

Industrial Altruism

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This research project aims to explain how the practice of altruism has been effected by the changing nature of modern society. Within the spheres of “aid”, “philanthropy”, “charity” and “corporate social responsibility” the unique practice of altruism has phenomenally grown and changed. Driven by globalisation, growth and changing social values, from materialistic to moral, altruism is rapidly increasing in the most developed societies. However, it is being reshaped by momentous, regressive, social forces and agents. Governments are using their economic power to colonise under-developed countries through tied aid. Populist and nationalist movements are leading a cultural backlash against the idea of a global community and are promoting selfish materialism. Altruism is becoming a tool for business in the search for good publicity and profit.

The motivations and processes of these industries are “based” on altruistic intentions yet new social forces challenge those intentions. Meanwhile, charities are being run more as businesses, using technology, statistics and paid professionals, turning altruism into a product that gives the donor a moral high. The industry embodies the negotiations of the most salient global social forces in the modern world and as it grows demands sociological analysis as a significant indicator of society’s future. Using altruism as a unit for analysis, a diverse set of case studies should be produced to highlight the changing nature and scale of altruism. Whilst altruism is usually hailed for its ability to bring happiness, the practice has become a vehicle for less virtuous intentions and consequences.