Instagrammable humanitarianism and the politics of guilt

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ABSTRACT
This article is based on a study of the collaboration between the Danish pop singer Medina and Act Alliance, the TV-program Medina and the Refugees—Access with Abdel and the harsh attacks on Medina and her humanitarian engagement on social media. The article follows three trajectories. Firstly, I suggest that Act Alliance uses celebrity advocacy in a mediatized campaign effort to mobilize young Instagrammers accustomed to peer-to-peer communication. Secondly, I suggest that Medina’s advocacy manifests as a particular form of politics of guilt, which on the one hand positions her as an “icon-body” that reproduces the classic distinction between active Westerners and passive sufferers and on the other hand challenges this distinction when her celebrity body becomes agentic. The politics of guilt is crucial because Medina and Act Alliance ask for recognition of a collective Scandinavian guilt, i.e. guilt about being on the receiving end of global inequality and consequently redemption through aid. Thirdly, I study the ways in which the politics of guilt is rejected when newspapers, bloggers and Facebook users cross-feed each other and affectively intensify a collective shaming of Medina. This kind of shaming, it is argued, is a way of rejecting guilt towards suffering others by shaming and denying Medina agency and insisting that she is merely an icon-body. Finally, while the article distinguished between politics of guilt and the shaming strategies directed at Medina, both work according to the logics of affective governmentality, seeking to govern who has agency and what the appropriate affects in the face of suffering might be. In this context, the analysis shows, shaming reflects a neoliberal and ethnocentric welfare-protectionism that conceals its own anti-refugee ideology.

KEYWORDS
Instagrammable humanitarianism; guilt; Medina; act alliance; shame; affect; celebrity advocacy; icon-body; agentic body; social media; neoliberal welfare-protectionism

Introduction

In 2015 the Danish pop singer Medina became an ambassador for the NGO Act Alliance (Folkekirkens Nødhjælp) and in 2016 they launched a campaign to further youngsters’ knowledge of and involvement in humanitarianism and in the refugee crisis that escalated due to the war in Syria. The campaign is called “Mevation”—a contraction of Medina, motivation and action—and it encourages youngsters to travel to refugee camps in Uganda and Kenya through Act Alliance’s travel program Go Global.

Before Medina began her publicity work she visited a refugee camp in Uganda. This was merely meant to be an educational journey and no media agencies or journalists accompanied her. Later, she travelled to the refugee camp Zaatar in Jordan. On this journey journalist Abdel Aziz Mahmoud accompanied her. He was to produce an episode of his TV-program series for the Danish public service agency DR. Even before Medina and the Refugees—Access with Abdel aired, Medina’s involvement with Act Alliance caused debate and Medina was for instance, on Facebook, called a “media whore” and a “national traitor”. The anger directed at Medina, but also Abdel and DR, can be understood within the framework of Scandinavian guilt. It highlights the importance of questioning how inhabitants in some of the richest countries in the world come to terms with or reject the feeling of guilt related to global inequality and human suffering. By focusing on the collaboration between Medina and Act Alliance and the attacks hereon this article thus provides a case study into the way in which Scandinavian guilt is being negotiated.

The article’s analysis of the collaboration between Medina and Act Alliance, the TV-program Medina and the Refugees—Access with Abdel and the attacks on Medina and her humanitarian engagement on social media follows three trajectories. Firstly, I suggest that Act Alliance uses celebrity advocacy in a mediatized campaign effort to mobilize young Instagrammers accustomed to peer-to-peer communication. Secondly, I suggest that Medina’s advocacy manifests as a particular form of politics of guilt, which on the one hand reflects a “celebrity witnessing modality” (Christiansen and Frello 2016) that positions her as an “icon-body” that reproduces the classic distinction between active Westerners and passive sufferers and on the other hand challenges this distinction when her celebrity body becomes agentic (Reichner and Koo 2004). The politics
of guilt is crucial because Medina and Act Alliance ask for recognition of a collective Scandinavian guilt, i.e. guilt about being on the receiving end of global inequality and consequently redemption through aid. Thirdly, I study the ways in which the politics of guilt is rejected when newspapers, bloggers and Facebook users cross-feed each other and affectively intensify a collective shaming of Medina. This kind of shaming, it is argued, is a way of rejecting guilt towards suffering others by shaming and denying Medina agency and insisting that she is merely an icon-body. Finally, while the article distinguished between politics of guilt and the shaming strategies directed at Medina, both work according to the logics of affective governmentality, seeking to govern who has agency and what the appropriate affects in the face of suffering might be. In this context, the analysis shows, shaming reflects a neoliberal and ethnocratic welfare-protectionism (Reestorff 2017) that conceals its own anti-refugee ideology.

Methodological considerations

In 2016 blogger for the newspaper Berlingske Tidende, Eva Agnete Selsing attacked Medina’s humanitarian engagement writing that it is “merely an accessory meant to shine on the rest of the project with umtji-umtji, eyelash extensions and Chanel bags. Charity bling aired during prime time” (Selsing 2016). Until then I had not had any particular interest in Medina’s music or life as a celebrity. But the attack on her humanitarian engagement intrigued me and in this article I therefore set out to investigate the mediatization, circulation and reception of the collaboration between Medina and Act Alliance.

Because the focus is the way in which the campaign is mediatized and circulated in news media and on social media the analysis took its outset in a pursuit of the life course of the object (Lash and Lury 2007, 16), that is an identification of the nodes that make up the network of information (Castells 2009) and affects that surround Medina and Act Alliance’s collaboration. Such a process is challenging because it leads to different types of data, which again requires additional methodological approaches. I, for instance, applied netnography (Kozinets 2010) and affective methodologies (Reestorff 2015) to understand the relationship between Act Alliance and Medina’s campaign, newspapers and the online behavior of Facebook users responding to campaign.

