Exporting Stimulus and 'shared prosperity': Re-inventing foreign aid for a retroliberal era

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Abstract

The global aid world has changed, partly in response to both the re-configurations of geopolitical power and to the global financial crisis (GFC). Paradoxically, in the face of recession in most Northern economies, collectively foreign aid contributions have not fallen. However there has been a qualitative shift in its narrative and nature. This new regime – which we term retroliberalism – projects the concept of 'shared prosperity' but constitutes a return to explicit self-interest designed to bolster private sector trade and investment. Drawing evidence from New Zealand the United Kingdom, we argue that aid programmes are increasingly functioning as 'exported stimulus' packages.

Keywords: DFID; International aid; New Zealand; NZAID; ODA; retroliberation; shared prosperity; United Kingdom

Introduction

A new aid regime is currently emerging, which is turning away from the poverty-focused consensus paradigm that guided OECD donors from the late 1990s, reflected in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the 'aid effectiveness' agenda (Eyben and Savage 2013; Harman and Williams, 2014). Trends and outcomes are crystallising in what is being termed the 'beyond aid' agenda (Barder and Evans 2014; Janus et al 2014; also Mawdsley et al 2014). At its best, this emerging paradigm recognises that 'aid' cannot work in isolation: it must be complemented by more coherent pro-development policies domestically and abroad regarding trade, migration, technology, the environment, and 'development financing'. At the same time, however, many 'traditional' donors are dealing with the reverberations of the Global Financial Crisis (GFC), and political, often public, pressure on international development spending. In this context it is notable, arguably counter-intuitive, to observe that the collective OECD-DAC aid budget has not fallen since the GFC, with the volume of DAC member aid rising in real terms (Figure 1). Although several states have seen reductions in their aid allocations (e.g. Japan, Denmark), others have held steady (e.g. Canada), and a

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few have even increased their relative or absolute contributions (e.g. UK and Germany).[4] This is despite widespread and significant budget cuts in other governmental sectors. In this paper we aim to explain and theorise this apparent paradox.

In this paper, we argue that governments and corporations are increasingly co-opting the rhetoric and resources of 'aid' under the rubric of 'shared prosperity' to stimulate and subsidise corporate capitalism. This is being pursued through the enthusiastic re-framing of 'the private sector' not just as an object of development, but as an active development partner. The paper thus foregrounds the articulation between domestic policies in 'traditional' donor countries, and the redeployment of aid to serve the interests of (corporate) capital accumulation. We frame this both within the apparent destabilisation of the former north-south model of aid, and of a 'retroliberal' era (Murray and Overton, 2016). We demonstrate how aid, like neoliberalism itself (Ong 2006; Peck et al 2010), proves yet again to be agile and adept at responding to new crises and opportunities within capitalism. Case studies of the United Kingdom and New Zealand are presented to illustrate how the shared prosperity motto has been constructed and is operating. Quite different as donors in terms of scale and scope the countries share similar policy drivers, and exemplify changes that are being pursued across a range of donors. We conclude by arguing that 'aid' has rarely been so co-opted and needs to be reclaimed if it is to support social justice in the 2010s.

Context: the GFC and the 'rise of the South'

Two profound changes in the gravity of global economic and political power provide the context and drivers for the changing aid regime that we analyse in this paper. The first is the GFC of 2007/8 onwards, which severely disrupted the major world economies, with repercussions that have spread beyond. As banks and companies were threatened with collapse, many Western governments engaged in programmes of substantial bail outs and subsidies of corporations. This seemed to signal a return to Keynesian-inspired strategies to stimulate domestic economies to avert severe recession. Yet there were also major reductions in almost all other areas of state spending, notably public goods and services, and in particular in some countries, social programmes and welfare. In such circumstances Western aid was threatened with crisis. It is striking that while it was increasingly difficult to publicly justify the continuation of the previous decade's expansion of aid spending on poverty alleviation in other parts of the world collectively OECD-DAC aid did not collapse, and in some cases the sector was one of the least affected sectors of government spending.

[4] Some states, such as Australia, the Netherlands and Canada, however, have signalled significant cuts to their aid budgets beyond 2014.

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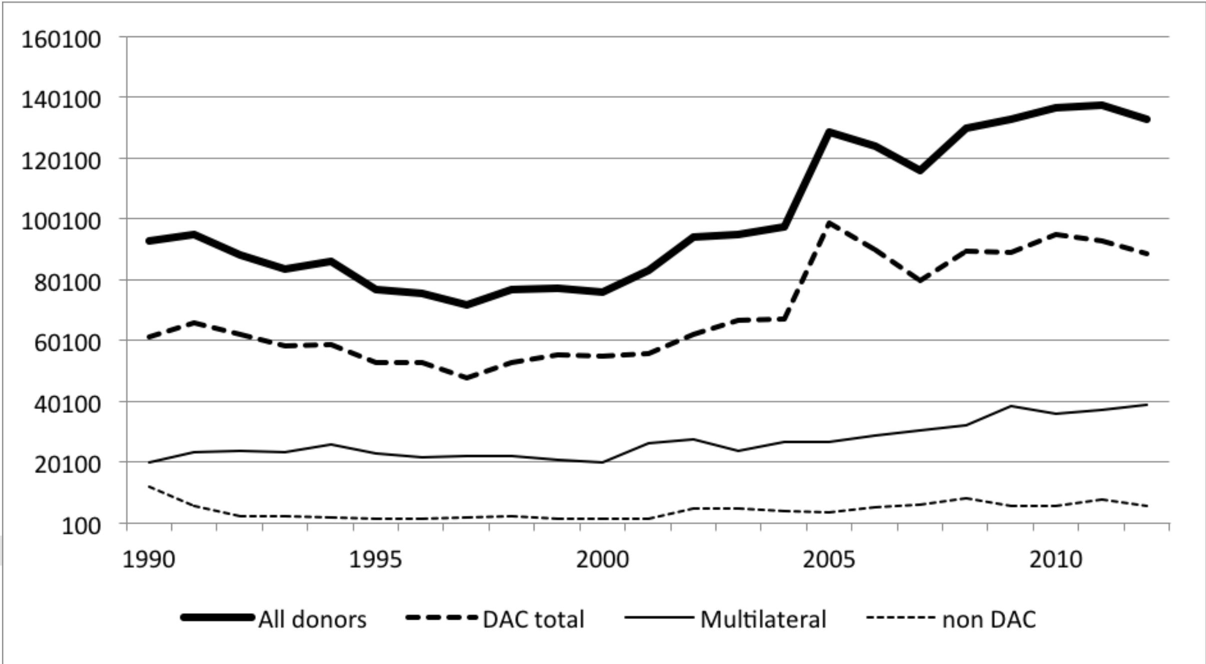
Figure 1 illustrates the counter-intuitive trend that forms the empirical backdrop to the discussion in this paper, showing that the overwhelming trend since the mid-1990s has been a rise in real aid outflows following a decline from the early 1990s.[5] The spike in 2005 which took aid levels to a new high came in response to the Indian Ocean tsunami and aid levels returned to a longer-term path by 2007. They continued to rise through the GFC, falling off only between 2011 and 2012, largely due to the reduction in US, and to a lesser extent Japanese donations. Figure 2 illustrates that aside from Japan, aid flows from all major donors continued to rise during the GFC at least until 2010.

