are involved in the process to be educated rather than to give input. The people in power inform, convince and influence the people who do not have any rights. They influence what participants want. It is a one-way form of communication with barely any space for feedback or attention to what participants want or need. The decision-makers formulate the agenda and determine which subjects are discussed.

#### **Regional councils' model**

ICCO explicitly indicates that it wants to get input and new ideas from the participants. That is what the concept is all about. Therefore, it does not correspond to this participation level. The formal model indicates that the agenda is made in cooperation with the regional manager, the Executive Board and the regional council. In that respect it also does not correspond to this level of participation.

#### **Regional councils at work**

The functioning of ICCO's model in practice does not correspond to this participation level because ICCO is explicitly asking for input. It pays attention to what participants want and need and tries to stimulate them in their role of giving input. Practice shows that participants are asked to be involved in the agenda development, but that they do not respond to this request. The agenda for the regional council meetings is consequently developed without input from the regional council. ICCO's intention creates another picture than reality.

---

### 2. Consult

Participants are used as partners in the policy developments and are asked to interact and to give their opinion. The results of the discussions are in no way compulsorily for the decision-makers. The participants do not have the vigor or the power to make decisions. The agenda is still formulated by the decision-makers. This level does not have a lot of influence because the participants often do not know which options there are. They are capable of giving their opinion, but this opinion is not based on an overall view.

#### **Regional councils' model**

The formal model aims for interaction with the participants and states that ICCO wants to hear their opinion. The decision-makers should follow the advice of the regional councils and if they are not able to do so, they have to explain why they did not follow the advice. They still make the final decisions, but they have some sort of obligation to the councils to take their advice serious. In the end, the participants do not have the vigor or power to make decisions themselves. The agenda is not solely made by the decision-maker; this does not correspond to this level of participation.

#### **Regional councils at work**

The functioning of the regional councils shows a lot of similarities with this participation level. The regional councils are asked to interact and to give their opinion, but the input is in no way compulsorily for the decision-makers. The Executive Board has to explain if it did not follow the advice of the regional councils. But in practice, the regional councils do not have the formal power to question or object to this decision. Participants do not have the vigor or power to make decisions or to hold the decision-makers accountable. The agenda is still formulated by the decision-makers. Not because ICCO wants it this way, but because the regional councils do not respond to the request to participate in the development of the agenda. The effect remains the same: participants do not know all the different options and do not have all the information to see the bigger picture.

---

### 3. Advice

Participants may suggest problems and discussion points and may formulate solutions. They get a certain level of influence, although the authorities can easily overrule them. Decision-makers commit themselves to the outcomes, but can change their point of view in the final decision-making. If the point of view does change in the end, this change will be examined and explained. The rights and responsibilities of the participants are often ambiguous and not clearly defined. If the participants are meant to be representatives of a certain group, often they do not represent that group at all.

#### **Regional councils' model**

ICCO's formal model corresponds to a great extent with this participation level: participants are involved in the development of the agenda and they are asked to give input and to create ideas. The final decision-making remains with the authorities, although they intend to follow the advice of the regional councils. If they cannot do so, they have to explain why. The rights and responsibilities of the participants are clearly defined in the guidelines of the regional councils, which is contradictory to this level of participation. The composition of the regional councils is also a challenging point for ICCO because it wants to represent the Southern perspective in some way with the regional councils.

---

---

**Regional councils at work**

ICCO wants the participants to interact and to come up with new ideas, but the participants rarely respond to this request. Several interviewees state that the regional councils give useful input during meetings, but they do not give input after the meetings. The regional councils are described and describe themselves as reactive instead of proactive. Authorities can indeed easily overrule the regional councils; they have to explain if it does not follow the advice of the regional councils, but this explanation can mean anything. The rights and responsibilities of the regional councils in practice are ambiguous; they are differently and sometimes contradictory understood by several interviewees. The regional council should become as representative as possible for the region and for the work that ICCO is doing, although it is impossible to be representative of a region with only a handful of people

---

**4. Co-producing/co-creation**

Decision-makers and participants develop the agenda and determine the subjects that are up for discussion. Participants can negotiate with the authorities. Solutions are sought in consultation with each other and the decision-makers make serious use of the input from participants. The participants have some sort of their own financial, technical, and substantive resources to hold the authorities accountable. In that way they can ensure their own needs, wishes and rights.

**Regional councils' model**

*The formal model of the regional councils indicates that the agenda is made in cooperation with the decision-makers and participants. The authorities make serious use of the input from the participants, although the final decision-making remains with the authorities. The participants do not have their own resources to hold the authorities accountable*

**Regional councils at work**

*The agenda is not developed in cooperation with the decision-makers and the participants. Participants do have possibilities to contact the authorities, although this is sometimes only possible in an indirect way. It is not possible to say that they can negotiate with them, because they do not have any kind of resources or power to negotiate with. The cooperation between the authorities and the participants is depending on what the authorities want.*

---

**5. Self-management**

The participants formulate the policy. Decision-makers use the outcomes directly if they fit into the overall framework and conditions. Participants have the amount of power to decide what they think is needed. They can govern programs and institutions. The participants are in charge of policy and management and can determine which other actors can influence their process, instead of the other way around. The management is no longer the decision-maker but rather takes a role of advisement.

**Regional councils' model**

The formal model of the regional councils does not indicate that the participants formulate the policy themselves. They rather give input and advice. Participants do not have the power to guarantee their decisions and they are not in charge of policy and management. Hence, this level of participation does not correspond to ICCO's formal model.

**Regional councils at work**

The functioning of the regional councils does not correspond to this level. The participants do not formulate the policy and their input is not always directly used. Participants do not have the power to guarantee that their input is used. They are not in charge of policy and management and cannot determine which other actors can influence the process.

---

The functioning of the regional councils in practice showed some important facts that indicated a certain level of participation. Many interviewees argue that the regional councils are reactive and do not interact enough in the model of ICCO. The ambition of this model indicates that ICCO wants to get new, critical and independent input on its policymaking. Practice shows that this ambition is not completely achieved. Employees of ICCO state that regional council members do not react on requests for input and do not interact sufficiently. Regional council members argue that ICCO presents many topics to them when it has already decided on it. The fact that the regional council is barely involved with the development of the agenda of the regional council meetings indicates the

limitations of its participation. This is remarkable, though, because ICCO actively asks the regional councils to give input on the agenda. It offers the regional councils a higher level of participation than they are willing to take. The rights and responsibilities of the participants are ambiguous in practice as well. The point that the Executive Board takes all final decisions and that it can easily overrule the regional councils, points to a certain amount of participation as well. The regional councils do not have any resources to hold the authorities accountable. As a result practice shows that the Executive Board decides which subjects are discussed with the regional councils and makes the final decisions. The regional councils in practice, therefore, correspond most to the participation levels of ‘Consult’ and ‘Advice’. This is a lower participation level than the participation levels of ‘Advice’ and ‘Co-producing/co-creating’ indicated in chapter four on the formal model of the regional councils.

