

MEDIATIZED CULTURAL ACTIVISM

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MEDIATIZING SHAME:

POSTHUMANITARIANISM AND PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT ETHICS
IN RADI-AID'S ACTIVIST AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS

CAMILLA MØHRING REESTORFF

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ABSTRACT

This article studies the Norwegian Students and Academics' International Assistance Fund's (SAIH) hoax advocacy campaign, Radi-Aid. The paper distinguishes between advocacy campaigns that are designed as fundraising and awareness campaigns targeted at changing political attitudes towards humanitarianism. The article argues that Radi-Aid is a mediatized activist awareness campaign that negotiates participatory development ethics. The focus is thus on Radi-Aid's engagement in an ethics that explores the functionality of celebrities and lifestyle posthumanitarianism and the participation of local communities. While posthumanitarianism might simply be dismissed, for instance, through notions of low engagement participation such as clicktivism and lifestyle activism, the article argues that Radi-Aid is itself a form of posthumanitarianism. This posthumanitarianism is crucial because it works as a form of détournement that simultaneously shames participants and makes existent humanitarian communities present to one another and turns them into political collectives. As such, Radi-Aid can be interpreted as a reconfiguration of posthumanitarianism that offers the shamed a remedy by means of the participatory development ethics.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

*Camilla Møhring Reestorff is assistant professor at the Department of Communication and Culture, Aarhus University, Denmark, and Honorary Research Fellow at the University of Melbourne, Australia. She is editor-in-chief of *Conjunctions: Transdisciplinary Journal of Cultural Participation*. Her previous publications include "Mediatized affective activism. The activist imaginary and the topless body in the Femen Movement" (2014) and "Unruly Artivism and the Participatory Documentary Ecology of *The Act of Killing*" (2015). Her research interests are culture wars, globalization, mediatization, cultural participation, activism, artivism, and affect.*

Corresponding author

Camilla Møhring Reestorff

Assistant Professor

The University of Aarhus, School of Communication and Culture

Jens Chr. Skous Vej 2, 1485/536, 8000 Aarhus C

norcmr@dac.au.dk

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INTRODUCTION

In this paper I study *The Norwegian Students' and Academics' International Assistance Fund's* (SAIH) hoax advocacy campaign launched under the name Radi-Aid. Radi-Aid is the sender of three campaign videos: "Africa for Norway" (2012), "Let's save Africa – gone wrong" (2013) and "Who wants to be a volunteer" (2014). In "Africa for Norway", charity songs, such as Band Aid, are turned upside down by "African" musicians, who point out that people in Norway are freezing and in desperate need of radiators. In "Let's save Africa – gone wrong", we are invited to meet Michael "The Fundraising Actor" who excels in performing the "sad African child". And in "Who wants to be a volunteer", the topic at task is the volunteer industry. Volunteers are literally throwing food at "Africans" and they are competing in reality game shows that require no knowledge about the issues at hand, but skills in taking "selfies" with "African" children. Radi-Aid's campaign videos all seek to challenge advocacy stereotypes, and they have all gone viral on YouTube¹ and been circulated in social as well as in mainstream media. The videos, for instance, all made it to *The Guardian's* list of "11 of the best aid parodies" (Purvis, 2014). Besides these hoax advocacy campaigns, Radi-Aid awards the Rusty Radiator Award to the advocacy campaigns that have the worst use of stereotypes and the Golden Radiator Award to campaigns that are creative, create engagement, and deviate from the common stereotypes.

In order to understand Radi-Aid's spoofs, I suggest that it is necessary to distinguish between advocacy campaigns that are designed as fundraising for a particular cause and awareness campaigns targeted not so much at fundraising as on changing political attitudes towards development aid. Radi-Aid is, I argue, a mediatized activist awareness campaign that negotiates a participatory development ethics. Participation is the underlying topic of negotiation and something which concerns two distinct levels: first, the cooperation between SAIH and its collaborators, and secondly, a particular mediatized activist practice. The focus in this article is not so much on the participatory practices of Radi-Aid, but rather Radi-Aid's engagement in an ethics that explores the functionality of celebrities and lifestyle posthumanitarianism and the possibilities of local communities to be engaged without being misrepresented. While posthumanitarianism might simply be dismissed, for instance, through notions of low engagement participation such as clicktivism and lifestyle activism, I will argue that Radi-Aid is in itself a form of post-humanitarianism. This posthumanitarianism is crucial because it works as mediatized activism that simultaneously shames participants and makes humanitarian communities present to one another by turning them into a political collective that is asked to recognize the flaws of the recognizable humanitarian imaginary in order to escape the shamed position and engage in the participatory development ethics.

ADVOCACY, AWARENESS, AND PARTICIPATION

If we are to understand the significance of Radi-Aid, it is necessary to understand the particular institutional setting of SAIH. SAIH has existed since 1961 as a part of Norwegian students' and academics' engagement in the anti-apartheid movement. This focus on students and academics entails that SAIH has a very specific target group and that members, potential participants, and benefactors are enlisted through their universities or "folk high schools" (the latter offers non-formal adult education). In Norway, higher education is free, but every student must pay a minor semester fee to cover various welfare services, such as exercise, printing, and membership of SAIH. Membership is voluntary in the sense that the democratic student organ of each institution decides whether or not to support SAIH. Six of Norway's eight universities are members and so are 23 "folk high schools". Accordingly, more than 160,000 students support SAIH with between 20 and 40 NKR each semester. Further to this, academics and academic unions support SAIH and the government-funded NORAD, the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, funds 80% of SAIH's activities. This means that SAIH relies on government funding and institutional membership by local organizations, universities, and "folk high schools", and it is therefore, obviously, not as dependent on personal membership and donations as many other aid organizations. This might be a structural reason why SAIH launches a campaign like Radi-Aid, which is not targeted at raising funds but at negotiating the participatory development ethics in humanitarian advocacy campaigns.