Furthermore, following the life course of the object—or in this case the network—requires limiting the amount of data. The data that is investigated is spread across media sites and platforms and consists of Act Alliance’s webpages, Facebook and Instagram accounts (Act Alliance 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5), Medina’s Instagram and Facebook accounts (Medina 1 and 2), DR2’s program Access with Abdel: Medina and the Refugees (DR2. 2016), 29 nationwide newspaper articles and the user comments to the seven articles that are shared on Facebook by the newspapers Berlingske Tidende (Poulsen 2016; Berlingske Tidende 2016a; Qvist-Sørensen—respectively 580, 303 and 2900 likes), Dagbladet Information (Lykkeberg 2016–480 likes), Ekstrabladet (Johansen 2016–237 likes) and BT (Andersen 2016; Holm 2016;—208 and 545 likes). The data was limited by including user comments to the articles shared on Facebook, but not the comments on each newspaper’s website. Nevertheless, the amount of data is comprehensive and it is intended to shed light on Instagrammable humanitarianism and the politics of guilt.

Instagrammable humanitarianism

Celebrity advocacy is not an uncommon practice in development campaigns. Celebrities have for instance become embedded in the official communication strategy of the United Nations. Celebrities are important because they “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, 5).

Medina contributes to Act Alliance’s goal to target young Instagrammers and create awareness about the humanitarian catastrophe in Syria. Furthermore, she encourages young people to participate in Act Alliance’s program Go Global in which volunteers, interns and students from folk high schools (folkehojskoler) can engage in relief work around the world. By using Medina as an ambassador, Act Alliance applies an “aspirational discourse” (Christiansen and Frello 2016) that encourages young people to “Follow in Medina’s footsteps. Experience life in a refugee camp. Sign up for the trip” (see Figure 1). Furthermore, they tap into her celebrity status and extant following. On Instagram and Facebook respectively Medina has 377.000 and 427.704 followers compared to Act Alliance’s 16.500 and 220.421 followers. The fact that Medina has more than 22 times as many followers on Instagram as Act Alliance is indicative of the amount of attention granted to celebrities. But it also points towards the fact that Act Alliance collaborates with Medina in order to get access to a younger generation, who is more likely to use Instagram.

Act Alliance wishes to reach a younger audience, yet this is a challenge because the children of the baby boomers have been through many years of intense marketing exposure and therefore do not necessarily respond well to traditional advertising (Branigan and Mitsis 2014). Thus, rather than responding to traditional advertising, such as TV ads, they are accustomed to and prefer information systems based on
peer-to-peer networks (Urbain et al. 2013). Networks based on peer-to-peer communication and celebrity endorsements have proven to be efficient in reaching youngsters (Dix, Phau, and Pougnet 2010; Branigan and Mitsis 2014). Hence, the collaboration between Act Alliance and Medina can be understood as a way to utilize the celebrity’s attention and preexisting network to create an instgrammable humanitarianism that facilitates the kind of peer-to-peer communication that may lead youngsters to engage with the campaign.

In Figure 2 we see how the combination of celebrity endorsement, attention and peer-to-peer engagement works. Medina encourages her Instagram-followers to volunteer as collectors for Act Alliance. It is a direct address that calls for action, and there is no photo of Medina herself. Therefore the update has fewer “likes” than many of her other posts. Nevertheless, we can see the peer-to-peer engagement unfold. One follower “tags” a friend and asks “are you up for it?” and the friend replies, “yes—it could be a really good idea”. Another follower lets Medina know that he/she is collecting with the local church, and others simply tell Medina that they love her.

Medina and Act Alliance’s instgrammable humanitarianism reflects a more general pressure within humanitarianism to raise awareness and funds. Act Alliance’s instgrammable humanitarianism is based on a collaboration with mainstream media outlets and the use of celebrity advocacy, and in this process the humanitarianist practices and content are altered. This alteration is evident in the campaign’s visual imaginary in which photos of Medina’s humanitarian engagement occur side-by-side with her life as a pop star (see Figure 3). Photos of children from Uganda and Medina at the refugee camp Zaatari in Jordan appear in her Instagram and Facebook feeds next to pictures of her modeling, singing, and relaxing at the beach. This means that the humanitarian messages are mixed with more conventional celebrity images,
which allows for peer-to-peer information to occur and for Act Alliance to enter into the realm of Instagram.

When humanitarianism becomes Instagrammable it is visual and it depends on gestural images—for instance selfies. These gestural images are important in Medina’s advocacy and they “inscribe one’s own body into new forms of mediated, expressive sociability with distant others” (Frosh 2015). The important thing is that the body is mediated and embedded in sociability. That is, Medina’s images, including images of her on the beach or taking selfies with friends, invite her followers into the sociability of her imaginary as celebrity humanitarian.

Ben Jones has suggested that the mediatization of NGOs results in media branches gaining increasing organizational power, that NGOs face changing accountabilities, and that NGOs “communicate development in a way that resembles other media outlets” (Jones 2017, 180). This perspective is crucial, but it also tends to assume that NGOs remain the senders of their communication. As illustrated by the collaboration between Medina and Act Alliance NGOs also engage in collaborations in which others communicate on their behalf. By tapping into Medina’s extant social media network and her gestural imaginary she also becomes “author” of the campaign. By means of this Instagrammable humanitarianism Act Alliance enters into the realm of peer-to-peer communication, but at the same time they lose “authorship” of their campaign and become exposed to an extended network of potential accountabilities.

