Humanitarian aid is a significant part of the Norwegian self-image. In a governmental report on power and democracy from 2003, humanitarian aid is described as a new national symbol: “Dette bildet av Norge som et idealistisk godhetsregime har blitt et nytt nasjonalsymbol som er med på å forme nordmenns selvbilde og nasjonale identitet” (Engelstad et al. 2003, 52) [This image of Norway as an idealistic regime of goodness has become a new national symbol, shaping Norwegians’ self-image and national identity]. A survey done by Statistics Norway shows that nine out of ten Norwegians are in favor of Norway giving assistance and money to developing countries (Utenriksdepartementet 2007). Norwegians feel privileged and like to consider themselves as generous. Giving humanitarian aid makes Norwegians feel fortunate, and vice versa; as one humanitarian aid worker for a Norwegian NGO states: “Jeg vil ikke si stolt, jeg er veldig ydmyk over å kunne bidra. Det er en glede å kunne bidra og vi er heldig som kan hjelpe” (Sørensen 2015) [I would not say that I am proud; I am very humbled to be able to contribute. It is a pleasure to be able to contribute and we are lucky because we can help]. The first World Happiness Report supports the idea that altruism can increase one’s own happiness:

There is of course plenty of evidence that people who care more about others are typically happier than those who care more about themselves. But does that mean that altruism increases happiness in a causal sense? Evidence on volunteering and on giving money suggests that it does. (Layard, Clark, and Senik 2012, 72)

Through various national humanitarian campaigns, often involving schools and communities, Norwegian youths are brought up to participate in the Norwegian humanitarian discourse practices. It is a part of their upbringing and education to become
good Norwegian world citizens. An underlying argument is that Norwegian youth are especially privileged, and should learn to give to the less fortunate.¹

An example of a humanitarian campaign carried out in Norwegian schools is the Operation Day’s Work (ODW). For more than 50 years, the student-driven organization has encouraged middle-school and high school students in Norway to work and collect money for one day of school a year.² This money is then distributed through projects that aim at educating youth in the global South.³ ODW develops an annual educational program, which is used in the participating schools in Norway. The program focuses on global topics such as solidarity, North/South issues, human rights, and education, as well as information about the chosen project of the year. Films, booklets, and online resources are made available to the schools.⁴ As the audience for this information campaign, Norwegian youth are to gain sufficient knowledge to decide whether they wish to work on the ODW-Day or not.

ODW emphasizes that they are not a charity, but a solidarity action. Youth are encouraged not to simply donate money, but also to work to raise money for the ODW projects. The money the students earn on the ODW-Day is, nevertheless, subsequently donated to a humanitarian aid organization, responsible for distributing the campaign money for educational projects in the global South.⁵ As the educational programs distributed to students in Norway are to be used as teaching material, and to motivate and

¹ It is, for instance, stated in the general section of the Norwegian curriculum that the young must gain widespread global knowledge that equips them to contribute to common efforts to improve living conditions—especially for the poor people of the world (Utdanningsdirektoratet 1993, 15).
² In addition to the Scandinavian countries, schools in a handful of European countries have their own Operation Day’s Work, including Germany, Belgium, and Italy. The Norwegian Operasjon Dagsverk is, however, the largest, engaging approx. 100,000 students and collecting approx. EUR 3.1 million for their projects each year. Some ODWs are student-driven while others are run by other organizations. The first ODW was started in Sweden in 1962. In 2011, the Swedish ODW was handed over to UNICEF. There are several ODWs in Finland. The largest, Taksvärkki RF Dagsverke, started in 1967 and engages approx. 20,000 students collecting approx. EUR 190,000 per year. None of the Finnish ODWs are, however, student driven. Like Norway, Denmark has a student-driven ODW. They started in 1984 and engage approx. 15,000 students collecting approx. EUR 560,000 each year. Some of the student-driven ODW organizations in Europe cooperate by sharing experiences and ideas through the SAME-network (Solidarity Action Day Movement in Europe; www.same-network.org).
³ In using “the global South” and “the global North” dichotomy, I admittedly adapt ODW’s use of the terms, where the global South is posited as the recipient of aid from the global North.
⁴ The ODW material is designed by the students in the ODW National Committee in collaboration with the selected humanitarian organization and youth in the project countries, and is organized practically and visually by a design agency.
⁵ ODW Norway received NOK 2,223,324 in government grants for 2014. Of this, NOK 900,000 came from Norad (the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, www.norad.no) and NOK 500,000 from Utdanningsdirektoratet (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, www.udir.no). The student campaign collected NOK 26,192,102. The organization can keep up to 15 percent of the collected money to cover administration costs. In 2015, this amounted to 10.95 percent (The financial statements for the fiscal year 2015 [01.04.14-31.3.15], Bronnøysundregistrene, www.brreg.no).
engage the students on the ODW-Day, ODW’s material may be considered a somewhat problematic cross between educational material and humanitarian aid communication.