## 5.6 Applying the frame of reference

ICCO’s formal model of the regional councils shows many similarities with knowledge on interactive policymaking, as indicated in chapter four. The empirical findings on the functioning of the regional councils described in this chapter, are already compared on specific points to the formal model of ICCO’s regional councils and to the developed frame of reference on interactive policymaking. The coming schematic overview demonstrates the comparison between the criteria indicated by the frame of reference, ICCO’s formal model and the functioning of the regional councils in practice. It indicates which criteria are visible in the formal model and in its practice. An explanation of this overview is described below.

### 5.6.1 Criteria for successful interactive policymaking

| Concepts         | Criteria  | Regional councils’ model                                    | Regional councils at work   |
|------------------|---|---|---|
| <b>Diversity</b> | Create diversity in a group and promote the possibilities of diversity in policymaking processes.                                     | Yes   | To a certain extent   |
|                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Be aware that motivation of actors to participate is mainly self-interest.</li> </ul>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Unknown</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To a certain extent</li> </ul> |
|                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Be aware that only a small group of people is willing and capable to participate.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Unknown</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Yes</li> </ul>                 |
|                  | Include informal processes in formal process.   | Unknown   | No  |
|                  | Create the right balance between involvement and independence of participants with the subjects that are under discussion.            | Yes   | To a certain extent   |
| <b>Clarity</b>   | Create clarity on roles, responsibilities and possibilities of different actors.  | Yes   | No  |
|                  | Create clarity on how the input from different actors is used in the final decision-making.   | To a certain extent   | No  |
|                  | Involve the highest decision-making body in the interaction of the policymaking.  | Yes   | Yes   |
| <b>Power</b>     | Keep final decision-making with the policymakers.   | Yes   | Yes   |
|                  | Participants have a form of power to hold the decision-makers accountable.  | To a certain extent   | No  |

The empirical findings on the functioning of the regional councils show that ICCO is trying to create the right diversity within its policymaking process by establishing the regional councils. ICCO wants to get a critical and independent view on its work and wants to create new insights to improve its policymaking. The formal model of ICCO indicates that the participants in the regional councils come

from a diverse background to form the wanted diversity. Practice, on the other hand, shows the difficulties with finding the right people who are willing and capable to participate. ICCO is struggling with finding participants who have the knowledge, experience, time and objectivity to advise ICCO in its policymaking. ICCO's ambition indicates that it wants to create the right diversity and the right balance in involvement and independence; practice indicates that ICCO realizes this only to a certain extent in reality. The motivation of participants is not explicitly examined in this study. Regional council members receive a fee for attending meetings and all their travel and accommodation costs are paid by ICCO; financial obstacles to participate are in that way compensated. Regional council members indicate that they enjoy meeting the other regional council members and that they appreciate the discussions with them. The actors do value their participation in ICCO's model, but it is not possible to determine if they only participate out of self-interest. A global office employee stresses the importance of using informal processes within the functioning of the regional councils. She states that it is important to create a right environment so people can talk more after the official meeting as well. The embedded case study on the regional council of Southern Africa indicated that discussions also took place in informal settings, for example during dinner. It is not clear how these inputs are used in the formal process of ICCO's policymaking, however. In sum, almost all criteria related to the concept of diversity are found in the functioning of the regional councils. These criteria are not naturally successful implemented, however. ICCO is still searching for the best way to use these criteria on diversity in practice.

Several interviewees emphasize the importance of clarity on roles, responsibilities, expectations, possibilities to influence and on how the input is used in the decision-making. The formal model describes these subjects clearly in the guidelines of the regional councils. The empirical findings on the regional councils in practice, conversely, show that there is no clarity on these subjects. Participants give different answers and discussions during the meeting and within the organization showed conflicting understandings. Participants do not know exactly what is expected from them or what they can expect from others. In addition, it is not clear for participants how their input is used in the final policymaking. The Executive Board is the highest decision-making body within ICCO and is involved with the functioning of the regional councils. It does not create more clarity in the total process of the policymaking, however. This uncertainty leads to different expectations and different experiences from participants of the model and its functioning in practice.

The amount of power of participants remains undefined as well. The Executive Board takes all final decisions and can easily overrule the input of participants. The model and practical use of the regional councils show that the input of the regional councils is actively used to improve decision-making. Participants have the feeling that ICCO listens to them, but they argue as well that many subjects are discussed with them when ICCO already has taken its decision. The regional councils are important for ICCO; they can put pressure on ICCO by using their expertise and contacts within the region. But in the end, they do not have any legal form of power to hold ICCO accountable. In addition, the regional council barely participates in developing the agenda for the meetings. This limits their space to bring and create new insights in the policymaking process. ICCO decides what it wants to discuss and provides the regional councils with the information that ICCO thinks is relevant.

## **5.7 Conclusion**

The practice of the regional councils is described in this chapter according to the three main concepts of the developed frame of reference and the different participation levels. Creating and using

diversity in the policymaking process is found to be a challenging concept in the model of the regional councils. ICCO is searching to find the right people who fit the profile and who can create the right composition for enough diversity. Additional challenges include stimulating the interaction and using this in the formal process of the policymaking. Many uncertainties are related to the model of the regional councils. Roles and responsibilities remain ambiguous in practice; expectations of participants differ; and uncertainty exists on how input is used in the final policymaking. The Executive Board does communicate to the regional councils how it has used their input, but this communication remains general. Because there are many actors involved with the decision-making it is not possible to see which input came from which actor and how this is used in the decision-making. Several interviewees state that the role of the chairman is important during a regional council. He is seen as a linking pin between the Executive Board, the regional manager and the regional council. Interviewees question the manner in which he operates during the meeting, however. Furthermore, this leads to the question: who should hold the regional council members accountable for their roles and responsibilities? Different interviewees state that the regional council members do not prepare sufficiently for a meeting, do not keep in contact in between the meetings and do not respond to requests to become more proactive. The amount of input from the regional council members varies per council member, show the empirical findings.

Most of the regional managers state that they are content with the regional councils, although they feel that the regional councils can be more proactive. The added value of the regional councils is mainly seen in the input they give on the regional strategy plans. Other interviewees state that it is not possible to see which input came from the regional councils. Their input might be less than appointed by the regional managers, state interviewees. Several interviewees indicate that ICCO's model appears to become a form of asking the regional councils for approval. They emphasize that this should not be the case. Employees of the global office state to be content with the regional councils, although they emphasize as well that they should become more proactive. The regional council of Southern Africa states to be satisfied, but it adds that it remains unclear how its input is used and how much influence it has. There is an ongoing discussion within this council on if it should, or should not get more influence. The majority of the regional council members state that more influence also means more responsibilities, and that they do not have the time to take up these responsibilities. They add that they even have some possibilities to influence, like developing the agenda, which they are not using on this moment. The regional office of Southern Africa states to see the added value of the regional council, but they would want to know more specific how they can use the regional council in their work. The functioning of the regional councils in general is not yet optimal. Like the director of ICCO said: 'The model is not the end station, it is rather a means to achieve our objectives.'