The collaboration between Medina and Act Alliance makes humanitarianism Instagrammable. However, while the youth might be interested in celebrities, they are not necessarily interested in charity work. In fact older groups tend to approve of associations between charities and celebrities more than younger groups (Brockington and Henson 2015). Several of the people commenting on Medina’s call for action (see Figure 2) intend to volunteer as collectors, but it can be argued that celebrity advocacy promotes more engagement with the celebrities than with the causes (Brockington and Henson 2015, 443). There certainly is a large amount of love directed towards Medina. One of her followers does, for instance, not comment on Act Alliance, but writes: “Dear Medina would you please follow me I really love you a lot and will never forget you. I hope to meet you one day you are the best thing I know.” Furthermore, while Medina facilitates peer-to-peer communication and the campaign succeeds in recruiting youth as collectors and to the Go
Global program it remains a challenge that insta-
grammable humanitarianism renders the campaign
more vulnerable to critique from people who are
not part of the target group.

The celebrity icon-body

Instagrammable humanitarianism is not restricted to
Instagram, but rather concerns the ways in which the
humanitarian imaginary is visualized and made
spreadable. In this regard DR2’s TV program
Medina and the Refugees—Access with Abdel also
becomes a part of Medina and Act Alliance’s insta-
grammable humanitarianism. Medina and the
Refugees is a human-interest journalistic piece about
Medina and her engagement with the humanitarian
crisis in Syria. The program is broadcast on national
public service TV and it serves an important function
in the collaboration between Medina and Act
Alliance, because it expands the target group beyond
young Instagrammers.

The program follows the narrative structure of the
“celebrity witnessing modality” in which the celebrity
is shown to “travel in a way that involves giving up
the amenities and ease of Western wealth and privi-
lege”, shows the celebrity displaying “genuine emo-
tion and personal attachment to the ‘suffering other’,
who in turn may ideally be depicted as an idealised
worthy ‘suffering other’”, and shows the celebrity’s
personal growth, “which compels her to act” and
tasks the audience “with the same compulsion to act” (Christansen and Frello 2016, 136–137). The
program starts out by showing Medina in her apart-
ment. Her walk-in-closet and many shoes become
symbols of her celebrity lifestyle. It also suggests
that Medina has genuine personal attachment to the
suffering “others” in the refugee camp, both by intro-
ducing her father, who is a refugee from Chile, and
later by showing her tears when she is confronted
with suffering. Finally, both Medina and the journal-
ist Abdel reflect upon their own privileges coming
from a rich Scandinavian country. Abdel reflects on
his encounter with a Syrian man, and says: “This was
what I was a bit afraid of. That I would come with my
white man manners, I almost said, like Western,
make TV on you and leave again”.3

The celebrity witnessing modality is closely con-
ected to the celebrity body. Abdel continuously
reflects upon his own uneasiness and Medina, refer-
ing to her tears, explicitly asks Abdel: “Do you know
why I cry?” The use of the celebrity witnessing mod-
ality and the celebrity body’s affects in relation to the
suffering others can be understood as an attempt to
circumvent “the general compassion fatigue of the
charity-literate” (Chouliaraki 2013). Medina and
Abdel’s bodies document suffering for the skeptic
viewers. Medina’s tears, for instance, are the visible
bodily indicators of an affective experience and they
thus serve to translate the affect one experiences
when confronted with suffering to the distant viewer.

Several concerns must be raised about the celebrity
witnessing modality and the use of the celebrity body
as the focus of attention. First of all, celebrity advoca-
cy is indicative of a larger crisis in humanitarian-
ism. Michael Barnett (2011, 168) has identified a shift
from an age of imperial humanitarianism to an age of
liberal humanitarianism in which humanitarianism
and security have collapsed under the notion of
peace building. In the age of liberal humanitarianism
NGOs are, according to Barnett, experiencing an
identity crisis, because they have difficulties deter-
mining when and to what extent they must act. Act
Alliance is anchored in the Danish Evangelical
Lutheran Church and this relationship to the church
carries another torch to the identity crisis because, as
Riina Yrjölä argues with reference to Franz Fanon,
the European notion of humanitarianism emerged
during dehumanizing and dehistorializing narra-
tives that “found justification and legitimacy in the
values of Western humanism and humanity, backed
up by Christian Saints calls for justice, forgiveness
and the renunciation of violence” (Yrjölä 2009, 5).
From this point of view, humanitarianism and
Christianity are a crucial part of the ideology and
legitimization of colonialism and in continuous struc-
tures of inequality.

The crisis of humanitarianism also concerns a
specific kind of posthumanitarianism, described by
Chouliaraki as the “reluctance to accept ‘common
humanity’ as the motivation for our actions” (Chouliaraki 2013, 2). This skepticism is the point
of departure of Access with Abdel. In the beginning
of the program Abdel says, “I really want to know
if she is sincere in her newfound interest in refu-
gees, because you haven’t really heard her talk
much about it before”.4 This reflects the reluctance
to accept common humanity as the motivation for
Medina’s actions. Paradoxically, Medina’s colla-
boration with Act Alliance is a response to the
selfsame compassion fatigue.