Figure 1: ODA 1990-2012 (constant $US mill 2012)



Source: OECD

Figure 2: ODA 1990-2012 by Selected Donor (constant $US mill 2012)

[5] These figures need to be treated with caution, particularly those for non-DAC donors. Non-DAC donors are only those as captured in OECD statistics and do not include China and India for example.

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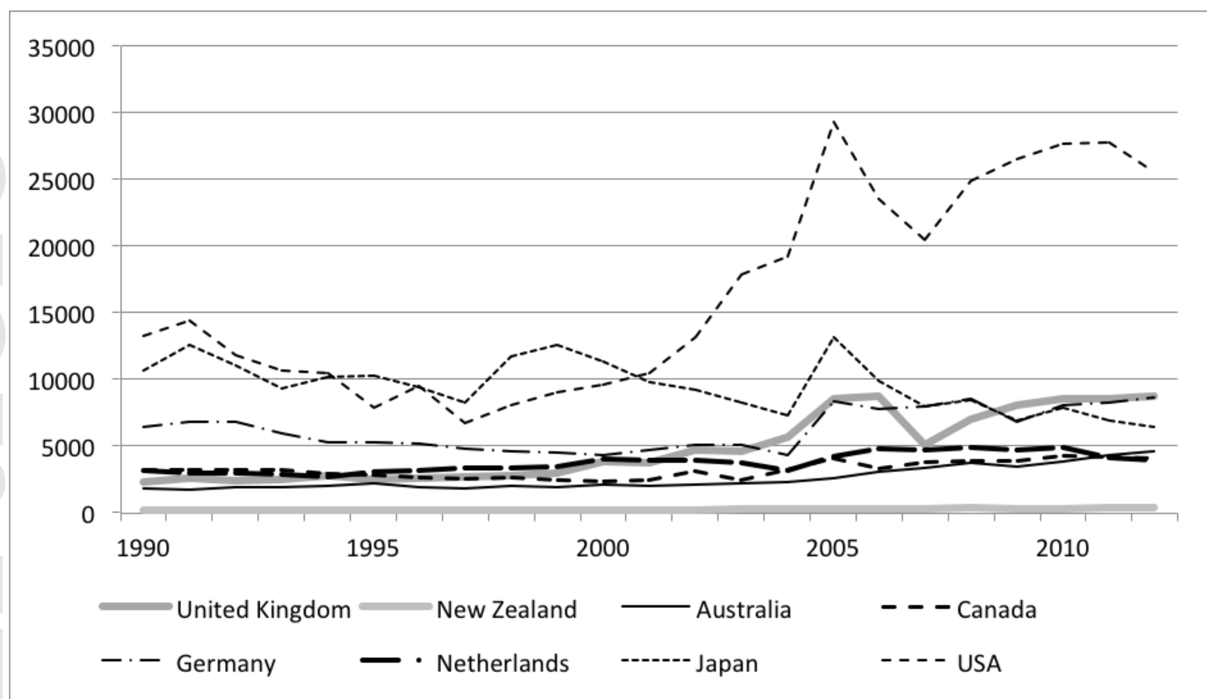

Source: OECD

The second factor shaping and driving the shift in the aid regime amongst the 'traditional' donors are the real and perceived challenges and opportunities presented by the 'rise of the South'. Southern economies are now acting as major sources of FDI, competitors for market share, and are increasingly important trade partners. Within the realm of development cooperation, Southern development partners are making growing contributions to various forms of development financing; have resisted or engaged on their own terms the western-dominated 'international' aid governance architecture; and have rather successfully promoted alternative ideational norms and programme modalities - including blurred and blended aid, trade and investment packages, and the focus on growth strategies, notably in terms of infrastructure development (Abdenur and Fonseca 2013; Vestergaard and Wade 2014; Mawdsley 2015a). In some regards at least, the OECD-DAC donors are moving closer to some of the norms and modalities of the Southern partners than the other way around. This is motivated in part by growing respect for the achievements of Southern partners, but also by a sense of competition and fear that China and others are out-competing the 'traditional' powers in pursuit of resources, markets and investment opportunities.

Murray and Overton define an aid regime as, 'comprised of an overarching set of principles together with a regulatory structure designed to both disburse and conceptualise overseas development assistance. These are generally influenced by broader regimes of accumulation. Aid modalities, refer to specific delivery tools, that may well transcend different regime but by definition be combined in

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varying ways' (Murray and Overton, 2016, p. 1). Aid regimes are altered as donors both establish and respond, in various degrees, to shifting domestic and international circumstances, ideologies, and events. Throughout this dynamic history, foreign aid, and its constituent allocations, conditionalities and practices, have always been accompanied by claims to the altruistic pursuit of improving the lives of others *and* self-interest. While the precise formulations of these interests may change (e.g. during and after the Cold War), or be constructed differently by different donors (e.g. Norway and the USA) they are invariably presented as positively aligned: New Zealand's earlier phrase of 'doing well by doing good' is just one such example (Scheyvens and Overton, 1995; Banks et al, 2012). The enduring continuity of self-interested aid is not inherently problematic: rather, all too often such formulations conceal particular interests and agendas that conflict with the stated altruistic intent.

In order to lay the historical context for the current period we conceptualise four such regimes: Modernisation (1950-1980), Neoliberalism (1980-2000), Neostructralism (2000-2010) and Retroliberalism (2010-present). Table 1 provides a summary of these regimes (see Overton and Murray 2011b; 2016 for further discussion on the nature and chronology of aid regimes).