Even though SAIH relies on government funding and institutional membership, participation plays a crucial role both in regard to SAIH's collaborative activities and in their stated objectives. SAIH collaborates with 40 aid organizations in Zimbabwe, South Africa, Zambia, Bolivia, Colombia, and Nicaragua, and the focus is on education. The core idea is that education is necessary not only for generating prosperity, but also for ensuring a just society, and that education is an emancipatory process in which active participation ensures a political consciousness in which each individual seeks long term solutions.² According to SAIH, these solutions are developed and implemented by local participants. SAIH emphasizes that they support "projects that are initiated, organized and run by local organizations or institutions. The projects must take their starting point in the target groups' culture and they must be a part of the project development and implementation. SAIH supports projects that use participatory methods" (SAIH, 2014 *my translation*). It is thus important that SAIH does not have headquarters or staff members outside Norway, but relies on collaborations with local organizations. This is at the core of their activities, and it is what they seek to promote not only in their collaborations, but also in their attempts to gain political impact.

Following this, it is important to distinguish between SAIH's activities abroad and their communication to a Norwegian and Western audience. Whereas the activities abroad rely on the collaboration with local organizations and institutions, their informa-

tion campaigns targeted at a Norwegian and Western audience are focused on negotiating the ethical principles of humanitarian participation. In Radi-Aid, the campaigns move from being primarily about advocacy to being awareness campaigns directed at other NGOs, volunteers, and participants, who donate money or volunteer in different types of humanitarian campaigns.

Contrary to SAIH's other activities, in Radi-Aid participation is not in itself characterized by a form of participation that enables what Sherry Arnstein (1969) and Nico Carpentier (2011) refer to as citizen power. The campaign is made by SAIH with the cooperation of Operations Day's Work (a high school charity), the musician Wathiq Hoosain, the folk band Bretton Woods and the video is produced by the Duban-based production company Ikind Media. As noted by David Jefferess, despite these collaborations, in Radi-Aid's videos there is "little indication that this was an active collaboration" (Jefferess, 2013, p. 76). Nevertheless, I will argue, that the videos do in fact concern participation. They concern participation in the sense that they are produced as "collective actions that form something larger so that those involved become part of and share in the entity or effects created" (Kelty et al., 2014, p. 5). Furthermore, while they do not facilitate citizen power, access to decision-making, or ownership of recourses, the videos are targeted at triggering a collective, affective experience (Kelty et al., 2014, p. 2). This experience includes the negotiation of citizen power, local voices, and participation in advocacy campaigns. As such, Radi-Aid, interpreted as an awareness campaign, concerns the negotiation of a participatory development ethics.

Participation is a core concern in Radi-Aid, and questions of participation are reflected in all three videos either as questions of celebrity or lifestyle humanitarianism or as the



Figure 1: Michael performs "the sad African child" in "Let's save Africa –gone wrong"

problematic, conditioned participation often offered to local communities. In “Africa for Norway”, the participation of celebrities in advocacy campaigns are challenged. In “Who wants to be a volunteer” volunteers compete in reality game shows that require no knowledge about local development. And in “Let’s save Africa – gone wrong”, we meet Michael “The Fundraising Actor”, who knows exactly how to perform when confronted with Western charity workers. The video emphasizes that Michael is a performer and he encounters a celebrity unaware of his actual needs – “celebrities always give me these crappy presents”. This confirms SAIH’s position paper that emphasizes that aid must concern local, formulated needs and target structural inequality, rather than merely treating the symptoms of these structural problems (SAIH, 2014).

Radi-Aid’s videos emphasize the misrepresentations that occur even when “Africans” are included in aid campaigns and highlight two problems relating to participation in advocacy campaigns. First, how can celebrity and lifestyle humanitarianism engage in advocacy campaigns without misrepresenting the people that they intend to help? And secondly, how can advocacy campaigns engage local communities without reducing these to mere props? By raising these questions, Radi-Aid engages in the field of development ethics that explores questions of good development of societies as well and contends that national economical development is not a sufficient frame of understanding. Development is often “articulated within a modernist model of linear progress, in which western democracies (and especially their economies) are the example to be imitated” (Carpentier, 2011, p. 48). Yet, this approach is not necessarily beneficial. Des Gasper has suggested a holistic perspective that does not merely foreground development with national economical development: “Generations of experience suggest the inadequacy of the assumption that societal, world or personal development can be equated to economic growth and wealth. That assumption neglects issues of equity, security, personal relationships, natural environment, identity, culture and meaningfulness” (Gasper, 2014, p. 47). Gasper thus suggests that it is necessary to address questions of development ethics, because poverty, sickness, insecurity, and unhappiness persist despite economic growth; because people become harmed even within processes of economic development e.g. through displacements; because gains in wellbeing through a development policy approach that focuses on economic growth are often questionable; and because of questions relating to democratic participation and the engagement of local communities.

In Radi-Aid the participatory development ethics is explicitly accentuated when Michael must perform “the sad African child” who is transformed into the happy receiver of aid – even when the aid does not correspond with his actual needs. Furthermore, the video mocks the references to “somewhere in Africa” and the expectation that “African women” are all able to walk with a bucket on their heads. This is not only indicative of a critique of a kind of participation that is harmful because it reproduces stereotypes; it is also critical of participation in which local participants do not have the opportunity to represent themselves. The video thus personifies, through Michael, the failed aid that

is the consequence of not involving local communities in decision-making that concerns the development of their community. This is furthermore made clear as the video points out the lack of historical and even geographical accuracy presented in subjective knowledge communication.