## 6. Conclusions, Recommendations and Discussion

*“I think there is a broad support for co-responsibility within the organization. It is an ambition that we want to achieve with each other. But it is also a daring experiment. I am not saying that the form we are using now is the ultimate form. We have to look at how we can improve it. (...) It is not a final model. We are trying to give meaning to the principle of giving influence to our target group in the South. The form has to be the means to achieve this principle; it is not the goal in itself.”*

(Interview 24, 10-7-2012).

Achieving more involvement of the South in policymaking processes of development organizations is highlighted in this thesis. ICCO's regional councils are one way of working with this ambition. The functioning of ICCO's model of the regional councils is still very new. Many interviewees of this study argue that it is a courageous, innovative and daring model. ICCO is one of the first development organizations that made Southern stakeholders co-responsible for its strategy and policy developments. There is a lot of support for the ambition of this model, although participants state that further development of the functioning of the model is needed. The sub research questions are first answered in this chapter to answer the main research question: How do ICCO's regional councils lead to input of the South in the policymaking of ICCO?

### 6.1 Sub research questions

- **How are ICCO's regional councils a form of interactive policymaking?**

The model of the regional councils shows many similarities with models of interactive policymaking. Both models share the ambition of using input of other actors to attain a better connection to beneficiaries. The models show the similar objective of improving policymaking processes and creating policies that better reach the needs of beneficiaries. The used method of ICCO to achieve this objective shows similarities with interactive policymaking as well. Both aim to reach their objectives by using input of other actors in their policymaking processes. Interactive policymaking processes use input of beneficiaries, experts, advisors or citizens in their policymaking. ICCO uses the input of regional councils in its policymaking. ICCO's model of the regional councils exists in the concept of co-responsibility. The organization has developed this concept to attain more influence of the South in its policymaking. The regional councils are appointed as the South in this concept of co-responsibility. The regional councils are co-responsible for the development of policy and strategy for the regions where ICCO is working. They advise the Executive Board about the performance of the regional offices and give requested and unrequested input on strategic issues. The regional councils consist of a diverse group of people that is involved with development cooperation. The ambition with the regional councils is to use input of the South in the policymaking of ICCO, to achieve work that is more context specific and better reaches the needs and wishes of the poor and marginalized. Interactive policymaking processes are used to better reach the needs of clients, citizens or other beneficiaries. ICCO uses a form of interactive policymaking with its regional councils to better reach the needs and wishes of its target group, the poor and marginalized. In sum, ICCO's regional councils are a form of interactive policymaking. This model of the regional councils aspires to a similar objective as interactive policymaking and aims for it in a similar way. Other actors, besides policymakers, are involved in the policymaking process to improve the policies and to better reach the needs and wishes of beneficiaries.

- **What are criteria for successful interactive policymaking?**

Literature on interactive policymaking processes indicated that the concepts of diversity, clarity and power are important to take into account for successful processes of interactive policymaking. The right diversity is needed to create sufficient interaction, new ideas and critical insights. The right diversity is present if there is a balance in involvement and independence from participants relating to discussed topics. Literature underlines that participants need to have sufficient knowledge on the topics to be able to provide input and advice. At the same time they should not be too involved with the topics because their own interests should not prevail. Useful interaction often takes place in informal settings. These informal processes need to be included in the formal process to become meaningful, according to the literature.

Clarity is needed on the roles, responsibilities and expectations of participants in the interactive policymaking process. Furthermore, it should be clear for participants how their interaction is used in the total process of the policymaking. Literature on successful interactive policymaking indicates that this is important to create certainty for participants and to ensure that everyone knows what is expected from them and what they can expect from others. Clarity within the process makes sure that everyone understands and uses the process in a similar manner. In addition, participants can be stimulated to provide input if they see how their input is used.

Participants should have some sort of power to hold authorities accountable, according to the literature on successful interactive policymaking. This can ensure them that their input is used. The final decision-making, nevertheless, remains with the authorities because they have the final responsibility in policymaking. Literature on participation levels indicated that participation becomes meaningful when participants may give input, are involved in the agenda setting and have resources to hold the decision-makers accountable.

The concepts of diversity, clarity and power revealed several criteria that should be taken into account to make interactive policymaking processes successful. These criteria formed a frame of reference that is used to examine how the formal model and practice of ICCO's regional councils correspond to the criteria on successful interactive policymaking processes. The frame of reference is described in the overview on the next page.

## Criteria for successful interactive policymaking

| Concepts         | Criteria  |
|------------------|---|
| <b>Diversity</b> | Create diversity in a group and promote the possibilities of diversity in policymaking processes.                                     |
|                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Be aware that motivation of actors to participate is mainly self-interest.</li> </ul>        |
|                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Be aware that only a small group of people is willing and capable to participate.</li> </ul> |
|                  | Include informal processes in formal process.   |
|                  | Create the right balance between involvement and independence of participants with the subjects that are under discussion.            |
| <b>Clarity</b>   | Create clarity on roles, responsibilities and possibilities of different actors.  |
|                  | Create clarity on how the input from different actors is used in the final decision-making.   |
|                  | Involve the highest decision-making body in the interaction of the policymaking.  |
| <b>Power</b>     | Keep final decision-making with the policymakers.   |
|                  | Participants have a form of power to hold the decision-makers accountable.  |

- **How does the formal model of ICCO's regional councils meet the criteria for successful interactive policymaking?**

Diversity is created in ICCO's formal model of the regional councils to facilitate the right interaction. The regional councils are stated to consist of a diverse group of people with a right balance of gender, ethnicity, age and experience. The regional councils are as representative as possible for the region and have sufficient knowledge on the work of ICCO. At the same time, they are independent so their interaction will not be influenced by their own interests. The formal model does not describe how it includes informal processes. Participants receive a fee of 500 Euros per attended meeting. The formal model does not indicate if ICCO provides this fee because participants only interact out of self-interest, as literature indicated. But by providing the fee, ICCO makes sure that the participants do not experience financial obstacles to participate.

Clarity is created in the formal model of the regional councils. The roles, responsibilities and possibilities of participants are described clearly. All participants can see what is expected from them and what they can expect from others. The final decision-making remains with the Executive Board, the highest decision-making body of ICCO. The Executive Board follows the advice of the regional councils and when it is not possible to do so, has to explain why. It informs the regional councils directly when their input is not used. The formal model does not indicate if and how often the regional councils are informed about how their input is used in the final policymaking.

The regional councils do not have a legal form of power. Formally, they do not have any resources to hold the authorities accountable or to ensure that their input is used. The formal model indicates that the regional councils are asked to give input, to interact, to be involved with the agenda setting and to give critical advice. All preconditions for sincere participation are present in the formal model of the regional councils. To sum up, diversity, clarity and power are important concepts in ICCO's formal model of the regional councils. Most of the related criteria for successful interactive policymaking are visible in the formal model.

- **How do ICCO's regional councils meet the criteria in practice for successful interactive policymaking?**

Diversity is not naturally formed and the right interaction does not naturally take place in the functioning of the regional councils. The selection of the regional council members was a complicated process. It was difficult to find the right people who were willing and capable to become a regional council member. They had to possess sufficient knowledge to be able to give advice, but they should not be too involved with ICCO, or the work of ICCO. Their own interests should not prevail. Useful interaction takes place in informal settings in the practical use of the regional councils. It remains unclear, however, how this interaction is used in the formal process.