This article explores how ODW appeals to youth at this generic crossroad by analyzing examples of their booklets from a historical perspective. I will apply Lilie Chouliaraki’s (2010) theories on how humanitarian aid communication has developed over time, from the use of what she calls “shock effect” and “positive image” appeals, towards a “post-humanitarian style of appealing.” I will discuss how ODW booklet covers around the turn of the millennium started displaying a new aesthetic, shifting the visual focus away from the campaigns’ recipients towards the students in Norway through humorous images and puns. This shift arguably indicates anxiety about whether the ODW material attracts the students' attention, as it employs an increasingly provocative and interpellative strategy addressing the students and their attitudes directly.

An example of a booklet front cover that calls to mind some of the characteristics Chouliaraki describes as typical of appeals in a post-humanitarian style is the 2001 cover. This shows a close-up of a mahogany toilet seat, lid standing open. Printed in large letters in the center of the toilet is the text “drit i regnskogen” [shit in the rainforest]. In Norwegian, “drit i” literary translates as “shit in,” but idiomatically means not to care about, as in the English “not give a shit.” The eye-catching layout and humorously distasteful slogan are obviously intended to provoke and engage the reader into turning the page.

The subject position offered in appeals in a post-humanitarian style, according to Chouliaraki, is disengagement from pity and instead engagement with the reflexivity of the spectator (2010, 115). The spectator, in other words, is asked to reflect on his or her own attitudes, life, and behavior rather than on the recipient. While ODW front covers share many characteristics with Chouliaraki’s description of a post-humanitarian style, they also participate somewhat ironically in a discursive practice based on what Jill Loga (2003) describes as a “discourse of goodness.” Loga discusses power in a Foucauldian sense (with an approach to discourses as “practices that systematically form the objects of which they

---


7 See enclosed a historic overview of the ODW booklets. All images are reproduced with the courtesy of Operasjon Dagsverk.
speak” [Foucault 1972, 49]), and she does so in a specifically Norwegian context. She coined the term ‘discourse of goodness’ to propose that when you ask someone to care, power comes from the fact that there is no arena from which to criticize this discourse without being placed as belonging to its antithesis; you are either good or bad. The discourse of goodness is a call for action, and if one does not respond, one is positioned as indifferent or self-centered: “Godhetsdiskursen ber oss om å handle, og den har likegyldigheten og selvopptattheten som sin motsetning. Diskursen definerer altså ‘den likegyldige’ og ‘den selvopptatte’” (Loga 2003, 66) [The discourse of goodness is a call to action, construing indifference and self-centeredness as its opposite. The discourse thus implicitly defines “the indifferent one” and “the self-centered one”]. This is a problematic either/or discourse, as in the 2001 cover, where it is used rhetorically, positioning the students as either caring, or “not giving a shit” about the environmentalist ethos.