The first of the aid regimes refers to the early era of development inspired by modernisation theory (Rist, 1997), from the early post-Second World War period through to the 1980s. During this Cold War period, aid allocations were linked explicitly to geopolitical motives, and approaches and modalities firmly wedded to Rostowian models of staged development, domestic imperatives concerning industrialisation and urbanisation as the path to economic growth, and funding the directive state.

The second regime followed the introduction of structural adjustment during the 1980s and had its origins in the neo-liberal-influenced economic transformations and agendas of OECD nations over this period – chiefly the UK (under Margaret Thatcher) and the USA (under Ronald Reagan). Neoliberalism was rolled-out rapidly across the South partly as a condition of aid grants and loans. At the centre of such endeavours was the shrinking of the state and privatisation, the reduction of corruption allegedly associated with oversized governments, export orientation based on comparative advantage and widespread privatisation and reduction in state expenditures in order to 'liberate the market', often while donors themselves remained behind protectionist walls. The shortcomings of the so-called 'Washington consensus' led to the moderate reforms (or arguably, deeper yet veiled penetration) of the 'post-Washington consensus' including 'good governance'

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approaches and a host of modalities associated with stimulating capitalist accumulation – including land titling and small enterprise creation for example.

Around the mid-/late 1990s, a new neo-structuralist aid paradigm was initiated which involved a deliberate shift away from language of the SAPs towards poverty alleviation as the dominant aid objective, inspiring the formulation of the MDGs. Domestically in the cases examined here of the UK and NZ, Labour governments came to power with modest domestic socially progressive 'New Left' reform agendas, that whilst reformist were 'globalisation friendly', and thus promoted policies that facilitated the expansion and growth of transnational capital including free trade agreements and continued deregulation of the economy. In the aid realm, these were reflected in the establishment of independent/semi-autonomous aid agencies (DFID in 1997 and NZAID in 2002) with an explicit focus on ostensibly more altruistic, poverty-driven agendas embodied in Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs). In the context of post-9/11, previously hollowed-out states were 'reconstructed' in part to reflect new security concerns. Economic growth policies that found favour built on free-market foundations, linked into the notion of 'Third Way' economic development and 'bottom-billion' capitalism that views the poor as potential entrepreneurs and consumers, as highlighted through programmes that focussed on micro-finance and slum improvement programmes. Elsewhere, it has been argued that whilst this regime was differentiated enough to term it 'neostructuralist' (that is based on a reformed and selective interpretation of structuralist development ideas) there was also strong continuity with the previous neoliberal paradigm in the unfolding of policy and practice (Murray and Overton, 2011b).

Table 1: Aid Regimes 1950-present; selected events, principles, goals and policies

	Modernisation	**Neoliberalism**	**Neostructuralism**	**Retroliberalism**
	1950-1980	*1980-2000*	*2000-2010*	*c. 2010 to present*
Global Events	Allied War victory, evolving Cold War, Truman's four point programme	Debt Crisis; fall of the USSR	9/11 and 'fragile states'	GFC and the aftermath of war, the rise of China and other Southern 'emerging powers'
Domestic political context in West	Cold War politics, Kennedy Alliance	Thatcherism, Reagonomics; Rogernomics (NZ)	The rise of Tony Blair's New Labour (UK), Helen Clark's Labour (NZ) and Clinton's democrats	Swing back to the right – Cameron, Abbot, Key, Republican control of Senate in US
Principles	Modernist and traditional structuralist ideas concerning role of industrialisation	Neoliberal theories. The state crowds out the private sector and leads to inefficiency and	The state tackles social justice based on neo-structuralist ideas but in the context of a	The state exists to facilitate economic growth; the private sector should not be crowded out by

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	and backwardness of rural development. Geopolitical imperative of preventing domino effect across the Third World	corruption. The market will arrive at Pareto Optimum. Benefits of export growth will trickle down to poor through employment	globalised economy that remains open. Delivering the benefits of globalisation and ensuring its trickle down	the state, the state sponsors and facilitates the private sector. Ricardian comparative advantage and 'aid for trade'
Development goals	Grow industrial sector, promote regional alliances, promote urbanisation and reduce rural inefficiencies	Reduce government size, raise productivity, stimulate exports	Poverty alleviation, equality promotion, aid effectiveness through market mechanisms	Economic growth, infrastructure development, stimulate trade and investment through financing
Aid policies and modalities	Import substitution Industrialisation, land reform, General Budget Support, human resource development (e.g. Colombo Plan)	SAPs, export-orientation, privatisation, hollowing out of the state, reduction in social expenditure, 'good governance', market-based projects	MDGs, national interest and development agenda (formally) separate, Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, Poverty reduction-based projects, Sector Wide Approaches (SWAPs), reconstruction of the state for security	Infrastructure, semi-tied aid projects, new (returnable) forms of development financing, development for diplomacy and the rolling together of national interest and developmentalism, partial return to General Budget support

Source: Adapted from Murray and Overton, (2016)

Most recently, a marked shift in the nature of aid can be discerned, driven by the challenges and opportunities that have accompanied the re-balancing of the global economy and governance towards the 'rising powers' and by the GFC. We suggest that this is part of a broader shift to a new phase in the regime of accumulation towards what Murray and Overton (2016) term 'retroliberalism'. In reaction to the collapse of global financial markets in 2007/8, the core Western economies implemented selective neo-Keynesian stimulus packages: that is, the state stepped in as supporter of last resort for the financial sector. The bail-outs in the UK and the USA for example made the Marshall Plan reconstruction of post-War Europe pale into insignificance, with the US stimulus package alone standing at US$831 billion (Murray and Overton, 2015:285). The purpose of such packages was not to tackle the underlying inequalities of the GFC. Rather, the purpose was to rejuvenate capitalism, with state corporatisation at the centre of this endeavour. This has socialised debt, with the burden of the 'crisis' being passed to taxpayers, who also face the impacts of widespread budget cuts. It is this response to domestic 'recovery' that, we suggest, provides part of

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the explanation for the apparent paradox of sustained commitments to ODA collectively (and increasingly, a wider conception of 'development financing') in the case of a substantial number of individual OECD-DAC donors.

