

The “rise of the rest”: Implications for “traditional” aid donors

The global landscape of development aid is changing. “Rising powers” such as Brazil, India, Russia and particularly China have skyrocketed development assistance promising development “without conditions”, and economic growth via private sector investment. This session seeks to explore how the “rise of the rest” is changing the rhetoric, practices or aims of traditional bilateral and multilateral donors e.g., Australia Aid, World Bank. Recent work suggests that aid-recipient governments are less likely to comply with traditional donors’ conditions if they receive aid from the “rising powers”. Relatedly, personnel in aid-recipient countries are increasingly willing to challenge donor conditions during the everyday micropolitics of aid partnerships if they receive Chinese aid. This suggests that racialized and geographical knowledge hierarchies that “whiteness” and “westernness” symbolise expertise are being unsettled. Other work signals that the presence of Chinese Aid is forcing traditional donors to increase their aid and reduce their conditions to maintain and consolidate partnerships. For example, the Australian government was accused of geopolitical manoeuvring when it launched the “Pacific Step Up” in 2018, which includes billions of dollars of investment in renewable energy, the blue economy and infrastructure across the Pacific.

This session seeks papers that explore how the “rise of the rest” is changing the narrative, structure or aims of traditional donors at all scales. The session particularly welcomes papers that use qualitative methods to consider issues related to donor compliance, development sovereignty and ownership, the micropolitics of aid, retoliberalism, knowledge politics, racialized forms of power, and the perceptions, experiences and behaviours of development experts in aid-recipient countries.