Radi-Aid's critique of humanitarian participation is a critique of a particular kind of tokenism. Arnstein, in a context of spatial planning, originally described tokenism as unfolding through strategies of informing, consultation, and placation. In the latter, "a few hand-picked 'worthy' poor" are placed "on boards of Community Action Agenda or on public bodies like the board of education, police commissions, or housing authority" (Arnstein, 1969, p. 220). In "Let's save Africa – gone wrong", Michael is expected to play a "sad African child", who has no knowledge about the Western world. He thus embodies token participants in advocacy campaigns. However, this does not correspond with Michael's self understanding when he is not filming for the campaigns. He dresses like a famous hip-hop artist with baggy pants, cap, and sunglasses and he is very aware that he has "mad skills". The isolated and "sad African child" does not correspond with Michael's otherwise global awareness, as suggested through references to Hollywood and hip-hop. This indicates that Michael is neither allowed to represent himself nor to provide a contextualized and accurate account of where, when, and why aid is needed. In the video, Michael is aware that his participation is tokenism, but this seems to be a necessary evil: "So you see. It is a tough business... Sometimes I think about quitting. But then again it is for a good cause." Thus, Michael reaffirms the argument that "those people who have the greatest reason to challenge and confront power relations are brought, or even bought, through the promise of development assistance, into the development of process in ways that disempower them to challenge the prevailing hierarchies and inequalities in society" (Kothari, 201, p. 143). The dilemma is clear: either you quit or you accept that your participation does not allow accurate representations that challenge structural inequality.

"Let's save Africa – gone wrong" delivers an alternative to the problematic token participation. In the end of the video, Michael dances to music that is very different to the sound scape from *The Lion King*, which is played earlier. While he is dancing, the screen reads, "Stereotypes harm dignity. Challenge the perceptions. Reach into your heart. Dig into your pockets. Donate your stereotype as rustyradiators.com." The solution inferred by Radi-Aid is not necessarily as radical as the citizen power required by Arnstein (1969). It is possible to promote advocacy campaigns, but the knowledge production must not be subjective and depoliticized. Furthermore, participation can occur without participants having full control of every aspect of the participatory process. Yet, participation must not rely on stereotypes, and it must provide room for challenging hierarchies. In order to avoid structural inequality and engage in a holistic approach to advocacy, Denis Goutlet (1975) has suggested that development practices with an ethical backdrop must adhere to a concept of universal solidarity, the abundance of goods, populace representation, and control over destiny. Following Goutlet's emphasis on people's ability to control their

own futures, Nikos Astroulakis likewise argues that non-elite participation in decision-making enables people to mobilize and gain control over their social destiny (Astroulakis, 2011, p. 227). In this context, Radi-Aid's lesson is first that people must be participants and problem solvers in their social environment (Goulet, 1975 and Astroulakis, 227), and secondly, that global solidarity must rely not on subjective knowledge but on what Lilie Chouliaraki terms "solidarity as agonism". Solidarity as agonism grounds "empathetic imagination upon what Arendt calls 'imaginative mobility', that is, the performance of the vulnerable other as a sovereign actor endowed with his/her own humanity" (Chouliaraki, 2013, p. 193). By performing this imaginative mobility, Michael becomes a participant who is more than a token, and who partakes in challenging popular representations, thus promoting a particular participatory development ethics.

MEDIATIZED ACTIVIST DÉTOURNEMENT

In understanding Radi-Aid as an awareness campaign rather than an aid campaign, it can be conceptualized as activism. Radi-Aid is not an attempt to fundraise, but, as argued above, it is an attempt to negotiate a participatory development ethics. The question is of course what Radi-Aid is when it is not a fundraising and advocacy campaign? As I have already indicated, Radi-Aid is an awareness campaign that targets a Norwegian and Western audience. This entails that it can be conceptualized as an activist intervention in humanitarian discourses and practices, relying on a broad notion in which activism is understood as "directed against prevailing authority as domination and exploitation, whether in personal relations of micro-power, or in the form of institutional domination" (Hands, 2011, p. 5). Radi-Aid is, in this context, an activist project because it is an expression of "dissatisfaction with the state of affairs", directed against a "general perceived injustice", and because it "entails an appeal to others" (Hands, 2011, p. 4). Joss Hands argues that activism works on the spectrum between dissent, resistance, and rebellion. Radi-Aid might best be described as dissent, because it "focuses on challenging dominant views, expressing opposition and relying on the force of argument alone" (Hands, 2011, p. 124), yet it also includes "a proto-rebellious ethics of solidarity" and thus a form of resistance that might exist "without necessarily expressing the full gesture of rebellion" (Hands, 2011, p. 6). Following this, Radi-Aid's videos, which call for people to "donate your stereotype" through clicks, likes, and shares, might constitute a proto-rebellious ethics of solidarity because they include an appeal to others to challenge stereotypes and structural inequality.

The appeal for solidarity is crucial, not only because it aims to mobilize support, but also because it is mediatized. The appeal is simply shaped according to the logics of social media. Saxton and Wang suggest "attention-getting projects, social pressures, and 'casual' and 'impulse donating' are driving contributions more than 'rational' concerns over efficiency" (Saxton and Wang, 2013, p. 852). While Radi-Aid is not primarily concerned with seeking financial contributions, the campaign nevertheless constitutes an attention-seek-

ing social and creative practice. Radi-Aid's videos are activist media practices, which are "(1) both routinised and creative social practices that (2) include interactions with media objects (such as mobile, laptops, pieces of paper) and media subjects (such as journalists, public relations managers, other activists); (3) draw on how media objects and media subjects are perceived and how the media environment is understood and known" (Mattoni, 2012, p. 159). The interaction with media objects and subjects primarily describe a mediation process, yet the emphasis on perception implies a process of mediatization in which activist activities are adapted to symbols or mechanisms created by the media (Hjarvard, 2008, 31). Accordingly, Radi-Aid constitutes an activist media practice because it includes interactions with media objects (e.g. cameras, laptops, videos, YouTube), media subjects (activists, bloggers, journalists), and because it is mediatized in its form.