In many OECD-DAC donor countries, some of which were previously at the forefront of claims to more progressive aid policies, aid is being re-tuned - in large part, but not of course solely - to bolster the private sector. The retroliberal regime can be seen unfolding and evolving in a number of countries such as New Zealand, Australia, the USA, United Kingdom, Canada and the Netherlands. In Table 2 we elaborate and describe the shift in each of these countries, substantiating our claim that there has been a remarkably similar transition in each. Notwithstanding national political economic contexts, chrolonologies and particularities, a strikingly parallel set of policy shifts and outcomes in this range of donor countries is revealed; for a full international comparative discussion of this transition see Murray and Overton (2016). Ostensibly the retroliuberal regime aims to raise broader social progress under the rubric of 'shared prosperity', ‘aid for trade’ and 'sustainable economic growth', and is one part of a potentially more desirable 'beyond aid' agenda. It also appeals to, and co-opts, the rhetoric of popular capitalism in developing countries (SMEs, microfinance etc.). However, early evidence suggests that these policies are working primarily to favour business elites and the owners of capital in donor and recipient countries - particularly the former. This use of public money to support businesses, in the form of ODA, is by no means new, but it is rapidly evolving, expanding and being explicitly foregrounded within the emerging development narrative as a credible and legitimate way of promoting 'inclusive growth' (Janus et al, 2014). Aid (and newer forms of 'development financing') can be seen here as representing a rolling-out of the selective stimulus that has characterised the post-GFC response to ‘crisis’ within many of the leading OECD economies. The new retroliberal regime can thus be theorised as an amalgamation of concepts drawn from across development history. In terms of modernisation theory of the 1950s and 1960s the emphasis in retroliberalism on economic growth as the core target and the role of the rolling out of infrastructure investment to facilitate this harks back to post- WW2 Rostowian concepts of stages of growth, as does the state’s directive role and the tying of aid to the government’s domestic agenda. The concept that the state should support the private sector - not allowing it to fail - echoes neoclassical and mercantilist ideas of the 1700s. Yet, placing market allocation at the very centre of society builds on neoliberal ideas. Retroliberalism then recreates elements of both classical liberalism and neoliberalism with the intention of perpetuating cycles of private capital accumulation. Furthermore, under the retroliberal regime, the pursuit of self-interest is enacted by a

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state-corporate nexus, who export their stimulus packages under the guise of 'shared prosperity' (Apeldoorn et al 2012).

Table 2: The comparative international shift to a retroliberal aid regime

	Aid regime change to retroliberalism	Central Mission	Institutional change	Private Sector	Total Budget
New Zealand	National Govt (Key/ McCully) 2008	'Poverty alleviation' changed to 'sustainable development in developing countries in order to reduce poverty and contribute to a more secure, equitable and prosperous world'	NZAID (semi-autonomous) reintegrated into MFAT	Direct involvement of NZ companies (Fonterra, Meridian) tying of aid (e.g. tertiary scholarships increase) Infrastructure projects (airports, energy)	Aid budget increased but at lower rate of increase
Australia	Liberal Govt (Abbot/ Bishop) 2013	Poverty focus diluted: 'promoting prosperity, reducing poverty, enhancing stability ' 'Aid for trade' 'Australia's national interest'	AusAid (standalone) folded into DFAT and disestablished 2013	Move to infrastructure projects	Cuts to aid budget (12% in 2013, more in 2014) Capped at $5 bill for 5 years
Canada	Conservative Govt (Harper/ Fantino) 2011	Poverty reduction enshrined in law but … 'sustainable economic growth' given prominence 'economic diplomacy'	CIDA amalgamated with FATDC (alongside trade and foreign affairs) 2013	Involvement of Canada's private sector Interest in countries with mineral resources	Aid budget cuts then stabilisation beyond 2015 at $4.62 bill (0.3% GNI)
UK	Conservative/LibDem Govt (Cameron) 2010	long-term programmes to help tackle the underlying causes of poverty … 'economic development for shared prosperity'	DFID retained but rebranded (UKAid)	Accusations that Africa funding is used to support land grabs by MNCs	Aid budget increased (30% in 2013 - to 0.7% GNI)
Netherlands	Conservative/Labour coalition (Rutte) 2012	'sustainable economic growth in developing countries … global stability and security and to foster human rights' shift from aid to trade	Part of Ministry of Foreign Affairs Major review in 2010	'new markets to explore' 'an enabling environment for economic activity'	Cuts in 2012 – achieved then abandoned 0.7% target

A further feature has been the stated shift in the mission of aid from what was previously a broad consensus based on the MDGs on the reduction of poverty to the less precise 'sustainable economic development', as well a focus on the private sector and its development as a policy goal and actor. Of particular concern are the types of firms that are being increasingly enrolled as 'active development partners'. These are mostly transnational conglomerates, larger corporations, international consultancies, hedge funds, private equity firms and so on. These powerful sub-

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sections of the private sector have been active agents of retroliberalism, helping produce growing inequality in donor states, precarity that reaches ever higher up the class and employment hierarchy, and often brutal policies of neglect and disciplining of the poorest. Needless to say, these shifts are being discursively projected as moral, smart and effective for donors and partners, as the motto 'shared prosperity', clearly suggests. This has, as discussed, led to the promotion of businesses from the donor countries themselves, leading to the sense that the 'tied-aid' regime has returned.[6] This is certainly the case in the more explicit use of contractors from donor economies.

In the latter regard and others, we can observe a shift towards more explicit statements of national self-interest declared in policy statements as well as the re-branding of aid programmes. A recent review of the future of aid by the UK's International Development Committee, for example, stated that:

> *We support the UK's principled stand against tied aid, but this should not stand in the way of building links between middle income countries and UK institutions (UK Parliament 2015, para 22).*

In the next section we aim to provide an empirical anchor for the arguments advanced so far. We provide two case studies, taking in two very different OECD-DAC donors (in terms of history, geography and scale), but which show revealing commonalities that are reflective of wider trends amongst the 'traditional' donors. The case studies are selected a for a range of reasons; first, both have been traditional policy leaders in their respective regions of influence. The United Kingdom has set the agenda in international aid; New Zealand has been a rapid adopter and at times leader also; this ws particularly the case in the neoliberal regime. We argue that New Zealand has been if not the model, one of the donor countries leading and shaping the current regime; second, the GFC had a profound impact in both countries and impacted external relations and policy significantly. Although the United Kingdom was more rapidly impacted, change in New Zealand – though delayed and cushioned in part by the nature of its commodity-based export sector in the face of rising Chinese demand – was to result in a significant downturn in economic growth and a search for solutions that mirrored those adopted in the UK. We discuss these case studies in the context of broader international trends and using a data base of six countries in Murray and Overton (2016). Focusing the investigation here at a dual case study level allows us to uncover and analyse the details and

[6] The OECD-DAC has sought to pressure its members to reduce or abandon tied aid with variable success, and some states continue to have very high levels of formal trying (e.g. USA, Austria). While the 2002 International Development Act legally obliges the UK to 100% untied aid, British companies still manage to secure a large percentage of all contracts.