Clarity is the concept that shows most challenges for the functioning of the regional councils. Roles, responsibilities, expectations, possibilities and outcomes related to the regional councils are differently understood and remain ambiguous in practice. Participants are uncertain about how their input is used and how much influence they have in the policymaking process. Participants feel that their input is seriously used by ICCO. At the same time they argue that ICCO presents topics to them when it has already taken its decision. The regional managers develop the agenda for the regional council meetings with someone from the global office. They ask for input from the regional council members, but rarely get any response. Many interviewees argue that the regional councils should become more proactive. The highest decision-making body of ICCO is involved in the process. This does not create more clarity in the process of the policymaking, however.

The regional councils do not have a legal mandate or any kind of resources to hold the authorities accountable. The Executive Board takes all final decisions and can determine to what extent it wants to use the input of the regional councils. The amount of influence of the regional councils appears to be rather low in practice. Participants do not respond sufficiently on the request for more input, do not give input on the agenda and do not have resources to hold the decision-makers accountable.

To sum up, the functioning of the regional councils demonstrates the difficulties in practice with obtaining the criteria for successful interactive policymaking. It is challenging to find the right diversity and to stimulate interaction processes; roles, responsibilities and expectations appear to be differently understood by participants; ICCO offers the regional councils different possibilities to give input, but they barely respond to these possibilities. ICCO is still searching for the best way to implement the different criteria for successful interactive policymaking.

## 6.2 Main research question

### **How do ICCO's regional councils lead to input of the South in the policymaking of ICCO?**

The model of the regional councils is comparable with models of interactive policymaking. Both aim to achieve input of other actors in policymaking processes. This input is argued to cause better policies that can better reach the needs of beneficiaries. This research developed a frame of reference that indicates three concepts, diversity, clarity and power, and several criteria that are needed to make an interactive policymaking process successful. This frame of reference is used in examining how the formal model and the practical use of ICCO's regional councils lead to input of the South in the policymaking of ICCO. Successful interactive policymaking is present when the described criteria are visible in the empirical finding on the regional councils. Input of other actors is used in

policymaking processes when an interactive policymaking process is successful. The regional councils are appointed by ICCO as the South. They represent the regions where ICCO is working and create a link to the regional context and the poor and marginalized. Hence, input of the South is used in the policymaking of ICCO when the frame of reference on successful interactive policymaking is applicable to the empirical findings on the regional councils.

The formal model of ICCO's regional councils leads to input of the South in the policymaking of ICCO. Diversity, clarity and power all have an important place in this formal model. Almost all related criteria are visible as well. The right diversity is created in the regional councils and interaction is stimulated; roles, responsibilities, expectations and outcomes related to the regional councils are clearly described; the regional councils do not have any legal power but they do have sufficient influence. They are asked to give input, to interact, to develop the agenda and to discuss with the authorities.

The functioning of the regional councils does not naturally lead to input of the South in the policymaking of ICCO. The concepts diversity, clarity and power are visible in practice, but the challenges with fulfilling the related criteria in practice are emphasized. Creating the right diversity within the regional councils is a complicated process. It is difficult to create the wanted interaction and to find people who are willing and capable to participate. Clarity is missing in the functioning of the regional councils. Roles, responsibilities, expectations and outcomes are differently understood and create uncertainty for participants. The consequence of this uncertainty is that participants do not know who can or should hold other actors accountable for their functioning. There is also no clarity on the amount of power of participants and how their input is used in the final policymaking. The regional councils do not have any legal form of power, but they are asked to be more proactive and to give more input on the agenda. They barely respond to this request so far. Participants feel that their input is used, although they state that ICCO also decides on topics without their input. It remains unclear which topics require input of the regional councils. The final decision-making remains with the Executive Board of ICCO and the regional councils do not have the power or resources to ensure that ICCO uses their input.

The participation levels of ICCO's formal model and the regional councils in practice, and the concepts regarding successful interactive policymaking in the formal model and practice of the regional councils are summarized in two simplified overviews below. The complete overviews are described in chapter five.

## Participation levels

| Regional councils' model  | Regional councils at work  |
|---|--|
| Roles and responsibilities of participants are clearly indicated.   | Roles and responsibilities of participants are ambiguous.  |
| Regional councils interact, give input and discuss with authorities.  | Participants are mainly reactive and do not interact enough.   |
| Regional councils develop the agenda for the meeting together with the regional manager and the Executive Board.                                    | Regional councils are not involved with the development of the agenda.   |
| Regional councils do not have legal power, but ICCO follows the advice of the regional councils. If it is not able to do so, it has to explain why. | Regional councils do not have any power or resources to ensure that their input is used. They feel that their input is used, although they state that ICCO also decides on topics without their input. |
| Final decision-making remains with the Executive Board.   | Final decision-making remains with the Executive Board.  |

ICCO's formal model of the regional councils shows more possibilities for participation than the regional councils in practice. Contrary to what is described in ICCO's formal model, the regional councils hardly respond to the request of ICCO to give more input and to become more proactive. ICCO offers the regional councils more input than the participants are willing, or able to take.

## Criteria for successful interactive policymaking

|                  | Regional councils' model | Regional councils at work |
|------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| <b>Diversity</b> | * Yes                    | * To a certain extent     |
| <b>Clarity</b>   | * Yes                    | * No                      |
| <b>Power</b>     | * To a certain extent    | * No                      |

The formal model of the regional councils displays the three concepts of diversity, clarity and power. The amount of power is only not completely visible in the formal model because the regional councils do not have any legal form of power. Their role is based on influence, without having the resources to hold the authorities accountable. The functioning of the regional councils, on the other hand, shows that ICCO is struggling with implementing the concepts of diversity, clarity and power in practice.

In conclusion, the formal model of the regional councils fulfills the main concepts for successful interactive policymaking. Consequently, ICCO's formal model leads to input of the South in the policymaking of ICCO. The practice of ICCO's regional councils does not yet fulfill the main concepts of successful interactive policymaking. Hence, ICCO's regional councils in practice do not yet lead to input of the South in the policymaking of ICCO.

### 6.3 Recommendations

ICCO established the regional councils to give more influence to the South in its policymaking. It wants to use input of the regional councils in its policymaking to create a closer connection to the needs and wishes of its beneficiaries. This study showed that ICCO's ambition with the regional councils is comparable to interactive policymaking processes. Both want to use input of other actors in their policymaking to develop policies that can better reach the needs of beneficiaries. Therefore, it is useful to examine to what extent criteria for successful interactive policymaking are visible in ICCO's formal model and practical use of the regional councils. ICCO's formal model of the regional councils takes almost all criteria for successful interactive policymaking into account. The functioning of the regional councils, on the other hand, shows that many of these criteria are missing in practice. Recommendations for ICCO are as a result focused on the model of the regional councils in practice. The formal model should strengthen and support the functioning of the model in practice.