The mediatization is particularly evident in the appropriation of recognizable popular culture and media images, such as Band Aid, "Who wants to be a millionaire?", and the sound scape from *The Lion King*. The references to images, sounds, and genres from popular culture make the videos recognizable, accessible, and thus spreadable, but the videos also ironically twist the imaginary that they adapt. In that sense, Radi-Aid's mediatized activism is in line with the situationists' concept of *détournement*; meaning deflection, diversion, rerouting, distortion, misuse, misappropriation, hijacking, or otherwise turning something aside from its normal course or purpose (Debord and Wolman, 1956). According to McKenzie Wark, *détournement* is an advance on the practice of collage and thus it "emphasises the destructive moment" (Wark, 2009, p. 146). Yet, *détournement* is not only a process of destruction of the *détourned* elements – "a revaluation via the organisation of another meaningful ensemble which incorporates it" (Wark, 2009, p. 146) might emerge. Radi-Aid's mediatized activist practice works as *détournement* because it uses and abuses a recognizable media imaginary. Furthermore, Radi-Aid "treats this commons not as an object of reverence, as a collective memory of the best of what was thought and said, but as an active place of agency. *Détournement* dissolves the rituals of knowledge in an active remembering that calls collective being into existence" (Wark, 2009, p. 152). By asking people to share a twisted yet recognizable humanitarian imaginary, Radi-Aid not only engages in a mediatized *détournement* of familiar humanitarian aid practices, but also calls a collective being into existence; a collective being that is asked to acknowledge the flaws of the recognizable humanitarian imaginary.

RECONFIGURING POSTHUMANITARIANISM

As argued above, Radi-Aid can be interpreted as an awareness campaign and as mediatized activism that utilizes strategies of *détournement* to dissolve the rituals of knowledge affiliated with humanitarianism and to call a collective being into existence. This strategy targets and mocks a specific form of posthumanitarianism evident in a number of charities, such as Band Aid.

In 2014, an outbreak of Ebola emerged in Western Africa, and while it was quickly contained in Nigeria and Senegal, at the time of writing the disease is still in outbreak in Guinea and Sierra Leone. After incidents of Ebola in Spain and the United States, media interest in the disease grew rapidly. On November 10, 2014, Bob Geldorf announced the incarnation of Band Aid 30. The charity super group would include One Direction, Sam Smith, Ed Sheeran, Emeli Sandé, Ellie Goulding, Lily Allen, Rita Ora, Guy Garvey, Chris Martin, and Bono. They were to cover “Do They Know It’s Christmas?” (1984) to raise money towards alleviating the “Ebola crisis”.³ Despite its commercial success, Band Aid 3.0 was criticized on the grounds that the song produces stereotypes and that it could be harmful because increased fear of Ebola might have a negative effect on tourism and trade, not only in the Ebola affected countries, but on the entire African continent. This critique was also reflected in controversies between Geldorf and a number of musicians. After the song was released, Lily Allen, Emili Sandé, and Angelique Kidjo, who all participated in the project, openly criticized it. Sandé “praised the sentiment behind the project but said ‘a whole new’ song was needed. The 27-year-old, who is of Zambian heritage, said on Twitter that she and Beninese singer Angelique Kidjo ‘made and sang our own edits’, and it was ‘unfortunate’ none made the cut” (Webb, 2014). Charity organizations also proceeded to criticize the song. Solome Lemma, who is cofounder of Africans in the Diaspora and Africa Responds, argued: “Band Aid is a relic of an old era that patronised Africa. [...] We now know that there are more effective ways of responding to emergencies, and a central part of that is supporting and strengthening the local response” (Lemma, 2014). Geldorf’s response to the critics was harsh and ambivalent. He maintains that the song potentially helps people to “die with a little more dignity”, yet he also implicitly acknowledges that the critique might be valid, because even if it is it doesn’t matter because “it’s a pop song, it’s not a doctoral thesis” (Sigh, 2014). As such, he establishes a distinction between elite and unsophisticated everyday knowledge. However, this distinction between elite and everyday knowledge is an attempt to avoid acknowledging that the song is potentially problematic and to redirect shame against the critics who can just “fuck off”.

I introduce the controversy surrounding “Do they know its Christmas?” because it provides a framework for understanding SAIH’s mediatized advocacy campaigns. As mentioned, Radi-Aid can be understood as mediatized activism that partakes in the negotiation of a participatory development ethics. The participants in the Band Aid project are celebrity musicians who try to do good, but end up issuing something harmful in which stereotypes threaten to cause fear related to the entire African continent. Radi-Aid’s mediatized *détournement* tackles this problematic by emphasizing the destructive moment of humanitarianism, and as such it can be interpreted as a specific attempt to come to terms with an identity crisis of humanitarianism.

Humanitarianism and posthumanitarianism are contested fields. Michael Barnett (2011) has identified a shift from an age of imperial humanitarianism to an age of liberal

humanitarianism in which humanitarianism and security have collapsed under peace building and in which fields of activity, such as emergency aid, development, human rights, and conflict prevention that once operated independently, have increasingly been merged, beginning in the 1990s (Barnett, 2011, p. 168). This regime of liberal humanitarianism signifies the emergence of invasive projects, as the “list of factors associated with a stable peace means that nearly all of the features of state and society have become objects of intervention” (Barnett, 2011, p. 164). The development of liberal humanitarianism is closely tied to the increasing focus on human rights and to the idea that there is an obligation to intervene on behalf of individuals against abusive states. It suggests, “if a state fail to honor their responsibility to their peoples, then the international community inherits that responsibility” (Barnett, 2011, p. 192). The notion of “the responsibility to protect” has resulted in a humanitarian identity crisis on two vectors. First of all, it has resulted in an identity crisis in development aid. Aid agencies are having difficulties determining when and how to act: for example, are they supposed to primarily deliver emergency aid, or engage in a variety of development issues and in so-called humanitarian interventions? And are these interventions necessary or damaging? The second identity crisis concerns a problem of engagement. Chouliaraki has argued that a new emotionality has developed as a response to “a generalized reluctance to accept ‘common humanity’ as the motivation for our actions” and that this has turned “the West into a specific kind of public actor – the ironic spectator of vulnerable others” (Chouliaraki, 2013, p. 2).

The ironic spectator is embedded in a paradigmatic shift from solidarity of pity to solidarity of irony evident in “the truth-claims of suffering, which move from an emphasis on suffering as external reality, validated by objective criteria of authenticity to suffering as subjective knowledge, validated by psychological grounded criteria of authenticity” (Chouliaraki, 2013, p. 173). This further involves a shift from a disposition that is oriented towards the other to a disposition oriented towards the self. Radi-Aid can be interpreted exactly as a harsh critique of the self-oriented disposition of posthumanitarianism and the promotion of suffering as subjective knowledge. This stance is particularly evident in Radi-Aid’s engagement with celebrity and lifestyle humanitarianism.