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particularities of what we consider the two leading architects and adopters of the retroliberal aid regime.

NZAid and *New Zealand Inc.*

New Zealand is one of a number of OECD donors that had a clear focus on poverty alleviation in the 2000s, but which has since been altered in line with retroliberal thinking. In 2002 policy makers made a bold move, shifting New Zealand aid from the 'doing well from our doing good' focus of the mid-1990s noted previously (Scheyvens and Overton 1995) towards a programme centrally oriented on poverty alleviation. A semi-autonomous unit, NZAID, was created in order to deliver on the new, holistic agenda which was underpinned by four pillars: governance, diversified livelihoods, improved health and education, and conflict resolution. There was a real growth in aid volumes in the early 2000s. Between 2000 and 2007 the New Zealand aid budget grew from $US 271 million to $US 389 million (in constant 2012 prices). Dispersal was focused more on the Pacific Islands than in the past with special efforts to target the poorer countries of Melanesia rather than mainly supporting more well off Polynesian countries with which New Zealand had important political ties, and obligations. Conflict within the region, especially in the Solomon Islands, led to a real growth in support for reconstruction, peace building and good governance activities (Banks et al. 2012; Murray and Overton 2011a).

In 2008, however, a change of government took place with the centre-right administration of John Key appointing Murray McCully to the Foreign Affairs portfolio. Since then, the aid budget has increased overall to reach $US 449 million in 2012 (constant 2012 prices), although the government has distanced itself from pursuing the 0.7% target (it currently sits at around or below 0.3% of GDP). The geographical focus on the Pacific has continued, albeit with stronger political rhetoric about commitments to neighbours and a shift back to Polynesian countries (Cook Islands, Niue, Samoa and Tonga). Meanwhile Minister McCully instigated significant changes across the aid programme.

Firstly, institutional change was achieved via disestablishment of the semi-autonomous agency, NZAID, and the aid programme was subsumed into the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade in 2009. This signalled an ideological shift towards a much stronger tying together of New Zealand's aid, trade, foreign policy and security issues. Interestingly, the new symbol for the New Zealand Aid Programme is a the white fern on black background, an image which is strongly associated with New Zealand's national sporting teams, especially the All Blacks. In this way, the branding of the aid

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project has adopted the iconography of the national project and it seems intended to pursue explicitly New Zealand's wider diplomatic, security, economic, and arguably cultural interests.

Secondly, the poverty focus of the aid programme was downgraded, supposedly incorporated under the broader mission of sustainable economic development. Aligned with this mission was a significant sectoral shift in aid. The growth in spending since 2009 can be explained principally by the increases in allocations to transport, communications and energy projects and 'production' sectors (mainly agriculture and tourism). Furthermore, although some categories remained fairly static in real terms (such as education), there were important changes within, such as the change in education spending towards more tertiary scholarships (see below).

Thirdly, there has been significant change in terms of what types of organisations the New Zealand aid programme partners with, and how they engage. The relationship with civil society has been eroded, with a decrease in the overall resources available to NGOs, at least at first, and a halting of support for development education and advocacy activities (McGregor et al. 2013). More so, however, the way in which MFAT wishes to work with NGOs seems to have shifted considerably such that NGOs are seen increasingly as contractors to the aid programme rather than partners in development. Aid funding has continued to flow through civil society but it now appears as a much more compliant sector, wary of questioning government policy (McGregor et al 2013). In an associated move, MFAT has deliberately courted new alliances with the private sector and encouraged them to bid, alongside NGOs and public sector agencies, for funding from its 'Partnerships for International Development Fund'. To be clear, much of this has been about getting the New Zealand private sector involved in aid delivery through the rhetoric of 'shared prosperity', rather than supporting private sector development within poorer countries.

Underlying these shifts towards 'shared prosperity' is, not surprisingly, considerable self-interest. New Zealand aid money was used to subsidise Air New Zealand flights from the Cook Islands, Tonga and Samoa to Los Angeles from 2008 onwards after pressure from the airline that it would otherwise have to cut these services. Initially the governments of these countries were asked to underwrite the airline, but later New Zealand decided to cover the costs of subsidies because these routes provide new visitors which would boost the tourism-dependent economies. Between 2010-2012, the Cook Islands used half of the $3 million of New Zealand aid it received for tourism to underwrite Air New Zealand flights, while $3.8 million was spent on subsidising flights to Tonga and Samoa between 2009 and 2011. The New Zealand government has a 75 percent stake in Air New Zealand. What

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would be politically unacceptable domestically – a direct government subsidy for a New Zealand company – has become cloaked within the aid programme in a way that justifies such a stimulus as being good for the region's poor.

One element of the shared prosperity approach that bolsters the New Zealand economy is support for education scholarships for students from developing countries to study in New Zealand. In 2007/08 the aid programme allocated some $NZ 31.25 million to such scholarships (NZAID 2008:18). This amounted to just under 7.6% of the aid budget for that financial year. In 2012/13 the allocation had risen to $NZ 54 million (or 10.2%) and the forecast allocation for 2014/15 is $58 million (11.7%) (New Zealand Aid Programme, 2012). Scholarships bring benefits for the students able to gain university and other qualifications in New Zealand and when they return home and contribute enhanced human capital to their government departments, NGOs or businesses. Yet, through scholarships, around a tenth of the total aid budget is spent on tuition fees, support costs and living expenses within New Zealand (together with some international air travel costs)[7]. As such, benefits undoubtedly also flow to New Zealand education institutions, accommodation providers and the wider economy.