Discussed literature on interactive policymaking processes indicated three concepts that are important for making such a process successful. Diversity, clarity and power are needed to ensure that input of other actors is used in policymaking processes. Hence, if ICCO wants to use input of the regional councils, it needs to make sure that these concepts are visible in its model of the regional councils.

#### Diversity

Literature argues that it is needed to create the right diversity in a policymaking process and to make use of this diversity. The diversity can contribute to new and creative ideas. It is important that participants have enough knowledge on the topics that are discussed, to be able to give useful advice. On the other hand, participants should not be too involved with the content that is discussed; their own interests should not prevail. The practical use of the regional councils shows that it is complicated to form the right diversity in the policymaking process. Many interviewees state that ideas from the regional councils are similar to ideas of ICCO. The objective of creating new and critical ideas with the regional councils is thus not completely achieved. Therefore, a recommendation for ICCO is to select people who are not connected to the work of ICCO. Participants need to be affiliated with the development sector to be able to give advice, but this can also include business people for instance. This can create a more critical and objective view on the work that ICCO is doing. Practice showed that useful interaction occurred in informal processes. It is not clear what happened with that interaction because the informal processes are not included in the formal process of the policymaking. Another recommendation is to create informal settings that stimulate interaction and to make sure that the created interaction is used in the formal process. The informal processes can be included in the formal policymaking to prevent that the interaction becomes meaningless.

#### Clarity

Theory on successful interactive policymaking emphasizes that it is needed to create clarity on the roles, responsibilities and expectations of participants. It is important that participants know what is expected from them and what they can expect from others in the policymaking process. Literature emphasized that it is important that the outcomes of the interaction are apparent. Participants need to see how their input is used in the policymaking process. The formal model of the regional councils creates a concrete image, but this appears to be ambiguous in reality. The functioning of the regional



councils showed that participants experience their roles and responsibilities differently and that it is not clear what happened with their input. A recommendation for ICCO is therefore to improve the understanding of participants on their roles and responsibilities in practice. It is important that there is a common understanding on expectations, rights, possibilities and obligations in practice. In addition, it can be useful if there is someone who supervises the model of the regional council in practice and who holds participants accountable for their roles and responsibilities. ICCO invests in the model of the regional councils and the regional council members receive a fee for participating; ICCO may expect something from the regional councils as well.

## Power

Literature on successful interactive policymaking indicates that it is important that participants have some sort of power. Furthermore, theory on participation levels describes some preconditions to make the participation meaningful in the total process: participants need to have resources to hold the authorities accountable and to ensure that their input is used, they need to give input, discuss with authorities and should be involved in the development of the agenda. The formal model and practical use of the regional councils indicate that participants have no formal power; their role is based upon influence. The formal model indicates that the regional councils give input, discuss with authorities and interact in the development of the agenda. The practical use of the regional councils, on the other hand, shows that participants are not proactive enough, that authorities can easily overrule the participants and that participants barely interact in the development of the agenda. A recommendation for ICCO is to give the regional councils some sort of power and to make sure that they give input on the development of the agenda. Otherwise their input remains insignificant. ICCO already asks the regional councils to give input on the agenda, but they do not sufficiently respond to this request. This point is linked to two other recommendations described before: ICCO can use informal processes to receive more input and it can hold participants accountable for their responsibilities. Responsibilities of the regional councils are to develop the agenda and to come with critical ideas and new insights. ICCO can address participants if they do not comply with these responsibilities.

ICCO aims to use input of the regional councils in its policymaking. Literature on interactive policymaking indicated what is needed to make sure that input of other actors is used in policymaking processes. The examination of the formal model and practical use of the regional councils indicated which criteria of successful interactive policymaking are missing in ICCO's model. ICCO's formal model of the regional councils includes the main concepts that are needed to make an interactive policymaking process successful. The formal model leads to input of other actors in its policymaking. Practice shows restrictions to fulfill this ambition in reality. More attention is needed on successful implementation of the formal model of ICCO's regional councils. The recommendations for ICCO are related to the concepts of diversity, clarity and power that are needed for successful interactive policymaking. The coming overview summarizes the recommendations for ICCO to better achieve its ambition of using input of the regional councils in its policymaking.

| Diversity  | Clarity  | Power   |
|--|--|---|
| Select people for the regional councils who are not connected to the work of ICCO. | Create clarity on roles, responsibilities, expectations and outcomes related to the regional councils in practice. | Give participants some sort of power to hold the authorities accountable. |
| Provide informal settings to stimulate interaction.                                | Hold participants accountable for their roles and responsibilities.  | Make sure participants interact in the development of the agenda.         |
| Include informal setting in the formal process of the policymaking.                |  |   |

## 6.4 Discussion

ICCO's model of the regional councils is a new model within the development cooperation sector. Development organizations are searching for years to achieve equality in their relationship with Southern organizations and to create participation of Southern actors in their work. Involvement of the South is theoretically discussed within the development cooperation sector since the 1970s. It is stated to create more accountability to the poor, legitimacy and in the end, more context specific and better development work. The concept of co-responsibility of ICCO and the related model of the regional councils underline the same ambition and objective of the development cooperation: ICCO aims to attain more influence of the South in its work to create more context specific aid that better fits the needs and wishes of the poor and marginalized.

The implementation of this concept and model indicates nevertheless that this ambition is not totally achieved. The regional councils are appointed as the South. According to ICCO, they represent the Southern perspective and create a closer link with its beneficiaries. It remains the question, however, how the regional councils can fulfill this representation. Most regional council members are high educated people with decent professions. They might be more likely to represent the elite of a country, than the poor and marginalized. On the other hand, most regional council members have a lot of experience in the development cooperation sector and possess useful knowledge on the regional context. They have the capacities to provide ICCO with useful insights and advice. The findings of this study indicated, however, that this does not happen sufficiently. According to several interviewees it is not possible to speak of an equal responsibility, or a true co-responsibility, between the regional councils and the decision-makers of ICCO. The Executive Board of ICCO takes all final decisions, has no obligation to follow the advice of the regional councils and decides which topics are discussed with the regional councils. It might be useful to take a critical look at who is in the regional councils and how they can represent the Southern perspective and the poor and marginalized. If they cannot represent this, they might not be suitable for being a regional council member. Furthermore, it might be needed to give more power to the regional councils to make ICCO's model meaningful. The regional councils need sufficient resources and power to be truly co-responsible for the policy and strategy development of ICCO. This creates a responsibility for the regional councils as well. Sincere co-responsibility would mean that ICCO and the regional councils can hold each other accountable for their responsibilities.

Changing relationships between the global North and the global South request new ways of cooperating within the development sector. Funding for development cooperation is declining in the north; on the other hand, substantive and financial resources are increasing in the South. If the North wants to keep an important position in work in the South, it is required to work more with Southern

partners. More equal relations in development cooperation can enhance the use of each other's resources and knowledge. The regional councils can be seen as one way of using the expertise of people from the South in the North. The influence of the regional councils on this moment is rather low in reality. As stated before, it might be good if the regional councils have more power and more possibilities to influence. This can give meaning to their input.