Appealing to students in a discourse of goodness can be a rhetorical risk. On the one hand, you could assume that ODW’s ironic and humorous address appeals to and unites young students enjoying a laugh together. On the other hand, it may split them. According to Loga, the discourse of goodness can lead not only to feelings of guilt, but also resentment (2003, 198). Tapping into a discourse of goodness, the ODW front covers can divide the students between those who participate in the solidarity actions, and thus are labelled altruistic donors and good Norwegians, and those feeling resentful and alienated.

In line with trends in humanitarian communication—and contrary to ODW’s principles, as we shall see—ODW’s appeals in a post-humanitarian style entail guilt-tripping students in a new way. This is clearly something ODW is uncomfortable with, yet unable to resolve.

Analyzing Threshold Texts

The booklet covers function as what Gérard Genette calls “threshold texts” (1997, 2), inviting the students to engage further with the learning material. According to Genette, paratexts (such as booklet covers) have a clear function: “The most essential of the paratext’s properties … is functionality. Whatever aesthetic intention may come into play

---

8 Norwegians, as mentioned initially, identify with a notion of Norwegian goodness. In Loga’s (2003) case, she analyzes a National Value Committee, constituted by the Bondevik government in 1998 to find out why it wasn’t that successful. The main objective of the Value Commission was to contribute to a broad value-based and social ethical mobilization to strengthen positive community values and responsibility for the environment and community. According to the mandate, this was considered important in order to counteract indifference and promote personal responsibility, participation, and democracy in Norway. The commission ended their work in 2001.
as well, the main issue for the paratext is not to ‘look nice’ around the text but rather to ensure for the text a destiny consistent with the author’s purpose” (407). Booklet covers, you could also say, function like speech introductions—the exordium in classical rhetoric. According to Jens Kjeldsen, the exordium must engage listeners’ or readers’ attention and obtain the audience’s goodwill (captatio benevolentiae) (2013, 161). The ODW booklet covers thus have several functions: they should be representative of the campaign, attract attention, invite further reading, and evoke good will in the students.

The ODW booklets are easily recognized as ODW material with either “Operasjon Dagsverk” or the abbreviation “OD” printed on the covers. Some front covers state the campaign year and/or the name of the recipient country and the year’s campaign slogan. The booklet covers from the 1980s and ’90s can be categorized, in Chouliaraki’s terms, as traditional humanitarian aid appeals. The covers are dominated by photographs of global others, often close-ups, representing youth in the project countries to elicit good will in the students.9 The first front cover in line with Chouliaraki’s post-humanitarian style is the 1998 cover. It is the first ODW cover without images, and there is no representation of a global other. The text addresses the students in Norway directly: “Skaff deg et annet bilde av Afrika” [Get hold of a different image of Africa]. From the above-mentioned 2001 cover until today, the front covers are dominated by images, drawings, and texts designed to attract attention in a non-traditional humanitarian aid manner. There are no longer images representing global others, except for the 2008 cover, which featured a cartoon drawing of a Bangladeshi “superwoman” (the campaign was for girls in Bangladesh), and the 2012 cover, which displayed several small photographs of Nepali girls (the campaign was for girls at the bottom of the caste system), and neither of these images is in the tradition of the photographic close up aimed at ‘shock effect’ or ‘positive image’ appeals.

Images have a rhetoric of their own, according to Roland Barthes, and are read with both denoted and connotated meaning: “[t]he literal image is denoted and the symbolic image connoted” (1977, 37). While the denoted meaning can be described in terms of who is being depicted, the connoted meaning entails the ideas and values expressed through specific elements in the image, and the ways in which they are represented. In our interpretation of the connoted meaning, we draw on myths—dominant ideologies of our time. The text accompanying the images serves to limit their possible meanings by pointing out how the image is to be interpreted (anchorage), or to add meaning so that the

---

9 There are no booklets available from the ’60s or ’70s. They may have been lost, but most probably ODW did not start producing booklets until the ’80s.
text and image together express meaning not found in one part alone (relay) (Barthes 1977, 38–40). When looking at the ODW booklets, general knowledge of the year’s campaign adds to the interpretation, as shown in my comments on the 2008 and 2012 booklets above, where I presume the images represent the project countries.