Celebrity advocacy does not necessarily need to
adhere to the posthumanitarian sentiment, but the celeb-
ritry witnessing modality, evident in Medina and Act
Alliance’s collaboration and in Access with Abdel, testifies to a shift in emotionality. Chouliaraki argues that the
new emotionality involves a shift from an other-oriented
morality to a self-oriented morality, which is closely
intertwined with imaginaries in which the West is turned
“into a specific kind of public actor—the ironic spectator
of vulnerable others” (Chouliaraki 2013, 2). The word
ironic is intended to capture the change of emotionality
in which the humanitarian imaginary of the vulnerable
other is filtered through the body of the non-sufferer—
for instance through the tears of Medina.
The self-oriented morality is principal and evident in the explicit use of Medina’s body. Medina refers to her bodily affects when talking about her experiences in the refugee camp, and her body is continuously photographed. The many photos of Medina’s body throughout the campaign entangle two different notions of the body: The icon-body and the agentic body, which "highlights the role of the body as an active participant or agent in the social world" (Reichner and Koo 2004, 298). These two notions of the body reflect two different aspects of the campaign. Interpreted as icon-body the continuous documentation of Medina pertains to her status as a celebrity, she becomes the body beautiful, which grants attention to Act Alliance. But, as I will return to later, the agentic body ruptures the icon-body, when Medina attempts to gain agency in relation to the refugee crisis.

The numerous photos and the utilization of Medina as the icon-body, impact the humanitarian imaginary. When Medina went on her first journey with Act Alliance to a refugee camp in northern Uganda she posted an update on Instagram (Figure 4). In the update she was careful to describe the accurate circumstances, where, why, and with whom she was going. For instance she informed her followers that there are 120.000 people in the refugee camp 95% of whom are women and children. But she also described her own nervousness and determination to “do my best in collaboration with you @noedhjaelp”. Furthermore, she writes that the photographer who took the image of her is going “to photograph child soldiers in South Sudan in a week. He risks his life so that we in the West can better understand a world that we do not know”. The update accurately describes the circumstances of suffering and Medina loyalty refers to Act Alliance, but the humanitarian imaginary also becomes filtered through the celebrity body. The image shows Medina’s naked body photographed with a camera from 1850. The lack of colors emphasizes the emotional connection to Medina, but also the negative space, which serves as a reference to the world that the viewer cannot imagine. The focus is not the refugee camp, but Medina’s icon-body, which again inscribes the photo in the self-oriented morality.

The icon-body reflects the “solidarity of irony”, in which the truth-claims of suffering “move from an emphasis on suffering as external reality” to “suffering as subjective knowledge, validated by psychological grounded criteria of authenticity” (Chouliaraki 2013, 173). This is crucial because the encouraged solidarity is not primarily validated through the suffering of the refugees living in the camps, but through Medina and the photographer “who risks his life”.

The icon-body as the validator of truth-claims of suffering is also mirrored in the relationship between Medina and Act Alliance. Act Alliance advertises the “Mevation campaign” on their webpage and writes:

Do you dream of making a difference? Do you want to experience life in a refugee camp and contribute to engage young Danes in the refugee situation? Then become a part of the Mevation Campaign and travel with Act Alliance to a refugee camp in Uganda or Kenya in the winter holiday 2017.

This obviously encourages youth to make a difference. But it is not motivated by the suffering of the people who live in refugee camps, but by the icon-

Figure 4. Medina’s Instagram update before her journey to Uganda.
body and the non-sufferers’ need to make a difference and experience life in a refugee camp. As such the campaign reproduces a problematic trope in which the Westerners are the active participants, the saviors (Bell 2013), and the sufferers are left without any perceived agency. However, this is not the only facet of the campaign. In the following I argue that the posthumanitarian perspective is challenged when Medina’s body becomes agentic.

**The agentic body and the politics of guilt**

As mentioned, both Medina and Abdel reflect upon the privileges of being not only celebrities, but also citizens of Denmark, a rich Scandinavian welfare state. Elisabeth Oxfeldt connects this kind of Scandinavian guilt to the bubble position that stems from a self-image that is “based on a sense of having attained equality, wealth, and happiness without being directly engaged with the rest of the world, either through postcolonial or neo-imperial exploitation, or through contemporary warfare” (Oxfeldt 2016). In an article about the program Abdel confirms what is also explicated in the program, namely that he had a “constant guilty conscience” while filming, because “I am a refugee, and my parents and I got here, when I was very small […] I talk the language, they look like [me], but I have been lucky, and you see they will never get the same chance as me” (Nielsen 2016). Abdel and Medina represents a specific kind of double guilt: guilt about being “lucky refugees” or refugee-descendants who have escaped to a secure state and guilt about the “lucky state” and its wealth.

In *Access with Abdel* the feeling of guilt exhibited by Medina and Abdel confronts the viewers’ Scandinavian bubble position. This, I argue, is a politics of guilt. While guilt and shame are often closely interwoven, “guilt arises because one has behaved badly, whereas shame arises because one is a bad person” (Allpress et al. 2010, 77). Shame casts doubt on the person or state believed to be shameful, which makes shame complicated to escape. On the contrary, the politics of guilt does not assume that the guilt is inherently bad, because bad behavior can be redeemed.

In *Access with Abdel* Medina is conducting a politics of guilt by implicating the viewers in her guilt. Her body is used as an icon-body through which the viewers can access the truth-claims of suffering, but she also demands agency. Medina reflects on the experiences that her Chilean father must have had and why he has never been able to talk about his past. On Act Alliance’s webpage Medina merely appears as a celebrity: as a stand-in for the ironic Western spectator. But in the TV program her agency is (periodically) altered because she is narrating her own firsthand experiences of the long lasting effects of being the child of a refugee. This poses a challenge to the viewers, who can no longer safely observe the icon-body. This challenge towards the safe spectatorship of suffering is furthered when Medina confronts the viewers and demands that they acknowledge the collective guilt: Scandinavia is not a safe haven dis-engaged from the rest of the world and, not least due to recent warfare, there is a responsibility to witness and act upon suffering. In one scene both Medina and Abdel get teary-eyed when the family they visit show them a mobile recording of a dead child in a bombed building. Medina turns to the camera and demands that the viewer acknowledge the guilt of failing to bear witness and of doubting the motives refugees have for fleeing:

> It is important that you also see this on camera; this is their everyday life. This was their everyday life until they chose to flee. This is the reason they flee. It is important. Did you get this on camera? It is important that people see. It is fucking hard to see. Because it is real.