As indicated in the controversy surrounding Band Aid 3.0, celebrity humanitarianism has developed into a controversial field. Celebrities were once considered a “powerless elite” (Alberoni, 2006), but now celebrities like Angelina Jolie and Emma Watson have become embedded in “the official communication strategy of the United Nations and Global INGOs, as well as the source of major private initiatives (Bishop and Green, 2008)” (Chouliaraki, 2013, p. 78). Some argue that celebrity humanitarianism is important “because celebrities have considerable opportunities not only to formulate but to sell their initiatives, targeting not only to the public but to selected state leaders” (Cooper, 2007, p 5). Yet others, including Chouliaraki, maintain that celebrities are tied to historical power relations of humanitarianism, empire, and spectacle (Chouliaraki, 2013, p. 87). To some extent, Radi-Aid’s videos can be interpreted as an attack on these humanitarian

power relations embedded in celebrity and lifestyle activism. This is because the participation of celebrities relies on the ironic spectator and thus on the affirmation of subjective knowledge.

This becomes clear in “Let’s save Africa – gone wrong” when Michael – the fundraising actor – encounters the well meaning, but ill-informed celebrity. The celebrity’s narration is told from her personal perspective: “It is my first time in Africa and as a young mother I am really looking forward to meeting the children”. She cries when Michael tells her his story, and she expects him to be happy when she gives him sweets: “The gifts we give do not mean anything to us, but their faces brighten like nothing I have ever seen before”. Michael’s encounter with the celebrity thus problematizes the idea that humanitarianism has to be presented as subjective knowledge experienced and felt by the celebrity. In this type of communication, it is the celebrity and her tears that attest to the authenticity of suffering, and this in turn depoliticizes the actual circumstances and the potential needs of the local community.



Figure 2: The celebrity approaches Michael in “Let’s save Africa – gone wrong”

In “Africa for Norway”, mediatized *détournement* is applied as a critique of Band Aid. The video is structured almost exactly like the Band Aid videos, which have used the same structure since the first version in 1984. Yet, it is not “Africans” that are in need of aid, but the suffering and freezing Norwegians. “Africa for Norway” begins by introducing the problem - Norwegians are suffering – along with the hashtag #FrostbiteKillsToo. We then see a group of celebrities coming together for the cause. They are filmed as they

enter the studio – followed by paparazzi – and as they record the track. The camera zooms in on each individual's face as they perform in front of the microphone. Finally, the group of celebrities is shown singing together. As such, "Africa for Norway" highlights that celebrity humanitarianism, such as Band Aid, focuses on collectivity and agency, yet it also launches a critique of this agency for being placed solely on the celebrities. By showing "African celebrities" coming together to help Norwegians survive the cold, it is made clear that traditional celebrity humanitarianism often transforms the celebrities into a community and as such produces "the West as an imaginary 'we' – a collectivity that perceives itself as an actor upon vulnerable others beyond its immediate reach" (Chouliaraki, 2013, p. 107).



Figure 3: "Celebrities" gathering for the cause in Radi-Aid's "Africa for Norway"

"Africa for Norway" delivers a critique of a process of depoliticization that often occurs in posthumanitarianism. This depoliticization involves "removing public scrutiny and debate" (Kapoor, 2013). Furthermore, celebrities often "champion 'safe' and marketable topics, shying away from anything too political. Usually, this means that they focus on symptoms rather than core problems" (Kapoor, 2013, p. 36). The emphasis on celebrities and the collective "Western we" implies that the sufferers are excluded from being active participants and from being anything else than sufferers. Like the celebrities in the Band Aid videos, the celebrities in "Africa for Norway" do not challenge the hierarchical relations in which they are embedded. The cameras and the paparazzi depicted in the videos obviously reflect an awareness of the celebrities as being privileged, but the videos and the celebrities do not confront "the corporate power they so profit from" (Kapoor, 2013, p. 33). As such, "Africa for Norway" critiques posthumanitarian projects that, while they

subscribe to a belief in “the responsibility to protect”, nevertheless fail to engage and challenge structural inequality and recognize local communities and individuals as participants with agency in their own life.

POSTHUMANITARIAN COPARTICIPATORY MOBILIZATION

Radi-Aid launches a critique of posthumanitarianism that grounds humanitarianism in lifestyle and the subjective knowledge of celebrity humanitarians and neglects the representation of structural inequality and local participation. This critique of posthumanitarianism is interesting, however, since Radi-Aid is in fact indicative of a highly posthumanitarian campaign. Radi-Aid’s mediatized *détournement* is a posthumanitarian practice, because it “occurs within a type of communication aware of its inability to enshrine any inherent and definitive certainty” (Wark, 2009, p. 151). The mediatized *détournement* that is applied to highlight the processes of depoliticization embedded in posthumanitarianism is a posthumanitarian practice.

According to Chouliaraki, irony “refers to a disposition of detached knowingness, a self-conscious suspicion vis-à-vis all claims to truth, which comes from acknowledging that there is always a disjunction between what is said and what exists – that there are no longer grand narratives to hold the two together (Rorty 1989)” (Chouliaraki, 2013, p. 2). The ironic spectator is thus an ambivalent figure, skeptical of appeals to humanity, yet willing to act. However, Radi-Aid’s posthumanitarianism is of a different character. Despite its posthumanitarian self-consciousness and mistrust of grand narratives, the campaign does in fact posit claims of truth through a set of explicit value judgments embedded in the participatory development ethics. While the videos certainly are suspicious of the ironic manifestations of celebrity and lifestyle humanitarianism and its depoliticized practices, they also imply that posthumanitarianism might be a solution to the identity crisis of humanitarianism mentioned above, in which aid agencies are having difficulties determining when and how to act, and a new emotionality has developed as a response to “a generalized reluctance to accept ‘common humanity’ as the motivation for our actions” (Chouliaraki, 2013, p. 2). In Radi-Aid, posthumanitarianism seems to be an answer to the condition in which audiences have become charity-literate, i.e. skeptical about grand humanitarian narratives, while also remaining charity-loyal (Dogra, 2012, p. 180). Thus, In Radi-Aid the concern is not so much to break down posthumanitarianism as it is to identify ways to redirect posthumanitarian loyalty towards reconsiderations of structural inequality. The posthumanitarian use of mediatized *détournements* must therefore be conceptualized as a reinvention of posthumanitarianism, as a critical practice that is used to attract attention and “to actively call upon audiences’ shared assumptions and predilections in an attempt to make members of existing discursive communities present to one another and, ideally, to turn those communities into actively politicized ones” (Day, 2011, p. 145).

