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Title: "Distant" Others in Need and "Nearby" Sustainability Superheroes: For-profits Doing Good in the Era of the SDGs

Based on event ethnography, this paper explores the growing proliferation of for-profit, as opposed to non-profit, narratives of "doing good" emerging in the era of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Through the analysis of narratives as empirical objects that convey and shape incentives and rationalities, the paper identifies three key trends in for-profit engagements in doing good. Firstly, doing good is increasingly defined as working towards the SDGs. In particular, individual goals and targets are strategically selected with an eye to "high impact" and measurability. Secondly, profit and doing good are more and more often presented as symbiotic rather than as competing rationalities. This has the consequence that, for businesses, doing good has now become part of their core business, as opposed to merely supporting various causes as a sideline. As part of this trend, for-profits and non-profits are working together to form so-called transformational partnerships. Thirdly, while narratives of doing good have traditionally justified initiatives by evoking a "distant other in need" (that is a person who needs help and who is socially and often geographically distant to the spectator), they tend today to invoke a "nearby sustainability superhero" (an individual who provides help and with whom the spectator can personally identify) when marketing these initiatives. As a result of these new trends there is a move away from questioning "development" as a (politicized) concept. Development is now simply (apoliticized) "doing good." Partly as a result of the SDGs, also known as the "Global Goals," scholarly debate is questioning whether the concept of the "international" should be replaced by the "global." However, whereas "international" denotes concrete (politicized) relations between national entities, the globe is an (apoliticized) abstraction. I argue that these trends, therefore, may have detrimental consequences for critical scholarly engagement with the politics inherent in "development."