After addressing the camera she, as we see in Figure 5, turns towards Abdel looking for him to depart from his role as a journalist and take part in her affect and demanding that he acknowledge the guilt that comes from having been spared suffering: “This is your f**king parents and my dad. They have seen these kinds of things.” Medina demands agency and she demands that the viewers acknowledge the guilt of neglect: neglect to bear witness and to act on suffering. Shame is involved in this politics, because shame can be about “not displaying the appropriate emotion” (Every 2013, 670), but it is primarily a politics of guilt. This is because Act Alliance is presented as a solution: Support their humanitarian work and combat your guilt.

The politics of guilt, in this case, also concerns a double witnessing. Through the mobile witnessing of the dead child “we are moved in time by the words of testimony” (Torchin 2012). We see the images of the inhumanity of a dead child and the effect the images have on the family and we are witnessing the impact that this mobile testimony has on Medina and Abdel. Their eyes become teary and their bodies and affects become points of orientation for the viewer: They exhibit and translate for the viewer the appropriate affects. This kind of double witnessing may simply turn the “viewer into a spectator-consumer, turning ‘consumption into a substitute for democracy’” (Torchin 2012, 138), but the politics of guilt does not allow a simple escape route away from the suffering. The viewers are forced to navigate between Medina’s celebrity body as an icon-body and as an agentic body. Therefore they cannot simply mirror themselves in Medina as a mere representation of the Westerner who saves the “vulnerable others”. It is in this negotiation between the icon- and agentic body
that the classic distinction between the Scandinavian or Western safe haven and the suffering others are destabilized.

The politics of guilt, as conducted by Medina is a question of “affective governmentality” (Reestorff 2017). Affective governmentality might appear as an oxymoron given that affect is sometimes understood as non-representational. However, the body also determines affect and the body carries its past (Massumi 2009, 2). Affective governmentality concerns the regulation of the appropriate affects, i.e. what kinds of bodily affects that can be exhibited in relation to different situations and objects. And in this regard the icon-body and the agentic body constitute two different ways for the viewers to “feel their way into politics” (Papacharissi 2015).

Medina’s icon-body makes it appropriate to engage in affective intensities and exhibit love for Medina and to some extent even ignore the humanitarian content. It is also the icon-body that can be subjected to the critique of a self-oriented morality that has “marginalized the reality of suffering in favour of stories about ‘us’” (Chouliaraki 2013, 185). However, Medina also becomes an agentic body and as such affect is governed differently. Here it is no longer acceptable to simply love Medina. The agentic body demands outrage, action and the acknowledgement of both guilt and the truth-claims raised, not only by Medina, but also by the refugees who experience suffering. The affective governmentality evident in the collaboration between Medina and Act Alliance is not uniform. This has to do with the fact that Act Alliance looses authorship in the instagammable humanitarianism. But it also has to do with the continuous negotiation between the agentic and the icon-body.

Shaming and the rejection of guilt

Earlier I mentioned that the insagrammable humanitarianism in which Act Alliance taps into Medina’s social media network addresses a specific group of young Instagrammers, but simultaneously, because of the networkability and ubiquity of social media, blurs the target group. Access with Abdel is broadcast on national public service TV and as such it expands the campaign’s number of accountabilities (cf. Jones 2017) and opens up for different target groups that potentially compete about how to interpret the campaign. It is also in this expansion that guilt is rejected and Medina is shamed.

It is important to note that the debate about Medina’s humanitarianism began even before her collaboration with Act Alliance was formalized. In the summer of 2015, Medina was on the island of Cos while refugees were arriving on boat from Turkey. In an Instagram update (Figure 6) she encouraged her followers to support Act Alliance. Later, in 2016, she shared the experience on a talk show. Following the talk show appearance, blogger for the newspaper Berlingske Tidende, Eva Agnete Selsing wrote that Medina’s care for refugees is “merely an accessory meant to shine on the rest of the project with umtji-umtji, eyelash extensions and Chanel bags” (Selsing 2016).” Selsing is shaming Medina and the kind of posthumanitarianism that filters truth-claims of suffering through the icon-body of the celebrity. However, Selsing’s critique goes further. She declared that Medina is “exactly as indifferent to the violence that follows immigration as the average cultural-radical. That is, ice-cold about the rapes, attacks, robberies and general brutalization spreading across the continent” (Selsing 2016). By arguing that there is a general brutalization spreading...
due to immigration, Selsing provides her readers with an escape route from guilt. She is correct that more rape offences are recorded in Europe, but the numbers of homicides and robbery are declining and offences such as drug trafficking and burglaries are stable (Eurostat 2016). The reference to a general brutalization thus hardly refers to the development of crime, but is rather a form of affective governmentalisation intended to reject Medina’s agency, to deny guilt and the call for action in relation to refugees.