Although the expansion of the scholarships scheme rested on a long-existing element of the aid programme, a marked change since 2008 has been the open collaboration between the aid programme and New Zealand agricultural enterprises. The model adopted uses the aid programme to upgrade production by farmers so they can link with New Zealand processing and marketing companies working overseas: this seems to have its greatest potential in the dairy sector. Fonterra is a milk production cooperative owned by some 13,000 New Zealand dairy farmers and companies. In recent decades it has become a leading global dairy processing and marketing company with operations also in Latin America and Asia. Its global expansion strategy rests not on directly operating farms overseas but more on managing the supply chain and processing milk into powder and a range of dairy products. It has a particular strategy to expand in developing economies, given the slow growth of traditional European and American markets and the rise of middle class consumption patterns (particularly for protein) in Asia and Latin America. In September 2014, Fonterra and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs signed a framework document agreeing to 'work together in the future, combining Fonterra's dairy industry expertise with MFAT's development best practice' (New Zealand Aid Programme 2014). The partnership is already reflected in proposals to work with dairy farmers in Indonesia and Ethiopia to improve milk yields and quality and link in with

[7] Some scholarship funding is spent to support students attending institutions outside New Zealand, such as the University of the South Pacific but most scholarships are for New Zealand institutions.

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Fonterra's supply chain. Thus the emerging aid narrative behind the MFAT-Fonterra partnership is one that talks of lifting smallholder production and improving the nutritional intake of the poor, for example, through a programme to recplicate its New Zealand 'milk for schools' project in Sri Lanka, whilst simultaneously drawing on New Zealand's expertise in dairy production and supply chain management. What remains unsaid but understood is that Fonterra's global strategy is also supported and subsidised by the country's aid programme.

The changes in the New Zealand aid programme have become entrenched in the programmes and mission statements of the government's aid agency, the International Development Group within MFAT. In 2015, the agency released its strategic plan (MFAT 2015). The priorities it articulates are noticeable for the alignment between them and New Zealand business interests. Thus the energy and agriculture sectors are given 'flagship' status, reflecting the move to involving New Zealand companies such as Meridian (energy) and Fonterra (agriculture) in aid projects. Poverty alleviation is not mentioned explicitly in this list and the core concerns of earlier years in health and education seem relegated.

Taken together, these changes amount to a bold modernist development project being pursued in the name of building upon areas of New Zealand's comparative advantage. Examples abound in the publicity material for the new aid programme. New Zealand has invested heavily in initiatives such as the rebuilding of a runway in the Western Solomon Islands, subsidising hotel reconstruction in Niue, and installing solar electricity in Tuvalu. This is 'investment' in infrastructure and industry, an attempt to promote economic growth through aid and build more modern and outwardly-oriented economies (that conveniently are often constructed by, and go on to link with, New Zealand companies operating overseas).

DFID's embrace of the private sector[8]

The UK's Department for International Development (DFID) is one of the most influential OECD-DAC donor agencies, admired by many of its peers (Morrissey 2001; Webster 2008). This reflects its size and budget, augmented by its relatively autonomous status, giving it the capacity to shape and apply policy, and project ideational leadership within the international development community. DFID was created in 1997 when New Labour came to power, replacing the series of Overseas Development Offices and Administrations of previous decades (Barder 2005). It was given Departmental status, a Secretary of State in the Cabinet, and a substantial increase in budget, staff and remit. Although

[8] This section of the paper draws upon elements of Mawdsley (2015b), which sets out a more substantial discussion of DFID's turn to the private sector.

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inevitably controversial, and certainly open to critique, under the leadership of Clare Short, DFID drove an agenda for coherent development policy domestically, and an activist role in an ostensibly more progressive and poverty-focused international agenda (see Porteous 2005; Marriage 2006; Gallagher 2009). These directions were given legal force under the 2002 International Development Act, which commits the UK to untied aid and ensures that ODA is poverty focused.

Programmes and policies to support economic growth were a part of DFID's agenda throughout this period, notably through various forms of 'inclusive finance' and 'bottom billion capitalism' initiatives. Trade, investment and larger-scale financing was also pursued. But like many other OECD-DAC donors since the mid/late-1990s, DFID increasingly concentrated its resources and 'narrative' on the core concepts of good governance and anti-corruption, as well as social wellbeing through health, gender and education programmes (Hulme and Fukuda-Parr 2009). A second feature of this period was the emerging development-security nexus, with Iraq and Afghanistan being particularly controversial sites (Biccum 2005; Duffield and Waddell 2006; Duffield 2007).

Gallagher (2009) makes a compelling case that DFID was not just associated with New Labour, but specifically Tony Blair (and later Gordon Brown), both of whom championed global development issues and sought positive image-making. When the Conservative-led coalition government came to power in 2010 it drove considerable change in DFID, yet, - in the face of considerable media, public and internal party opposition - Prime Minister Cameron has honoured the commitment to meet the 0.7% GDP target (allowing for the usual donor chicanery in how this is calculated). Indeed, in 2014 the UK for the first time joined the very small group of donors who have ever achieved this, although revealingly the government chose not to publicise it too loudly. While DFID has been subject to internal cost cutting, its overall budget has been protected more than other government entities. The retroliberal framework described above resolves this apparent paradox: a growing share of UK aid can be understood as serving UK and transnational capital through exporting stimulus. This mirrors the current government's domestic policy of subsidising banks, financial institutions and corporations, while cutting spending in many parts of the welfare, and social and public goods budgets.

The Conservatives had already signalled some of its intentions for DFID and UK aid spending in a (pre-election) Green Paper of 2009. It promised a 'value for money agenda', that re-balanced national interests with doing good globally (Glennie, 2011; Hall-Matthews 2011; Mawdsley 2011; Noxolo et al 2012). Since coming to power, the Coalition (2010-2014) and Conservative government (since 2014) have led an increasingly radical set of changes within DFID (Eyben 2013). Coalition policies regarding DFID were advanced under Secretary of State Andrew Mitchell (2010-2012) then,

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since September 2012, Justine Greening. Greening is a former Treasury Minister with a background in business. Her trademark focus has been a commitment to the empowerment of girls and women, and an avid drive to expand DFID's private sector partnerships, spending and remit.

In March 2013, Justine Greening gave a keynote speech at the London Stock Exchange in which she promised an agenda for change for DFID using the language of investment, market-making and the necessity of a structural public to private rebalancing (Greening 2013). She returned to the LSE in January 2014, and in another high profile statement, detailed the 'transformational journey' that DFID had taken:

> *Economic development is not a completely new direction for DFID but in the past the approach was ad-hoc, and nowhere near a top priority for the department. That is changing. We are now building the most coherent, focused and ambitious approach to economic development that DFID has ever had. ... This represents a radical shift in the way that DFID works.* (Greening 2014)

The 'economic growth' agenda is not just being expanded through sector-specific spending, but is re-focussing DFID's entire mandate. DFID has committed to increase its budget on economic development to £1.8 billion by 2015/16, which is roughly double what was spent on this area in 2012/13 (DFID 2014). Overall, the total aid budget in 2013 was £11.4 billion, so such spending will shortly constitute about a fifth. This figure does not include multilateral contributions, which are also being oriented to serve growth objectives (such as the Private Infrastructure Development Group), while the 2014 Strategic Framework states that DFID will expand existing instruments and create new channels for promoting economic growth. Thus, the economic growth share of the aid budget will continue to rise.

