

AGIC seminars

Humanitarian Partnerships: Exploring the 'Value' of Help

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Abstract

Since the 1990s, geography and other social sciences have seen considerable infighting over how to theorize the relationship between the political, the economic and the cultural. Yet, many of these fundamental dilemmas in theory can be clarified when engaged pragmatically for understanding real world phenomena as Ibert and colleagues have argued —‘positioning and “doing” geographies of dissociation’—can link our critical political economy with a strong semiotic critique. This paper will draw on theories from cultural economic geography to understand humanitarian partnerships. ‘Partnerships’ between humanitarian organizations and businesses are becoming increasingly part of the funding and definitional landscape of transnational helping. From a recently completed research program on *Commodifying Compassion* and ongoing collaborations on *Everyday Humanitarianism in Tanzania*, I will draw on examples of diverse humanitarian partnerships to explore theoretically and empirically. This paper will explore how we might use the geographies of dissociation to explain partnerships ranging from the €790 pendent with the NGO logo ‘honoring the 10th anniversary of Bulgari’s philanthropic partnership with Save the Children’ to the hand-blown glass carafe that supports Tanzanian philanthropy.

7th of May 2024, 2.00 pm, Room A3, Campus Einaudi

In cooperation with the Laboratorio di Analisi Sociologica “Nicola Negri”

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