Selsing’s article is a blog post and thus is a different genre than Berlingske Tidende’s other articles. Nevertheless, the newspaper utilizes it in their other articles. In August 2016, Berlingske Tidende ran an article about the upcoming program Access with Abdel and Medina’s journey to Jordan. The article quoted Medina saying: “I would like to have more knowledge about the conditions under which they live and what they are fleeing from and I would like to share as many of my experiences as possible with the Danes” (Berlingske Tidende 2016a).\footnote{Berlingske Tidende share the article on their Facebook page and it resulted in a range of racist and sexist slur against Medina and her humanitarian engagement. The tendency to devalue Medina’s agency was not only found in the comments on Facebook. Berlingske Tidende reproduced it when they ran an article in which they quoted users of their own Facebook page to make the argument that people are “doubting whether Medina’s interest in the refugee situation is real”: ”Using refugees as your personal bling is loathsome,” Pia T. Nielsen amongst other things writes about the new program with Medina. […] “It had to come. The only way Medina can get time on air is by drawing the refugee card. She does so in collaboration with DR, to which we all pay, and Act Alliance that gets status and EU funding” writes Carsten Nielsen. (Berlingske Tidende 2016b)\footnote{Berlingske Tidende quote their own Facebook followers’ responses to their initial article, but they do not take into consideration that they by hosting Selsing’s blog have already skewed the reader’s interpretation of Medina’s collaboration with Act Alliance. As such they ignore their own role in the shaming of Medina.}}

Following the harsh critique of Medina, Abdel wrote a sarcastic Facebook update, in which he defended Medina by reappropriating the offensive slur used against her—e.g. “nasty slut”, “national traitor”, “failed female singer”, “brainless cow”, “well paid nasty citizen”\footnote{Berlingske Tidende wrote: “Using refugees as your personal bling is loathsome,” Pia T. Nielsen amongst other things writes about the new program with Medina. […] “It had to come. The only way Medina can get time on air is by drawing the refugee card. She does so in collaboration with DR, to which we all pay, and Act Alliance that gets status and EU funding” writes Carsten Nielsen. (Berlingske Tidende 2016b)”}—in order to emphasize her humanitarian engagement and to critique the media coverage and social media response (Mahmoud 2016). Likewise, general-secretary for Act Alliance, Birgitte Qvist-Sørensen, defended Medina (Quist-Sørensen 2016). Afterwards Berlingske Tidende began to reflect on the language used in the critique of Medina (Berlingske Tidende 2016c) yet, they still did not acknowledge their own part in the shaming. Selsing’s blog post in Berlingske Tidende was taken up by other newspapers, e.g. BT (Kronberg 2016) and the content was circulated between newspapers and their followers on social media. This is crucial because it indicates that the rejection of guilt and public shaming, which I discuss below, is not simply a specific trait of social media, but rather closely interwoven with traditional news media.

The harsh critique of Medina manifests as a rejection of guilt through shaming and it relies on skepticism towards celebrity advocacy. Celebrity advocacy has become an important part of the way in which NGOs try to achieve social and political change, but it is not necessarily “a particularly popular phenomenon” (Brockington and Henson 2015). This also correlated with the argument posed by Torchin (2012, 137) that the narratives of suffering “that seek to edify and entertain may give way to sensations of vicarious

Figure 6. Medina on Cos encouraging people to support Act Alliance.
trauma’ and result in ‘empty empathy’—affect that satisfies but does not necessarily mobilize” (Torchin 2012, 137). Thus, while the collaboration between Medina and Act Alliance might be popular and mobilize a particular group of young Instagrammers, who are accustomed to peer-to-peer communication and inclined to direct love and attention towards Medina, the campaign’s posthumanitarian use of the celebrity icon-body also provides ammunition to the critics and those who attempt to reject the campaign’s politics of guilt.

The refusal to accept guilt in relation to suffering and the double trauma witnessed is specifically targeting the icon-body in order to reject Medina’s as an agentic body. Here is becomes necessary to distinguish between the politics of guilt conducted by Medina and Act Alliance and the shaming of Medina. Whereas the politics of guilt allows redemption through the support of Act Alliance, the shaming of Medina does not allow such redemption. Selsing’s references to “umtji-umtji, eyelash extensions and Chanel bags” denounce Medina’s advocacy with references to symbols of the body beautiful. In a similar manner Sørine Godfredsen, in the newspaper Kristeligt Dagblad, doubts Medina’s intelligence: “this woman would probably go numb after 30 seconds of debate about the state of the time” (Godfredsen 2016). Shame concerns the embodied feeling by the self of the self. Yet, this awareness of the body is highly social, and 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 2004, 103). Thus when Medina’s intelligence is called into question and she is reduced to the body beautiful she is subjected to shaming, i.e. her body is exposed to the gaze of others, and this creates an awareness of judgment and dehumanizes and reduces her agency.

Shaming is not only conducted by named debaters, such as Selsing and Godfredsen, but also by the numerous Facebook users who engage with the media content shared by newspapers and bloggers alike. This makes it virtually impossible to interact directly with the shamers to correct the image of the shamed (Danielson 2013, 64). The user comments to the articles shared by newspapers online can be distinguished in three groups: the first and largest group shames Medina, the second criticizes the harsh language on social media in general and the third and smallest group defends Medina’s humanitarianism. This is very different from the responses that we saw on Act Alliance and Medina’s pages on Facebook and Instagram.

It appears that whereas Medina and Act Alliance’s own websites, Facebook and Instagram accounts are safe spaces guarded by their fans and followers, the politics of guilt is contested when the content is circulated and reaches new target groups. This also provides an insight into the ways in which guilt and complicity in suffering is rejected. The user comments combine slut, pop and benefactor shaming of Medina. Slut shaming can be conceptualized as a “societal process that is predominantly directed at women, where individuals are publicly exposed and shamed […] for their real, presumed or imagined sexuality” (Webb 2015). Medina’s humanitarianism is rejected when users shame her as a “fucking media whore”, “a brainless cow” and someone who is likely to pose topless “you must assume that the reportage primarily is topless photos of Medina with her tits covered by funny emojis, that is after all her primary media competency”.