Accompanying the increase in the share of ODA going to economic growth are changes in DFID's institutional structures and personnel profile. In 2011 a Private Sector Department was created, and in 2013, DFID announced that it was creating the new post of Director General for Economic Development with the mandate to lead and increase DFID's investments in growth. A 2011 DFID document 'The Engine of Development: The private sector and prosperity for poor people' asserts that ‘private sector thinking [must] become as much part of DFID's DNA as work with charities and governments’ (DFID, 2011, p. 2). DFID is looking to import more personnel and advisors from the private sector and from other government departments, rather than 'traditional' aid bureaucrats.

A related trend that has received media and NGO scrutiny, as well as criticisms from the Independent Commission on Aid Impact (ICAI 2014), is DFID's very substantial use of contractors,

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including pro-market think-tanks, and large accountancy, financial and management consultancies. These lucrative partnerships are not new, of course, but the focus on economic growth agenda appears to be opening up further opportunities for contracting. Criticisms include the fact that many of these organisations are ideologically committed to privatisation regardless of context or evidence; that ODA is being used to pay large corporate salaries and expenses; that they are being managed at arm's length with insufficient strategic oversight by DFID; and that some 'partner firms' are domiciled in tax-havens.

Civil society organisations are not excluded from this agenda, and the 2014 Strategic Framework states that they can make an important contribution to ensuring 'equitable and inclusive growth and poverty reduction' (the only time 'equity' is referred to in 27 pages). The role CSOs can play in fostering local markets, SMEs, microfinance, improved value chains and holding business to account, are all mentioned. In her 2014 London Stock Exchange speech, Justine Greening commended some NGOs for their work with the private sector, but gave clear direction:

> *I do think NGOs can and need to do more to embed this positive approach towards private sector investment and private sector engagement. I understand why it may come more naturally to campaign to get more children into school or vaccinations for babies – but being reluctant or uncomfortable about encouraging a more entrepreneurial business environment won't do these developing countries any favours.* (Greening 2014)

In terms of the 'substance' of this shift, the centrepiece of the existing mechanisms is the Commonwealth Development Corporation (CDC), the UK's Development Finance Institution. Its mandate is to provide 'developmentally beneficial investment' to help grow businesses in Africa and South Asia. The CDC has been the subject of considerable controversy, including a badly handled part-privatisation, and accusations that its investments do little to enhance development - in some cases undermining socio-economic wellbeing. The CDC has been the object of reforms in 2012, which were intended to bring it into line with 'DFID's objectives'. However it remains a controversial instrument, as do other OECD-DAC Development Finance Institutions (DFIs), many of which are subject to similar critiques (Tomlinson, 2014).

Like other OECD-DAC donors, DFID states that it is promoting 'inclusive growth'. It claims, for example, that it provides finance for firms of all sizes - including British and partner country SMEs - and in 2012 it launched an Impact Investment Fund that directs capital towards pro-poor businesses. However, analyses of these emerging financing approaches in other OECD-DAC donors all point to concerns (Tomlinson 2012; Eurodad 2013). These include the tendency to invest in safer, middle-

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income settings with the best returns rather than where the finance is most required; to crowd out private finance; to support donor rather than recipient country firms; to support larger companies; and to inflate private and public debt.

DFID is also exploring new ways of working with the private sector. For example, the Trade in Global Value Chains Initiative is aimed at encouraging UK businesses to improve supplier standards. The stated goal is to harness and leverage private sector expertise and finance, and to raise standards in value chains. Simultaneously, however, the 2014 Strategic Framework makes no reference to labour rights, union representation or other structural aspects of 'inclusive' growth. Recipients of this ODA money include UK supermarkets Tesco, Primark and Asda. Marks and Spencer also, for example, is to receive ODA to develop 'the leadership and management skills of farm workers in Kenya and South Africa', while Sainsbury's is receiving aid money to establish an 'innovative radio show' for farmers in Kenya.

One of the most interesting features of DFID's current direction is the prominence of the financial sector. Justine Greening has created a formal partnership with the London Stock Exchange Group (LSEG). The first step in the DFID-LSEG partnership was bespoke training for financial sector professionals, regulators and government officials. Present at the partnership launch were twenty 'capital market leaders' from Tanzania, about to embark on a course to help them address constraints to growth in their stock market. Greening asserted that:

> *This is a win-win partnership. It means the best run stock exchange in the world, our stock exchange right here in London, will be offering their expertise to a region where capital markets are in their infancy. And it also means the LSEG will have a fantastic, positive relationship with these frontier economies as they take off.* (Greening 2013)

In a keynote speech intended to inspire it is perhaps no surprise that the distinctive contributions of the City of London's financiers and bankers to the GFC were not mentioned. The 2014 Strategic Framework makes one mention of protecting against financial volatility, and that is to assert that DFID will work with the IMF to help stabilise poor country economies. This does not suggest a balanced or honest appraisal of the risks and rewards of greater financialisation as a development strategy.

Our argument is this. Like a number of other OECD-DAC donors, these trends are not simply about aid being used in support of greater 'national self-interest'. Rather, as with New Zealand, the example of DFID makes the case for the idea of aid being enrolled in a highly divisive post-GFC era of *deepening* and *consolidating* retroliberalism domestically and abroad. One tool is the use of public

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money to bail-out banks, other financial institutions and corporations, while instituting austerity economics on ordinary taxpayers and the most marginalised sections within western economies. If this is the growth model being extended to low and middle income countries, with the assistance of the self-same private sector actors (corporations, transnational conglomerates, accountancy and management consultancies, and financial firms) that have been complicit in widening inequality and growing poverty, precarity and injustice, then we have to question the claims to 'inclusive' or 'sustainable economic growth or 'shared' prosperity. Why would this model be 'inclusive' in Tanzania as it is clearly not in Britain?