So far, ICCO's regional councils underline the ambition to create more equality in relations with the South and more participation of Southern actors. The practical use of the regional councils indicates that adjustments are needed to achieve this equality and participation in reality. It might be important to realize for the development sector in general, that it is not possible to create equality or true participation in their work if the cooperation is based upon unequal resources. In general, the Southern actors remain dependent of the North in the work of development organizations. They need the financial support of Northern organizations. This creates an inequality in the relationship and cooperation between the North and the South. This difference in resources might be important as a start to create more involvement of the South, equal relationships, or co-responsibility between the North and the South.

### **Interactive policymaking in development cooperation**

The formal model and the functioning of the regional councils are examined with use of knowledge on interactive policymaking, which is embedded in the discipline of organizational and policy sciences. This study applied this knowledge on a model in the development cooperation sector. Coming to the end of this study, it is possible to state if information from interactive policymaking was applicable to the development cooperation sector. The knowledge on interactive policymaking appeared to be useful for examining the regional councils. ICCO aims for a similar objective and tries to implement this in a manner that is similar to models of interactive policymaking. Both want to obtain policies that better reach the needs of beneficiaries by using input of other actors in policymaking processes. The formal model of the regional councils indicated many similarities with the criteria for successful interactive policymaking. The functioning of the regional councils, moreover, indicated that participants were requesting certain criteria in practice. They were, for instance, complaining about the lack of clarity, or the missing of resources to hold the authorities accountable.

Nevertheless, there are certain differences between this model in the development cooperation sector and models of interactive policymaking. Interactive policymaking processes directly use input from their beneficiaries. The used input is generally based upon a one to one relationship between the decision-maker and the beneficiary. ICCO, on the other hand, uses input from representatives of its beneficiaries. This creates an indirect relationship with its beneficiaries which can make it more difficult to create policies that better reach the needs of beneficiaries. The development cooperation sector has in general a more indirect link with its beneficiaries. Many organizations are based in the North and work with partner organizations in developing countries. Therefore, they cannot reach their beneficiaries directly. They are depending on other actors that need to represent the beneficiaries, or on actors that can bring them in contact with the beneficiaries. The main research question is how ICCO's regional councils lead to input of the South in the policymaking of ICCO. The South is a very broad notion. The regional councils are appointed as the South by ICCO. They should create a Southern perspective in ICCO's policymaking and should consequently create a closer link to the beneficiaries of ICCO. Their connection to the beneficiaries is indirect, however. Therefore it is

not possible to state with certainty that influence of the regional councils is equal to input of the South; or that input of the regional councils creates a closer link to the beneficiaries.

### **Buzzword**

There is no general accepted objective of the regional councils within ICCO. Most interviewees describe different objectives; they refute statements of others and discuss what it is that ICCO wants to achieve with the regional councils. All interviewees, nevertheless, agreed on one general objective: giving more influence to the South in the policymaking of the North. This ambition is very broad; it can almost mean anything. ICCO's model of the regional councils appears to be another buzzword, as described in chapter two. It has a positive and persuasive sound, but it lacks a clear definition. ICCO can use this uncertainty to frame its own understanding and to make sure that everyone in the organization aims for the same objective. On the other hand, such a general concept carries the risk of creating uncertainty about its objective. A model can be implemented that is differently understood by participants and therefore is differently used in practice. This study indicated that there is not one general understanding within ICCO on the model of the regional councils. Formal documents of the model generate a general, but clear definition and objective of the regional councils. ICCO states that it established the regional councils to give more influence to the South to achieve a better connection to the needs and wishes of the poor and marginalized. The way this objective is applied and understood in practice generates another image. This raises the question if it is possible to reach the objectives of this concept, if these objectives are differently understood in reality.

### **Methodology**

An embedded case study on one of the regional councils of ICCO was leading in this study. The findings are not naturally applicable to other regional councils or to the functioning of the model in general. Interviews with regional managers and employees of the global office, who are connected to the regional councils, support the findings and create a stronger image. The findings of this case study can be used in further examination of ICCO's model of the regional councils. A comparable case study on several regional councils will enlarge the external validity of this study. It will give a more complete image of the functioning of the regional councils within ICCO. The outcomes of this study are also not naturally applicable to other forms of attaining influence of the South in the work of Northern development organizations. This study paid little attention to approaches of other development organizations. Some information is examined on the Internet and three interviews are done with three different organizations. These findings were too minimal and broad to be used in this study. Further research on different development organizations relating to this subject will be relevant and enlarges the external validity as well.

The regional councils are the independent variable in this research. They have a correlation with the dependent variable, the input of the South in the policymaking of ICCO. The focus of this study is on the input of regional councils on the policymaking of ICCO in general. It is difficult, however, to appoint with certainty which input came from which actor. The internal validity could be extended if methods were used to determine how much influence different actors had on the policymaking. This study did not focus on the use of input given by other actors, or on one specific policy development. A focus on the input of all actors in the policymaking of ICCO would have made it possible to compare the amount of input between different actors. A focus on one specific policy development of ICCO would have made it possible to see more clearly how the input of the regional councils is

finally used in the policymaking. This study focused mainly on the experience of participants of the regional councils and employees of ICCO about how input of the regional councils is used. Moreover, the embedded case study on the regional council of Southern Africa mainly focused on the given input by the regional council. It would be interesting to investigate what happened with this given input in further policy developments of ICCO. Document analysis on developed policies after the observed regional council meeting in this study can show which input is actually used. This can increase the internal validity and strengthen the outcomes on if input of the South is used in the policymaking. It was not possible to do this in this study due to the length of this research.

This research appoints the regional councils as the South, because ICCO described the South like that. This is not a general accepted definition or scientific understanding of the concept of the South. It might be better if this research started with investigating if and how the regional councils can be appointed as the South.

### Further research

The subject of giving more influence to the South in the work of Northern development organizations has been discussed theoretically for a long time. This study shows how this ambition can be applied in practice. It shows possibilities to make such an ambition work and shows restraints that might occur in practice. Additional research on this ambition in the development cooperation sector would be relevant. First of all, several things related to the specific model of ICCO are worth examining in more detail. As a follow up of this research, it can be interesting to investigate who the regional councils represent. Or how they are connected to the regional context and the poor and marginalized. Furthermore, further research can examine how the regional councils can represent the needs and wishes of the poor and marginalized. It can be interesting to examine the broad notion of the South in more detail as well. Further research can examine who can represent the South; if and how the regional councils represent the South, or what other manners are used as a representation of the South. Examining who the South is, or who can represent the South can be important to be able to answer if the South is present, or represented, in the policymaking of an organization. The theoretical debate within the development cooperation sector and theory on the models of interactive policymaking argue that input of beneficiaries in policymaking processes creates a better connection to the needs of beneficiaries. It can be interesting to investigate if input of other beneficiaries in policymaking processes indeed creates this better connection. Furthermore, it can be interesting to investigate the understanding of a concept like co-responsibility, or the model of the regional councils. ICCO's regional councils underline the ambition to give more influence to the South in the policymaking of a Northern organization. This ambition is so general, however, that it is differently understood in reality. It can be interesting to examine the understanding of this concept within the organization and how this influences the practical use of the concept.