The shaming of Medina not only concerns her sexuality. It is a comprehensive devaluation of her agency. For instance her ability as a singer is rejected: “Could she perhaps sing for them. Then they would travel home due to tinnitus.” It is crucial that there is an “alignment and genuine relationship between the celebrity and their organizational values and mission to achieve best practice” (Branigan and Mitsis 2014). Thus, by devaluing Medina’s professional capacity as a singer and by claiming that she is “a media whore”, who is in it “for the money”, her agency and authentic relationship to Act Alliance and the truth claim of suffering that she documents is challenged.

Neoliberal welfare-protectionism

As mentioned above the responses to Medina and Act Alliance’s collaboration either, shame Medina, criticize the harsh language on social media in general or defend Medina’s humanitarianism. This is the case in the Facebook comments, but also in the 29 articles studied. None of these responses capture the complex relation between instagammable humanitarianism, the icon-body and the agentic body and they fail to understand the relationship between shaming and what I elsewhere have termed neoliberal welfare-protectionism.

The shaming is deterritorializing humanitarianism. In the Facebook comments the focus is shifted to refugees in Denmark. Facebook users for instance write that Medina should “just go back to Chile”, that she is a “national traitor, looking for media attention”, that they “can’t wait to see the bitch in burqa” and that she doesn’t know what she is talking about and what the consequences of Muslim rule will be”. The idea that humanitarianism is equivalent to national treason is peculiar, but by framing the nation-state as threatened by Muslim immigration, the Facebook users reject the guilt associated with living in a rich country and refusing to aid people who suffer.

The rejection of guilt is closely intertwined with what I have labeled neoliberal welfare-protectionism (Reestorff 2012).
The ideology behind social security and welfare is changing, not because of a larger refugee population, but because of an ideological alteration of the welfare system. For instance, since the 1990s the duties of the unemployed “have increased significantly and the duration and compensation rates have been cut” (Alves 2015, 11). This reflects a changing ideology behind the welfare state, which by changing governments has been articulated as a “competition state”. Neoliberal welfare-protectionism then, concerns the fact that the welfare state has been undergoing alterations, prior to the current refugee situation, yet these alterations are described as consequences of immigration. This does not mean that people necessarily are aware of the neoliberal alterations of the welfare state, but they use welfare-protectionism when they reject guilt. The logic becomes that to aid refugees is to put the welfare state at risk. A Facebook user for instance writes:

You could also make a documentary about what refugees cost DK. It is the old, the sick, school children, education etc. that are paying for the "party". Talk to the old wife who is caring for her husband with dementia, and who cannot get into a nursing home, because a Muslim family has to come to DK. (Facebook comment)\textsuperscript{18}

The Facebook user is arguing that people in Denmark are suffering and that Muslim immigration is preventing them from getting the care that they deserve. Hence, guilt is redirected by comparing the imagined social benefits and aid for refugees with the imagined lacking benefits given to the "native" Danish population. We should, the argument goes, feel guilty, not for rejecting to aid (Muslim) refugees, but for neglecting the suffering Danes.

Denmark has a long tradition for public service TV, but as part of the neoliberal welfare-protectionism and the rejection of guilt, the Facebook users also reject the public service channels that might serve them news and stories that they do not want to hear. Thus, it is not only Medina who is subjected to shaming, but also DR and Abdel. The Facebook users appear to find “a common identity in being opposed to power, as they consider themselves in opposition to the political establishment” (Peters 2015). This is evident in comments such as: “Just remove the damned TV license” and in reference to the media and journalists as a cultural elite, out of touch with “real life”. For instance: “We are so sick of your performance as the protectors of minorities, knowing that most of you in real life are FAR AWAY from where you would be in contact with the consequences of 40 years of failed integration”. Thus, in the neoliberal welfare-protectionism is not only the agency of Medina and Act Alliance that are rejected, but also the agency of those news outlets that communicate the inconvenient suffering.

Conclusion

In a number of international surveys Denmark has been nominated as the most livable and happy country in the world. Yet, it appears that there is a fear that “the wrong people can be happy, and even a desire for happiness to be returned to the right people” (Ahmed 2010, 13). In this article the affective governmentality and desire to return “happiness to the right people” became evident, when newspaper bloggers and Facebook users rejected Act Alliance and Medina’s call for humanitarian engagement by arguing that refugees are a threat to the nation-state and that the real sufferers are “the Danish old, sick and children”. The article analyzed a clash between different ways of coming to terms with Scandinavian guilt: promoting and exhibiting love and support for humanitarianism or rejecting guilt through neoliberal and ethnocentric welfare-protectionism.

The study explained how Act Alliance taps into Medina’s already existing social media network, allowing her and her gestural imaginary to become “author” of the campaign. In this collaboration an instagrammable humanitarianism emerges. In the instagrammable humanitarianism Medina’s celebrity body is on the one hand promoted as an icon-body that makes it appropriate to exhibit love for Medina and even to ignore the humanitarian commitment, but on the other hand Medina also becomes an agentic body—and the agentic body governs affect differently. Here it is no longer acceptable to simply love Medina. The agentic body demands outrage over the witnessing of suffering and it demands the acknowledgment of guilt and the truth-claims raised, not only by Medina, but also by the refugees that experience and flee suffering. The instagrammable humanitarianism strengthens the relationship to Medina’s following, but it also means that Act Alliance loses “authorship” of the campaign and becomes exposed to an extended network of potential accountabilities. The extended field of accountabilities is crucial to understand the different politics of guilt and the shaming that affectively intensified the media representation and reception of the campaign.