Tempting though a swinging critique is, we must also recognise counter-currents, constraints and limitations. DFID is not, of course, a singular coordinated actor, and nor does it have complete autonomy. Both of these truisms temper the extent and functionality of these growth programmes and direction. Country-level offices and staff in particular, are expressing concerns about some of the directions.[9] DFID is subject to parliamentary oversight, and must respond to assessments from the Independent Commission on Aid Effectiveness (e.g. ICAI 2014), The National Audit Office and the All Party Parliamentary Committee on International Development, amongst others. It is notable that all express some of the concerns listed above about various aspects of the private sector-led growth agenda. A very well-established and engaged NGO and academic community are also active in scrutinising the UK's development directions, and engaged in various forms of dialogue with the development establishment (e.g. IDS, Action Aid). Whether and how this will play out will be strongly impacted by the imperatives of party politics in the UK. Both Labour and the Conservatives are acutely aware of the challenge posed by the growing popularity of the UK Independence Party, a party which is demanding an 85% reduction in British aid. Together and separately, all of these factors will bear upon the retroliberal directions sought by DFID's leadership and some political allies, with complex and differential outcomes.

Conclusions

The world of aid has been significantly reshaped in the last few years, in response to the GFC and in response to fundamental changes in the geography of the global economy. The old North-South dichotomy in aid, largely mediated through the OECD and cemented by global agreements such as the MDGs and the Paris Declaration, has been substantially dismantled. While there is plenty to welcome in this more pluralised field of action and governance, we also observe concerning signs. This paper has traced the way such large-scale transformations have been played out in new

[9] This statement is based on confidential discussions with a number of DFID staff and others within the DAC community. For obvious reasons the sources must remain confidential.

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institutional arrangements, strategies and modalities in the United Kingdom and New Zealand. Work elsewhere would seem to support the assertion that the parallel transition to a new aid regime is not exclusive to these cases – we have seen similar trends in the Netherlands, Australia, and Canada among other countries (see Murray and Overton, 2016). Despite the quite different spheres of interest, perceived comparative advantages and scales of operation, the similarities between the two are compelling. For both 'shared prosperity' has come to mean a significant reinvention of aid. The prosperity that is being putatively shared is not a trickle down of the benefits of economic growth to the poor in either donor or recipient countries (and what are now 'donor' and 'recipient' is increasingly opaque) or to those parts of the global economy that are deemed to have poor prospects for growth. The stated mission of aid involving a net flow of resources from the wealthiest to the poorest – never a particularly binding strategic goal – has been lost in these new partnerships.

The discursive shift to 'shared prosperity' has obfuscated a fundamental realignment of resources and relationships under the banner of aid. Amongst other functions (security, soft power etc), in the case studies discussed and, we hypothesise, in general across the OECD, aid has become part of a broader stimulus package intended to revive and sustain capitalism, primarily with the donors in mind, but with spillover benefits for capitalist elites in partner countries, and (at best) crumbs, risk and precarity for workers and citizens. The GFC created space for states to openly subsidise capital to avert crisis in 2007-08, and increasingly we see OECD-DAC aid acting as another conduit for public money to promote the interests of certain favoured elements of their own private sector. Shared prosperity has allowed for the export of stimulus packages for domestic private enterprises. Given the trends of rising inequality in these self-same donor economies, decreasing labour protection, 'recovery' for the few and not the many, poverty-level wages, and the contraction of public services, public goods and social welfare, it does not seem illogical to question both ends of the claim to 'shared prosperity'.

We have not read a single critic who has based their analysis on an ideological rejection of the role of the private sector in a healthy economy and polity. All recognise the necessity and value of a well-regulated and diverse private sector, and see the value of aid policies and programmes that seek to support such an outcome. Rather, their critiques rest on the nature, type and quality of such private sector-led growth, and the broader structures within which different parts operate. Clearly, the renewed and expanded focus on private sector-led strategies for 'development' may indeed produce improvements in 'headline' growth figures in both donor and partner countries. However, the evidence to date suggests that the overwhelming beneficiaries of this growth are or are likely to be

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corporate elites, with much less guaranteed - and in some cases negative - outcomes for ordinary taxpayers, workers and citizens (ActionAid 2014). A detailed review of private sector-led development partnerships, programmes and strategies across the OECD-DAC donor community reveals very little mention of decent work (labour terms and conditions), local ownership, directing investment to where it is needed rather than where it provides the best return, reducing risk and exposure to financial volatility, and only tokenistic commitments to partner country SMEs (Tomlinson 2012). Breezy statements about 'inclusive growth' or 'shared prosperity' are not backed up with the conceptual or policy frameworks required to actually achieving these goals. Rather, current aid discourses repeatedly assert and assume a confluence of interests between all parties, and a 'natural' translation of 'growth' into 'development'.

There is likely to be opposition to the maintenance of high levels of aid spending when domestic economies remain sluggish, and funds are being spent ostensibly on the poor overseas whilst unemployment and poverty persist at home. Such a reaction has already been articulated strongly in the UK and is fuelled by the realisation that the economies of many recipients are performing better than donors. Paradoxically, then, public resistance to retroliberalism (the support for domestic capitalism under the guise of aid) is coming from those who oppose the idea that aid is being spent overseas on the poor, and such groups are increasingly associated with the rising nationalist movement across the Western world. While this continues to be one dimension of aid allocation and programming, here we have argued that in fact aid is once again being explicitly harnessed to 'national' self-interest. Public and political critique of aid is then, we would suggest, mis-directed. Instead, civil society and politicians should be insisting that aid is re-purposed to genuinely serve to promote inclusive, progressive poverty reduction, and greater equality, domestically and abroad. Current media, public and political debates are largely missing the point, and diverting attention away from a critical analysis of those who are excluded from current strategies – the poor, civil society, small-scale capitalism and labour movements in both donor and recipient countries.
We therefore finish by proposing that aid should be reclaimed. This does not mean a return to the neostructural project of the early 2000s, nor does it argue that aid was 'moral' in earlier eras and needs to return to a state of grace. What we do argue is that many states (OECD-DAC and others) have effectively co-opted the mantle of aid - material and moral - so as to enable certain agents (transnational capital, the wealthy) to use it to accelerate their own accumulation. Domestic policy strategies that acted to rescue, support and promote the private sector during the GFC have been reconfigured as an export strategy through aid programmes. And just as those strategies were stimulus packages for capital, so too did they simultaneously exclude and further marginalise

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peripheralised groups in society. A reclaiming of aid should therefore aim to invert the current redistributive mechanisms of capitalism and instead focus attention on those who lose – wherever they are - and seek to lessen not magnify inequality.

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