**Traditional Humanitarian Aid Appeals**

Chouliaraki studies humanitarian communication in terms of its aesthetic properties, and from a performative point of view that “emphasizes the role of humanitarian communication as ‘moral education’: as a series of subtle proposals of how we should feel and act towards suffering” (2010, 110). As mentioned above, she argues that there are two types of traditional emotional appeals: First, ‘shock effect’ appeals showing arresting images of sufferers. According to Chouliaraki, ‘shock effect’ appeals are “victim-oriented”: “they focus on the distant sufferer as the object of our contemplation” (2010, 110). Furthermore:

This social relationship of distance, produced by the contrast between spectator and suffering other is a social relationship of distance, produced by the contrast between the bare life of these sufferers and the healthy bodies in the West, is associated with the affective regime of guilt, shame and indignation. (2010, 110-111)

In contrast, ‘positive images’ appeals reject the imagery of the sufferer as a victim and focus on the sufferer’s agency and dignity. Citing Luc Boltanski (1999), Chouliaraki writes:

[T]he moralizing function of this affective regime relies on ‘sympathetic equilibrium,’ a logic of representation that orients the appeal towards a responsive balance of emotions between the sufferer and the spectator as potential benefactor. (Boltanski 1999, 39; quoted in Chouliaraki 2010, 112)

Both ‘shock effect’ and ‘positive image’ appeals build on photorealism and on a belief in the power of grand emotions. Whereas ‘shock effect’ appeals to guilt and indignation, ‘positive images’ appeal to emotions of gratitude and empathy, empowering audiences by showing how our actions may lead to change (Chouliaraki 2010, 112).

The ’80s and ’90s ODW front covers, which I have categorized as traditional humanitarian aid appeals, differ from Chouliaraki’s concepts of ‘shock effect’ appeals in
being more moderate. In my view, the ODW images are never shocking. We can, however, find covers with more traditional victim-oriented images from the ‘80s, with the use of aesthetic expressions to evoke pity. One example is the 1985 booklet with a complex front cover playing into several myths. In the center, we see a color photograph of a crying child. The close-up shows the child’s face and the child’s left hand wiping the tears from his right eye with a white cloth. The top text reads “Afrika informasjon” [Africa Information], while a bottom text pasted diagonally on a yellow ribbon in the right corner reads “Nordisk Operasjon Dagsverk: Storinnsats for Afrika” [Nordic Operation Day’s Work: A grand effort for Africa]. The image of the crying child beneath “AFRIKA” [Africa] written in capital letters plays into the myth of Africa as a continent in need, not distinguishing between the different African countries. The close-up is pasted onto a larger picture of a grey urban background with tall buildings and cars. This image contrasts the “Africa-myth,” as modern, busy cities do not tend to connote “Africa in need.” The two images together, a crying child and an anonymous (grey) city, connote estrangement and the feeling of being lost. While complex, the image clearly appeals to feelings of pity in the spectator, as the close-up of the crying child is the eye-catcher. The yellow ribbon provides a solution: a joint Nordic ODW endeavor to improve conditions. Implicitly, the students may experience a sense of catharsis by participating in the campaign.

A close-up of a child is also the eye-catcher on the 1988 front cover. In this photograph, a child is standing in a slightly torn T-shirt behind a fence, grasping the fence with his or her left arm. Behind the child is a yellowish, blurred background. The background makes the child stand out. The color photograph is set on a red background with the text “Utdanning mot apartheid” [Education against apartheid] on top and “Operasjon Dagsverk 1988” [Operation Day’s Work 1988] at the bottom. The word “apartheid” anchors an interpretation of this child as a victim of apartheid, and in this setting, the color red surrounding the photograph might connote danger or revolution. The child looks directly at the camera. According to the social semioticians Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen, a direct gaze addresses the viewer and

---

10 This campaign was a collaboration between the Operation Day’s Work organizations in Sweden, Denmark, and Norway, supporting refugees from the apartheid regime in Namibia with an education that would enable them to participate in society when the apartheid regime was overthrown. The campaign funds supported two projects in southern Africa: a study-centre in an ANC camp in Dakawa, Tanzania, and agriculture and crafts equipment for practical-theoretical schools in Zimbabwe.