Medina, Act Alliance and Access with Abdel reflects a double guilt: guilt about being “lucky refugees” and Scandinavian guilt about the “lucky state”. Yet, the politics of guilt is continuously contested through different forms of shaming. The shaming of Medina continuously seeks to reduce her agency by insisting that she is merely an icon-body. The shaming not only concern’s Medina’s sexuality, but is a more comprehensive devaluation of her agency and competencies and it is affectively intensified when newspapers, bloggers, and Facebook users cross-feed each other and devalue Medina’s authenticity as a performer and her authentic relation to Act...
Alliance. The shaming of in particular Medina, but also Abdel, Act Alliance and the public service agency DR, which documents the uncomfortable images of suffering, is a rejection of the politics of guilt which manifests in a neoliberal and ethnocentric welfare-protectionism that conceals its own ideology by claiming to be enforced by demographical changes caused by refugees.

Notes

1. Original quote: "Flygtningeomsorg er en accessory, der skal give åndelig stråleglans til resten af projektet med umtji-umtji, øjenvippe-ekstensions og Chaneltasker. Godheds-bling i bedste sendetid."

2. If magazines and local newspapers had been included the number of articles would have been 267 and if the search had been broadened to nationwide articles that mention Medina and refugees the number had been 525.

3. Original quote: "Det var det jeg frygtede lidt. At jeg ville komme med mine hvide mands maner, havde jeg nær sagt, altså sådan vestlige laver TV på dig og smutter igen".

4. Original quote: "Jeg vil meget gerne vide, om hun er oprigtig i sin nyfundne interesse i flygtningene, for det har man ikke rigtig hurt hende tale så meget om før.

5. Original quote: "Dronner du om at gøre en forskel? Vil du opleve livet i en flygtningelejr og være med til at engagere unge dansker i flygtningeproblematikken? Så bliv en del af Mevation-kørene i Uganda i et program, som vi alle betaler licen-

6. Original quote: "Jeg er selv flygtning, og mine forældre og jeg kom hertil, da jeg var ganske lille, og for dem var det også et endegyldigt farvel til alt, hvad de kendte af kultur, venner, familie og liv og land. Men jeg havde konstant dårlig samvittighed, da vi var i Jordan. Jeg taler sproget, de ligner, men jeg har været heldig, og de får jo aldrig den samme chance som mig" (Nielsen 2016).

7. Original quote: "Men det er jo det der er vigtigt, at man også ser på kamera, der er jo at det her er deres hverdag. Det var deres hverdag indtil de valgte at flygte. Der er derfor de flygtige. Der er vigtigt. Fik du det på kamera? Det er vigtigt at folk ser. Det er hårdt at fucking se. Fordi de er virkelig.

8. Original quote: "Det er det dine fucking forældre og min far, det er sådan noget de har set".

9. Original quote: "Flygtningeomsorg er en accessory, der skal give åndelig stråleglans til resten af projektet med umtji-umtji, øjenvippe-ekstensions og Chaneltasker. Godheds-bling i bedste sendetid."

10. Original quote: "Medina er med andre ord præcis så lige med den vold, der følger med indvandringen, som den gennemsnitlige kulturradikale. Altså, iskold over for voldætterne, overfaldedele, roverierne og den generelle forråelse, der breder sig på kontinentet."

11. Original quote: "Jeg vil gerne have en større forståelse for hvilke forhold, de lever under og hvad, de flygt fra, og jeg vil gerne dele så mange af mine oplevelser som muligt med danskerne. Derfor har vi også valgt at have et tv-hold med denne gang".

12. Original quote: ""At bruge flygtninge som sit personlige bling bling er afskyeligt," skriver Pia T. Nielsen blandt andet til Berlingskes opslag om det nye program med Medina.

"Det måtte jo komme, den eneste måde Medina kan få tv-tid er at smide flygtningekortet. Det gør hun så i samarbejde med DR, som vi alle betaler licen-

13. "Nasty citizen" is often used to refer to the "Friendly Citizens" (Venligboerne) that organize on Facebook to help refugees for instance with basic necessities.

14. Original quote: "Denne kvinde ville sikkert blive stum efter 30 sekunder i en konkret debat om tidens tilstand."

15. These three positions reflects a larger culture war in Denmark, which have been ongoing since the beginning of the 2000s and concerns conflicts about cultural and national identity in light of globalization. This culture war is beyond the scope of this article, but have studied it in debt elsewhere (Reestorff 2017).

16. Original quote: "Kunne hun ikke bare synge for dem. Så ville de rejse hjem på grund af tinitus."

17. Original quote: "Endnu en landsforræder væmligbo. Hun aner ikke hvad hun snakker om og hvad konsekvenserne af Muslimsk styre bliver."

18. Original quote: "Man kunne også lave en dokumentar om hvad flygtninge kosten Danmark. Det er de gamle, de syge, skolebørnene, uddannelsessestien osv. der betaler for festen. Tal med den gamle kone der tager sig af sin demente mand og som ikke kan få plads på et plejehjem fordi en muslimsk familie skulle til Danmark.

19. Original quote: "Vi er så trætte af jeres performance som minoritetsbeskyttede velvivende at de fleste af jer i det virkelig liv er LAGT VÆK fra der hvor man kommer i kontakt med 40 års fejlslagen integration".

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Act Alliance 4. Act Alliance’s Facebook-Page for Go Global: https://www.facebook.com/AnonymousGlobal/
Act Alliance 5. Act Alliance’s Instagram Account, @Noedhjaelp: https://www.instagram.com/noedhjaelp/?hl=da
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