The argument that Radi-Aid is a posthumanitarian practice that repoliticizes and makes communities present to one another might be viewed as controversial, because the campaign to some extent relies on what is usually deemed low effort participation. Radi-Aid does not require funding, nor does it call for the offline participation of the audience. The only participatory support that Radi-Aid seeks is on social media. People are encouraged to donate a stereotype by adding a “twibbon” to their profile pictures and to share videos on Facebook and Twitter. This online strategy is quite successful. Radi-Aid’s Facebook page has 23,000 likes, and the videos that they post (not only their own) are generally shared a lot. For instance, the video “Trevor Noah tunes the British about Britain’s colonial past” has been shared 103 times. This might not seem like much, but it is. In comparison, Unicef Norway has 42,000 likes on Facebook. This is of course much more than “Africa for Norway”, but Unicef’s content is less spreadable. Unicef Norway’s most shared post is a commemoration of the victims of the Norwegian far-right terrorist Anders Behring Breivik. The post, which states that hate will never win, has been shared 36 times. This is a lot compared to Unicef Norway’s other posts and videos, but it is very little compared to the activity on Facebook page of “Africa for Norway”. This seems to indicate that, with Radi-Aid, SAIH has found a strategy that is spreadable. This “spreadability” (Jenkins, Ford and Green, 2013) is confirmed by studies, which show that social media allow organizations to mobilize the public (Lovejoy, Waters and Saxton, 2012) and attract younger audiences (Flannery, Harris and Rhine, 2009). Furthermore, Gregory D. Saxton and Lili Wang (2013) identify a “social media effect” that relies on three parameters. By relying on social media users’ networks, nonprofits can “employ *crowdfunding*, reaching geographically dispersed people”, apply a peer-to-peer fundraising that “differs from other types of fundraising, as the recipient has preestablished connections with and is more likely to trust the solicitor”, and establish “peer pressure (Meer, 2011) for the recipient of a solicitation to support a cause that a family member, friend, or colleague supports” (Saxton and Wang, 2013, p. 853-854).

Despite the success regarding online mobilization, the “social media effect” is often perceived of as low effort participation and as a form of clicktivism. Clicktivism is a highly contested practice. It is often dismissed – with reference to Sherry Arnstein – as inconsequential “token participation” (Arnstein 1969). Based on reviews of comments submitted on MoveOn.org, Stuart Shulman, for instance, suggests an “overwhelming evidence of low-quality, redundant, and generally insubstantial commenting by the public,” and he warns of “signs of large-scale, continuous e-mobilizations able to generate uninterrupted streams of e-mail messages directed at diverse agency personnel” (Shulman, 2009, p. 25–26). In a similar spirit, Evgeny Morozov refers to “slacktivism” as “the ideal type of activism for a lazy generation” (Morozov, 2009) and Drumbl, analyzing the Kony 2012 campaign, argues that clicktivism generally has “short attention spans and limited shelf life” (Drumbl, 2012, p. 484).

While social media campaigns and clicktivism obviously hold both opportunities, by virtue of the social media network, and challenges, related to “tokenism” and limited time-span, I contend that it is often more productive to understand these campaigns as integrated parts of more expansive campaign efforts. As noted by David Karpf, the “concerns about the possible perverse incentives underlying such ‘clicktivism’ or ‘slacktivism’ make the mistake of treating e-petitions as a single-minded campaign effort, rather than as an individual tactic within a broader strategic mobilization effort” (Karpf, 2010, p. 35). Thus, it is important to keep in mind that Radi-Aid is only one aspect of SAIH’s advocacy efforts. SAIH argues, “the representation of other regions and continents is often based on stereotypes and generalizations. It is important that we understand how the world is structured in order to contribute to a more nuanced understanding when the politics of tomorrow are developed: in the North and the South. Aid alone cannot create a just world. Rich countries in the North must change policies that have a negative impact on the development in countries in the South.”⁴ Thus, SAIH is an advocacy organization, and Radi-Aid is not an aid campaign, it is an awareness campaign designed to raise awareness of a posthumanitarian participatory ethics.

Radi-Aid’s posthumanitarianism is a critical practice that is used to attract attention and to mobilize social media users to help in the dissemination of the campaign. Thus, it “actively calls upon audiences’ shared assumptions and predilections in an attempt to make members of existing discursive communities present to one another and, ideally, to turn those communities into actively politicized ones” (Day, 2011, p. 145). This campaign and its use of *détournement* is a mediatized practice that follows the logics of the “coparticipatory workings of irony” (Hutcheon, 1994; Day, 2011). In Radi-Aid, the coparticipatory workings are intended to make communities present to one another and to engage critically with the depoliticizing practices of posthumanitarianism, somewhat paradoxically, by repoliticizing posthumanitarianism.

SHAMING AS EMOTIONAL WORK

So far I have argued that Radi-Aid is a mediatized activist practice that utilizes a post-humanitarian strategy, *détournement*, to make communities present to one another by repoliticizing posthumanitarianism. This does not correspond with other readings that often either praise (Evans, 2013) or dismiss Radi-Aid as simply providing “a comforting narrative that reaffirms the humanitarian project” (Jefferess, 2013, 73). In the following I suggest that the answer is not quite that simple, because Radi-Aid engages in a mediatization of shaming.