11 The campaign supported rehabilitation of secondary schools in Mozambique and alternative education for black and colored children affected by the apartheid regime’s racist education policy in South Africa.
demands something from the viewer, demands that the viewer enters into some kind of imaginary relation with him or her. Exactly what kind of relation is then signified by other means, for instance by the facial expression of the represented participants. (2006, 118)

The child’s head tilted slightly forward connotes children asking for something, and in the facial expression, we can read a longing or an accusation directed at the spectator. A thought provoking interpretation places the spectators, in this case, students in Norway, on the same side of the fence as the white South Africans. The main impression is, however, that ODW on this front cover signals danger and puts forward a demand for justice for the victims of apartheid.

The children on both the 1985 and the ’88 cover are young—younger than the high school students—and seemingly alone; there is apparently no one to protect them. The moral imperative of always helping children in need addresses the spectator, and the images can evoke compassion and a desire to care for and help them. The front covers can also evoke feelings of guilt. Because they are children in need, the spectator infers that not enough is being done by him or her personally, or by his or her school and nation on a more institutional level.

Most of the examples of front covers with a ‘positive image’ appeal do not portray global others with big smiles, but represent the “sufferer’s agency and dignity” (Chouliaraki, 2010, 112). Examples of this approach include the 1991, 1992, 1995, and 1997 front covers. All of them have large photographs portraying one girl/woman or boy/man. The person looks directly at the camera with a neutral facial expression or a careful smile. The exception is the 1987 front cover, which is the most prominent example of a ‘positive image’ appeal. It shows a close-up of a smiling child, presumably a girl. Her milk teeth tell us she is quite young, and there is a reflection of light in her eyes, adding to her big, bright smile. She has a dirty collar, which could connote poverty, but could also connote children playing, getting their clothes dirty. The photograph has a yellow framing with “ERITREA” written in pink letters at the top and “Operasjon Dagsverk 1987” [Operation Day’s Work 1987] written in smaller black letters below. As on the 1988 front cover, the child looks directly at the camera. The imaginary relation demanded by her

12 The ODW 1987 campaign supported renovation of two schools, building two new schools, and building a print shop for educational material in Eritrea.
gaze presumably installs a wish in the spectator to help preserve the child’s innocence and joy.

This front cover can evoke feelings of gratitude in the spectator for seeing that aid is helping youth in the South. Feelings are contagious and images of happy children can also in and of themselves create happiness—in the same way that pictures of sad children can create sadness. ‘Positive image’ appeals promote a reciprocal gratitude and support the idea that altruism also increases one’s own happiness, as proposed in the *World Happiness Report*.

There are, however, possible downsides to both traditional humanitarian appeals. ‘Shock effect’ appeals have two pragmatic risks: a “bystander” effect may leave people feeling powerless, and a “boomerang” effect may leave people feeling indignation toward the guilt-tripping message of the campaign itself, rather than toward the situation the campaign seeks to ameliorate (Chouliaraki 2010, 113). ‘Positive image’ appeals, on the other hand, may be considered narcissistic in that they promote self-contentment by focusing on “our” generosity (Chouliaraki 2010, 113). More importantly, they tend to conceal crucial aspects of the complexity of global divisions. Hence, ‘positive images’ may represent a misrecognition, a “euphemistic concealment of systemic power relations by the image of smiling children” (Bourdieu 1977; quoted in Chouliaraki 2010, 113). There is the risk, Chouliaraki explains, that the “plethora of smiling child faces may be misrecognized as children like ‘ours,’ leading to inaction on the grounds that ‘these are not really children in need’; this is a misrecognition of the social relations of difference and identity that positive images gloss over” (2010, 114). Thus, traditional humanitarian aid appeals, using shocking or positive images, face multiple challenges when representing recipients. This could contribute to explaining why ODW front covers in traditional humanitarian appeals are more moderate. In addition, I would suggest, it could be understood in terms of the covers constituting the above-mentioned genre hybrid in which they also have to be regarded as educational material aimed at young people whom one wants to treat more gently.
Youth Regardless