Thereafter, it can also be interesting to investigate if and how other development organizations are working with the ambition to attain influence of the South in their work. Comparing how other organizations in the similar sector are dealing with a similar ambition is interesting; this enables organizations to learn from each other's experiences. Additional research can also focus on what researchers in the organizational and policy sciences state about the functioning of interactive policymaking. Difficulties of interactive policymaking processes in practice might create instruments to understand the functioning of the regional councils in practice. Moreover, literature on the

functioning of interactive policymaking might create examples of how to deal with difficulties in practice.

In conclusion, poverty is not structured in geographical boundaries anymore. A global responsibility arises to fight poverty and to attain development. ICCO's regional councils are a new model that deals with the changing relationships between the global North and the global South. It is one way of using input of the South in the policymaking of the North. This study showed that the formal model has the capacities to use input of the South in the policymaking of ICCO. The functioning of the regional councils, moreover, showed that it is still a young concept that needs adjustments to optimize its implementation.

## References

- Aerts, Jeroen (2011). *Kamerbrief Regionale Benadering: 'Multilateraal waar mogelijk, bilateraal waar nodig'*, 8-3-2012, from <http://www.viceversaonline.nl/2011/11/kamerbrief-regionale-benadering-%E2%80%98multilateraal-waar-mogelijk-bilateraal-waar-nodig%E2%80%99/>.
- Allen, T. and Thomas, A. (2000). *Poverty and development into the 21<sup>st</sup> century*. Oxford: University Press.
- Allison, G. and Zelikow, P. (1999). *Essence of Decision. Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*. New York etc: Longman.
- Ambro, G. (2006). *Defining Local Ownership. A grounded theory approach*. (Master Thesis). Aga Khan Rural Support Programme's Projects Baltista, Norway.
- Anders, G. (2005). *Civil Servants in Malawi: Cultural Dualism, Moonlighting and Corruption in the Shadow of Good Governance*. (Doctoral dissertation). Erasmus University, Rotterdam.
- Atack, I. (1998). Four Criteria of Development NGO Legitimacy. *World Development*, volume 27, (5) pp. 855-864.
- Bakker, Wieger (2010). *Werken aan domestic accountability. Bevorderen van publieke verantwoording bij begrotingssteun*. Den Haag/Utrecht: Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken en Utrechtse School voor Bestuurs- en Organisationswetenschap.
- Banerjee, A. V. and Duflo, E. (2011). *Poor economics. A radical rethinking of the way to fight global poverty*. New York: Public Affairs.
- Boeijs, H. (2005). *Analyseren in kwalitatief onderzoek. Denken en doen*. Amsterdam: Boom onderwijs.
- Chambers, R. (1997). *Whose reality counts? Putting the first last*. London: Intermediate Technology Publ.
- Cornwall, A. en Brock, K. (2005). What do Buzzword do for Development Policy? A critical look at 'participation', 'empowerment', and 'poverty reduction'. *Third World Quarterly*, Volume 26 (7).
- Easterly, W. (2006). *The White Man's Burden. Why the West's Efforts to Aid the Rest Have Done So Much Ill and So Little Good*. London: Penguin Books.
- Edwards, M. (2001). The rise and rise of civil society. *Developments: The International Development Magazine*, volume 14 (2<sup>nd</sup> quarter).



- Elbers, W. (2012). *The Partnership Paradox. Principles and Practices in North-South NGO Relations*. (Doctoral Dissertation). Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen: Nijmegen.
- Fukuyama, F. (2001). Social capital, civil society and development. *Third World Quarterly*, volume 22.
- Hammersley, M. (1992). *What's wrong with ethnography?* London: Routledge.
- 't Hart, H., van Dijk, J., de Goede, M., Jansen, W., & Teunissen, J. (2001). *Onderzoeksmethoden*. Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Boom.
- ICCO (2007). *Co-reponsibility: wat betekent dat?* Utrecht: Internal document.
- ICCO (2010). *Governance and management ICCO in 2010 and beyond. Responsibilities, roles and tasks of the different governance bodies and management layers of ICCO*. Utrecht: Internal document.
- ICCO (2012a). *Organisatie*. 15-2-2012 from <http://www.icco.nl/nl/over-icco/organisatie>.
- ICCO (2012b). *Co-responsibility en decentralisatie*. 8-3-2012 from <http://www.icco.nl/nl/over-ons/werkwijze/co-responsibility-decentralisatie/>.
- ICCO (2012c). *Het Sociaal Kapitaal van het Maatschappelijk Middenveld*. Utrecht: Raad van Bestuur ICCO.
- ICCO (2012d). *Organisatiestructuur*. 12-3-2012 from <http://www.icco.nl/nl/over-ons/organisatie/organisatiestructuur/>.
- Leezenberg, M. en Vries, de G. (2001). *Wetenschapsfilosofie voor geesteswetenschappen*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Legard, R., Keegan, J. and Ward, K. (2003). In-depth interviews. In J. Ritchie and J. Lewis (Eds.), *Qualitative research practice: A guide for social science students and researchers* (pp. 138-169). London: Sage Publications.
- Lopes, C. en Theisohn, T. (2003). *Ownership, leadership and transformation: can we do better for capacity development?* London: Sterling, VA, Earthscan Publications.
- Marissing, E. (2005). *Citizen participation in the Netherlands. Motives to involve citizens in planning processes*. Utrecht: Urban and Regional research centre Utrecht (URU), Utrecht University.
- Michels, A. and Graaf, de L. (2010). Examining Citizen Participation: Local Participatory Policy Making and Democracy. *Local Government Studies*, volume 36:4, pp. 477-491. Utrecht/Tilburg: Utrecht School of Governance, Utrecht University and Tilburg School of

Politics and Public Administration.

- Michels, A. (2011). Innovations in democratic governance: how does citizen participation contribute to a better democracy? *International Review of Administrative Science*, volume 77, pp 275-293.
- Molund, S. (2000). *Ownership in Focus? Discussion paper for a planned evaluation*. Sida Studies in Evaluation, 00/05. Stockholm: Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency.
- Mosse, D. (2011). *Adventures of Aidland: the anthropology of professionals in international development*. London: Berghahn Books.
- Narayan, D. (1999). *Can Anyone Hear Us? Voices From 47 Countries. Voices of the Poor, Volume 1*. Poverty Group, PREM: World Bank.
- Potter, R.B. R., Binns, T., Elliott, A. J., Smith, D. (2008). *Geographies of development. An introduction to development studies*. Third edition. England: Pearson Education Limited.
- Potter, R.B. and Lloyd-Evans, S. (1998). *The city in the developing world*. Harlow: Longman.
- Reijngoud, T. (2009). *Ontwikkelingshulp in 2 uur en 53 minuten. De zin & onzin, de achtergronden, de spelers en de toekomst*. Utrecht/Antwerpen: Kosmos Uitgevers.
- Silverman, D. (2005). *Doing qualitative research: A practical handbook*. London: sage Publications.
- Snape, D. and Spencer, L. (2003). The foundations of qualitative research. In J. Ritchie and J. Lewis (Eds), *Qualitative research practice: A guide for social science students and researchers* (pp 1-22). London: Sage Publications.
- Stone, B. (2002). *Policy Paradox. The art of political decision making*. New York: Norton & Company.
- Soudijn, K. (2005). *Onderzoeksverslagen schrijven. Praktische handleiding bij het schrijven van scripties en andere werkstukken voor hbo en wo*. Houten: Bohn Stafleu van Loghum.
- Verschuren, P. and Doorewaards, H. (1999). *Designing a research project*. Utrecht: Lemma.
- WRR (2010). *Minder Pretentie, meer Ambitie. Ontwikkelingshulp die verschil maakt*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Yin, R.K. (2003). *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. London: Sage Publications.