As I have already argued, Radi-Aid uses posthumanitarian mediatized *détournement* to critique the depoliticizing aspects of posthumanitarianism. This, of course, makes Radi-Aid an obvious target of critique. Accordingly, in his critique of “Africa for Norway”, Jefferess argues that the video functions within a traditional development discourse, “and

is hence complicit with, the tradition from Band Aid and other Western humanitarian projects; once again the white/Western humanitarian speaks *of* and *for* the other” (Jefferess, 2013, p. 76). This is to some extent correct, and I certainly agree with Jefferess’ affirmation that we “need to do the hard, complex and fraught work of understanding how humanitarianism structures the way we think about the world and our place in it”, and that as “long as we conceive of solidarity with those who suffer as enacting assistance and aid, we don’t question the inequality of our social positions: for instance how we are in a position to help” (Jefferess, 2013, p. 79). However, while Jefferess argues that Radi-Aid, in the case of “Africa for Norway”, does not question the inequality of our social positions, I argue that Radi-Aid does in fact question inherent inequalities by utilizing posthumanitarianism and mediatizing shame.

Radi-Aid applies a strategy of shaming that might not correspond with the emphasis on solidarity as agonism in which the vulnerable other is a sovereign actor endowed with his/her own humanity (Chouliaraki, 2013). To some extent, Radi-Aid does rely on the viewers “comfort with ‘the humanitarian relation’ implicit in development discourse” (Jefferess, 2013, p. 77). But the viewers are also being shamed for this comfort. Those who are being shamed are those who participate in advocacy and humanitarianism that use stereotypes and thus fail to recognize that a humanitarian participatory ethics must not only equally include local participants. But despite this strategy of shaming Radi-Aid’s ironic disposition also entails that the projects acknowledge its own embeddedness in the inequality of social relations.

The strategy of shaming is most explicit in Radi-Aid’s Rusty Radiator Award that “goes to the fundraising video with the worst use of stereotypes. This kind of portrayal is not only unfair to the persons portrayed in the campaign, but it also hinders long-term development and the fight against poverty.” Thus, with the Rusty Radiator Award, Radi-Aid demands that fundraising must concern structural inequality. This kind of shaming is also evident in the reflections on posthumanitarianism in the videos. In “Who wants to be a volunteer?”, a number of people participate in reality game shows to get the chance to be volunteers. They have to compete in the “Feed Africa Challenge”, the “Educate Africa Challenge”, the “Promote Africa Challenge”, and finally in “Who wants to be a volunteer?” In the challenges they have to feed “Africans”, and they do not reflect on whether the people they encounter are actually starving or on the consequences of their aid. For instance, one volunteer throws food at “Africans” causing them to drop the food they are already eating. This implies that aid might be harmful to the local recourses. The local food industry might not be able to compete with the aid provided by humanitarians, and aid thus counteracts local sustainable businesses. In “Who wants to be a volunteer?” the contestant is asked a final question: “For the grand prize of a chance to save Africa answer this question: How many countries are there in Africa? Is it A: One, B: Two, C: Five, or D: Fifty-Four?” The contestant expresses fear of being shamed: “I know I should know this one. I just can’t remember”. After using a lifeline and unsuccessfully calling

Michael – “Damn African line speeds” – she makes the guess that there is one country in Africa. Her fear of being shamed is put to rest after her guess turns out to be correct. The video ends with a group of dancers dancing to Emiliana Torrini’s “My heart is beating like a jungle drum” (2009) while the volunteer is carried out of the film studio by four “African” stereotypically dressed and half naked men. This indicates that not only should the volunteer be ashamed because she misrepresents an entire continent, she should also be ashamed because she does not realize the harmful consequences of her aid and because she fails to acknowledge her position in the patterns of structural inequality.



Figure 4: The contestant taking selfies in “Who wants to be a volunteer?”

Shaming is a difficult strategy to apply, because the shamed will not necessarily respond by changing his or her behavior. As mentioned above, Bob Geldorf responded to the critique of Band Aid by attempting to redirect the shame. The critics implied that, rather than being proud, he should be ashamed “for not displaying the appropriate emotion, namely shame” (Every, 2013, p. 670). This suggests that shaming is not non-violent and that it can be counterproductive. As argued by Danielle Every, “Campaigns that utilise shaming tactics may in fact be creating behavior counter to their goals” (Every, 2013, p. 668). Shame can generate different responses: “fight, flight, freeze, appease, or dissociate” (Tarakali, 2009). In Bob Geldorf’s case, it was obvious that he applied a fight response when he asked the critics to “fuck off”. The question of shaming is more complex in Radi-Aid, because it is not entirely clear who is being shamed.

Shaming is also a difficult strategy because it does not necessarily correspond with the mediatized strategy applied by Radi-Aid. Mediatized processes often rely on pleasure and entertainment values to gain attention. In relation to activist groups such as the Yes Men, Amber Day argues: “entertainment value is key to the success of their actions as, at the very least, it assures that they will be noticed. For this reason, the potential pleasure that particular stunts may afford their viewers is a key concern in their design, a pleasure often conceptualized in opposition to the potential displeasure of the straightforward didactic” (Day, 2011, p. 148). Following this logic, the mediatized strategies are less didactic, yet they gain attention by being entertaining and thus pleasurable. This places Radi-Aid in a peculiar situation, because their campaigns simultaneously seek to entertain potential participants and shame them. It is clear that Radi-Aid shames depoliticized posthumanitarian humanitarian campaigns, but it also implicitly shames the people who engage in Radi-Aid and the SAIH’s own campaigns. This is because of the posthumanitarian self-awareness that requires a constant gaze to one’s own position in the social relation and structural inequality.