From the very beginning, ODW has emphasized similarities between young people in the North and South, trying to avoid an “us/them” dichotomy. This dimension points to another explanation for the moderate ODW front covers and underlines ODW’s solidarity principle. ODW wants to promote a global community of youth, showing students in Norway that youth in the South are not all that different from themselves. One of their slogans is “Ungdom er ungdom, uansett,” translated to “Youth regardless” (Operasjon Dagsverk, n.d., “What Is Operation Day’s Work?”). An informational text in the ODW 2001 booklet illustrates this kind of rhetoric:

ODW 2001 is going to focus on the rainforest and the people who live there, but it’s also about minorities and how they have been, and now are, treated in Norway. It is how we really aren’t that different—we are all young people with dreams for our future and the right to be treated equally. (Kristoffersen 2001, 14)

The 2001 booklet is printed in Norwegian, except for this informational text, which is printed in six different languages and fills a whole page of the booklet. Printing the text six times can be seen as a gesture to minority youth in Norway with one of these languages as their mother tongue. At the same time, the different languages connote a global youth community; though linguistically divided, they are unified in being young.

In recent years, ODW has made a conscious choice to use solely positive representations of the recipients. An ODW basic principle reads:


---

13 This can furthermore be read as an interesting new turn and sign of globalization. What was previously regarded as the global South is right here in the global North.
14 Bosnian, Sami, Urdu, English, Vietnamese, and Arabic.
(ODW rejects excessively negative representations. To engage, we prefer to focus on positively oriented projects and themes. . . . One should not work on ODW-Day because one feels pity for the people one seeks to help. At the ODW-Day, youth work with youth in the South to give them the access to education that Norwegians have. It is not because one has a guilty conscience, but because one has gained an understanding of others’ right to an education.)

This principle shows how ODW does not want to create feelings of pity or guilt among Norwegian youth. Instead, it becomes a question of equal opportunity. ODW seeks to mobilize and motivate youth as well as to make the students understand and agree upon how all youths are equal and equally entitled to an education. The quote describes a vision of solidarity with global peers. However, focusing solely on positive representations of the project countries and arguing that “we really aren’t that different” runs the aforementioned risk of covering up structural and cultural differences between the global North and South. This corresponds to Chouliaraki’s critique of ‘positive image’ appeals (cf. Chouliaraki 2010, 114).

From the very beginning, the head of the ODW committee has made an annual trip to the receiving countries to discuss with the youth there how they wish to be portrayed. Sometimes, the recipients contribute directly to the design of the educational material. An example is the 2013 booklet, in which youth in Guatemala and Honduras created a board game, which was printed in the booklet distributed to middle school students in Norway. In the film accompanying the booklet, we see happy young people in Central America drawing and playing the board game, exactly like students in Norway are encouraged to do. This can create a sense of identification and reciprocity for youth in Norway with the youth in the South, based on the rhetoric of “youth regardless.” At the same time, the Norwegian youth might not identify with youth in the global South through the board game. A board game might seem “primitive” or old-fashioned, as Norwegian youth might be more oriented towards digital games.

The idea of “youth regardless” is sometimes challenged in ODW’s own material. The 2013 campaign was introduced by the head of the ODW committee, Embla Jørgensen,

---

15 It is uncertain when this part of ODW’s basic principle was written. It may have been as late as 2012; however, according to the ODW office, it has “always been an implicit principle.”