- Zoomers, A. (2001). Plattelandsontwikkeling als doelstelling van Nederlands ontwikkelingsbeleid: kanttekeningen bij de sectorale benadering. In L. Schulpen (2001), *Hulp in ontwikkeling. Bouwstenen voor de toekomst van internationale samenwerking*. Assen: Koninklijke van Gorcum.
- Zoomers, A. (2010). Nieuwe prioriteiten op brede agenda voor internationaal ontwikkelingsbeleid. *International Spectator, volume 4*, pp. 200-204.

## Attachments

### 1. List of interviewees

- **Interview 1:** 29-3-2012, former Advisor of the Executive Board and former Head of the Project Implementation Team, which was responsible for the change towards ProCoDe, ICCO.
  
- **Interview 2:** 12-4-2012, Strategy and Innovation Advisor, closely involved with the change towards ProCoDe, ICCO.
  
- **Interview 3 (included two person):** 12-4-2012, Head of Executive Board Support Office and employee of the global office, who was part of the Project Implementation Team, and was responsible for the selection of the regional council members of Western, Eastern, Central and Southern Africa, ICCO.
  
- **Interview 4:** 16-4-2012, Regional Manager South America, ICCO.
  
- **Interview 5:** 17-4-2012, Policy and Development Ecumenical Affairs Policy Advisor, ICCO.
  
- **Interview 6 (included two persons):** 17-4-2012, employee of the global office, who was part of the Project Implementation Team, and was responsible for the selection of the regional council members of Western, Eastern, Central and Southern Africa and employee of the Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation department, ICCO.
  
- **Interview 7:** 18-4-2012, Researcher and Professor at Centre for International Development Issues Nijmegen.
  
- **Interview 8:** 20-4-2012, Regional Manager Western Africa, ICCO.
  
- **Interview 9:** 23-4-2012, employee of the Executive Board Support Office, who is responsible for the communication between the Executive Board and the regional councils, ICCO.
  
- **Interview 10:** 25-4-2012, Regional Manager Southern Africa, ICCO.
  
- **Interview 11:** 26-4-2012, employee of the global office, who was part of the Project Implementation Team, and was responsible for the selection of the regional council members of Western, Eastern, Central and Southern Africa, ICCO.
  
- **Interview 12:** 26-4-2012, Regional Manager of Middle and Central America and Haiti, ICCO.
  
- **Interview 13:** 3-5-2012, former and first Director of ICCO.

- **Interview 14:** 9-5-2012, Regional Council Member Southern Africa, ICCO.
  
- **Interview 15:** 10-5-2012, Regional Council Member Southern Africa, ICCO.
  
- **Interview 16:** 12-5-2012, Regional Council Member Southern Africa, ICCO.
  
- **Interview 17:** 17-5-2012, Program Officer at the Regional Office Southern Africa, ICCO.
  
- **Interview 18:** 17-5-2012, Program Officer at the Regional Office Southern Africa, ICCO.
  
- **Interview 19:** 17-5-2012, Regional Office employee of Southern Africa, responsible for policy and advocacy, ICCO.
  
- **Interview 20:** 24-5-2012, Regional Manager Southern Africa, ICCO.
  
- **Interview 21:** 16-5-2012, Regional Manager of Save the Children Sweden, located in South Africa.
  
- **Interview 22:** 22-5-2012, Regional Director of Hivos South Africa.
  
- **Interview 23:** 23-5-2012, Manager of Red Cross South Africa.
  
- **Interview 24:** 10-7-2012, Head of the Executive Board of ICCO.

## 2. List of observations

- **Observations 1:** 10-4-2012. *Discussion about objective of co-responsibility and regional councils.* Global Office, ICCO.
- **Observations 2:** 10-4-2012. *Discussion about objective of co-responsibility and selection of regional council members.* Global Office, ICCO.
- **Observations 3:** 12-4-2012. *Discussion about formal structure of regional councils within ICCO.* Global Office, ICCO.
- **Observations 4:** 20-4-2012. *Conversation about functioning of the regional councils.* Global Office, ICCO.
- **Observations 5:** 8-5-2012. *Conversation about influence of the regional councils.* Regional Office employee Southern Africa situated in Lilongwe, Malawi, ICCO.
- **Observations 6:** 23-5-2012. *Conversation about influence of regional councils.* Former Global Office employee, situated in Kampala, Uganda, ICCO.
- **Observations 7:** 9-5-2012. *The first day of the regional council meeting of Southern Africa.* Pretoria, South Africa.
- **Observations 8:** 10-5-2012. *The second day of the regional council meeting of Southern Africa.* Pretoria, South Africa, ICCO.
- **Observations 9:** 11-5-2012. *Field visit partner organization.* Pretoria, South Africa, ICCO.
- **Observations 10:** 11-5-2012. *Email from representative of the Executive Board about the outcomes of the regional council meeting of Southern Africa. Email is send to Executive Board Support Office.* Pretoria, South Africa, ICCO.
- **Observations 11:** 14-5-2012. *Email from the researcher of this study, Lise Anna Janson, on the outcomes of the regional council meeting of Southern Africa. Email is send to Executive Board Support Office.* Pretoria, South Africa, ICCO.
- **Observations 12:** 15-5-2012. *Email from employee of Executive Board Support Office as response on outcomes of regional council meeting of Southern Africa.* Global Office, ICCO.
- **Observations 13:** 15-5-2012. *Email with the agenda of regional council meeting of Southern Africa in May 2012 with its objectives.* Global Office, ICCO.
- **Observations 14:** 11-6-2012. *Discussion about influence of regional council on investment fund of ICCO.* Global Office, ICCO.

- **Observations 15:** 27-4-2012. *Phone conversation about influence of regional councils on decision to withdraw from countries.* Manager at the Global Office, ICCO.
- **Observations 16:** 7-6-2012. *Email about minutes of regional council meeting of Southern Africa in May 2012.* Global Office, ICCO.
- **Observations 17:** 22-2-2012, 28-2-2012, 1-3-2012. *Discussion about research question and about objectives of regional councils.* Global Office, ICCO.
- **Observations 18:** *Guidelines regional councils, January 2011.* Global Office, ICCO.
- **Observations 19:** *Minutes of earlier meeting of the regional council of Southern Africa from 2009 until 2011.* Global Office, ICCO.
- **Observations 20:** *Emails about preparation for the regional council meeting Southern Africa May 2012.* Global Office, ICCO.