Shaming is a social emotion “experienced when the self reaches awareness of being exposed to the regard of others with the reflective notion of their implicit or explicit judgment, and the sense that the judgment matters” (Danielson, 2013, p. 63). As such, shame relies on emotional work. According to Sara Ahmed, shame is an “intense and painful sensation that is bound up with how the self feels about itself, a self-feeling that is felt by and on the body” (Ahmed, 2014, p. 103). Shame concerns an embodied feeling by the self of the self. Yet this awareness of the body is highly social, and shame relies on being seen by others: “shame also involves the de-forming and re-forming of bodily and social spaces, as bodies ‘turn away’ from others who witness the shame” (Ahmed, 2014, p. 103). This bodily logic of shaming bound up by the awareness of being seen is reflected in “Who wants to be a volunteer?” The contestant displays fear by looking down, she is afraid of being shamed in front of the audience. She is afraid of being rejected as a volunteer and rejection by others is a threat to our social belonging (Scheff and Retzinger, 2000). While the contestant avoids being shamed, the ironic play with her cultural ignorance serves to shame those who might share her ignorance. This contributes to the activist aspect of Radi-Aid, because what counts as shame is political – because marking something “as shameful is not natural or biological, but socially constructed for political ends” (Every, 2013, p. 669). By making the contestant in “Who wants to be a volunteer” feel shameful, Radi-Aid thus invites the viewer to engage in a participatory development ethics by reflecting on when participation in advocacy work might constitute shameful participation.

The kind of shaming that is embedded in Radi-Aid is mediatized shaming, because the emotional work is adapted to media logics in order to make the shame recognizable. According to Danielson, mediated shame “disperses and anonymizes the witnesses of the shaming and renders their moral judgment implicit and unarticulated, a fact which

makes it virtually impossible to interact directly with them to correct one's image" (Danielson, 2013, p. 64). Yet, in the case of Radi-Aid, the witnesses of the shaming are not just anonymized, they are also the ones who are being shamed. Whereas Geldorf had the opportunity to argue against the shaming because he was named and put on the stand, Radi-Aid shames an advocacy practice and thus potentially everybody who engages in humanitarianism. In order for this strategy of shaming without naming to work, the process of shaming must follow two logics. First, the shaming has to take place in such a way that the shamed is prevented from taking flight or taking on the fight. Radi-Aid generally achieves this simply by not naming the shamed. Yet, in the Rusty Radiator Award, campaigns that use stereotypes are named and shamed. However, in the "Golden Radiator Award", Radi-Aid also praises campaigns *that are "stepping outside of the common way of using stereotypes"*. *This praising relates to the second aspect of productive shaming. In order for shaming to be productive, it must create communities that offer a way out of the position as shamed*, i.e. it must include opportunities for transformation. The shamed "must be able to move beyond shame and connect with a renewed sense of their ability, or necessity, to act, coupled with a commitment to social justice" (Every, 2013, p. 671). By encouraging people to donate a stereotype and by praising campaigns that confront stereotypes and structural inequality, Radi-Aid provides a means for participants to move beyond shame. Radi-Aid not only calls upon the audience's shared assumptions and makes discursive communities present (Day, 2011), it also repoliticizes posthumanitarianism by engaging in a mediatized *détournement* that not only shames but also offers a participatory development ethics as a posthumanitarian move beyond shame.

CONCLUSION

Throughout this paper I have argued that the *Norwegian Students and Academics' International Assistance Fund's* (SAIH) campaign, Radi-Aid, is an example of an awareness campaign that encourages and negotiates a participatory development ethics as a countermeasure to the crisis of humanitarianism that has resulted in posthumanitarianism. Radi-Aid engages in participatory development ethics and questions the role of participation both in relation to celebrities and lifestyle humanitarianism and the emphasis on a participatory practice in which people are problem solvers in their social environments and in which global solidarity relies on agonism. I have argued that, as a means to promote this participatory development ethics, Radi-Aid engages in a mediatized activism that utilizes the strategy of *détournement* with the aim of challenging or destabilizing posthumanitarianism. This strategy, however, suggests that Radi-Aid is a posthumanitarian venture. This might appear paradoxical, but Radi-Aid's posthumanitarianism is of a different character. Despite its posthumanitarian self-consciousness and mistrust of grand narratives, the campaign posits claims of truth through a set of explicit value judgments embedded in the participatory development ethics. The videos represent a

suspicion towards the ironic manifestations of celebrity and lifestyle humanitarianism and of depoliticized practices, but they also insist that posthumanitarianism is a solution, as it can potentially force the participants to consider their own role in producing structural inequality. I therefore suggest that the posthumanitarian use of mediatised détournements must be conceptualized as a reinvention of posthumanitarianism, as a critical practice that is used to call attention to and negotiate shared humanitarian assumptions. In Radi-Aid's campaigns, détournement is applied as a critique of celebrity and lifestyle humanitarianism and it becomes a critical practice used to attract attention and make communities present to one another through the "coparticipatory workings of irony" (Day 2011). The critique of posthumanitarianism is also achieved through the emotional work of shaming. Shaming is a difficult strategy to apply because shamed participants might fight back or even resign from engaging in development issues out of despair. However, Radi-Aid *offers a way out of the position as the shamed*. By encouraging people to donate a radiator, donate a stereotype, and participate in the dissemination of the participatory advocacy ethics, the campaign provides a means for participants to move beyond the shame.

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NOTES

- 1 On January 6, 2015 "Africa for Norway" had 2,825,260 views, "Let's save Africa – gone wrong" had 1,124,196 views, and the newest video "Who wants to be a volunteer?" had 710,499 views on YouTube.
- 2 SAIH's description of the need for education can be found at: <http://saih.no/hvorfor-utdanning>.
- 3 For the first time in Band Aid's history, German and a French' versions of the song were produced.
- 4 My translation. The original quote in Norwegian goes: "Derfor jobber SAIH med å endre vårt bilde av Sør, fordi fremstillingen av andre regioner og kontinenter ofte er basert på stereotypier og generaliseringer. Det er viktig at vi forstår hvordan verden strukturelt henger sammen, slik at vi kan bidra til at et mer nyansert bilde ligger til grunn når morgendagens politikk skal utformes, i Nord og i Sør. Bistand alene kan ikke skape en rettferdig verden. Rike land i Nord må også endre politikk som har negativ innvirkning på utviklingen i land i Sør." <http://saih.no/hvorfor-utdanning>.