16 The ODW 2013 campaign supported non-violence programs in schools in Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico.
in the short film Bildeserien 2013. The film depicts happy young people in the North and in the South, and Jørgensen states in voice-over:

Du kan tenke på hvor iPhone’en din er, hvor mange likes Instagrambildet ditt har fått og hva som skjer på Facebook. Du skal ikke ha dårlig samvittighet for å være født i et rikt land, men husk at du kan velge å bry deg om større ting.¹⁷

(You can think about of where your iPhone is, how many likes you got on your Instagram picture, and what happens on Facebook. You should not feel guilty for being born in a rich country, but remember that you can choose to care about bigger things.)

Seemingly in line with ODW’s policy of not appealing to a bad conscience, Jørgensen is trying to point out how privileged Norwegian youth are, without this leading to guilt feelings. At the same time, the Norwegian youth’s privilege of caring for material and (what is hinted at being) superficial things is mentioned, and points to the vast difference between youth in the global South and global North. This is a tightrope for ODW to balance on, as the difference between the South and North is of course the foundation for the ODW campaigns. ODW must show the need for aid and, at the same time, try to underscore their solidarity principle.

A Post-Humanitarian Tendency in Humanitarian Aid Communication

As I indicated in my introduction, there has been a shift in the ODW booklets’ layout. The front covers are no longer dominated by images of children and youth in the South, and there is a tendency to have a greater focus on the aesthetic expression, than on the campaign’s aim of helping youth in the global South to get an education. The question of how the “global other” should be presented and represented is more or less removed from the equation. The focus has shifted away from the recipients and onto the booklet’s audience and how to capture their attention.

In some ways, this new aesthetic corresponds with what Chouliaraki calls a post-humanitarian style: contemporary humanitarianism characterized by textual games, the use of irony, optical illusions, and multi-modal, juxtapositional aesthetic features (2010, 115-119). According to Chouliaraki, the post-humanitarian style is a response to a crisis of pity

¹⁷ Transcribed by the author.
or compassion fatigue. Reclaiming the legitimacy of humanitarian appeals by removing
grand emotions, the post-humanitarian style appeals to low-intensity emotional regimes, where

Guilt, heroism and compassion re-appear not as elements of a politics of pity, partaking a grand narrative of affective attachment and collective commitment, but as de-contextualized fragments of such narrative that render the psychological world of the spectator a potential terrain of self-inspection. (Chouliaraki 2010, 119)

Furthermore, the post-humanitarian style can be seen as inspired by practices of corporate branding. As opposed to the other two styles of appeal, which draw on universal discourses of ethics, this style abandons universal morality and communicates “the organizational brand itself” (117).

Interestingly, the 2001 “drit i regnskogen” booklet cover mentioned above, in line with a post-humanitarian style, is also built on a shock effect: We do not expect references to toilets and excrement—and especially the word “shit”—in pedagogical material and in humanitarian-aid communication. The booklet cover also displays a shocking relation: We exploit the rainforest so that our bottoms may enjoy a mahogany seat, while we relieve ourselves. Served as a humorous pun, the image and message construct the Western consumer as self-indulgent. The booklet cover maneuvers within an affective regime of humor, as well as guilt, shame, and indignation with the bodily aspect implied in the toilet joke, functioning both as a pun and as a metaphor for the (vulgarly) privileged Norwegian.

If the students turn the page, they will find a photograph on page three of the same toilet seat, this time with the lid down, and the text “… eller redd resten!” (Kristoffersen 2001, 3) […]or save what is left!]. The students are here given a binary choice: they either do or do not care (about the rainforest, their ethical duty to the environment, and their ethical duty towards the global others). This can be read as placing a huge responsibility on the youth’s shoulders; they have both the obligation and the opportunity to save the rainforest, it would seem. On the other hand, the slogan echoes several already well-known campaigns appealing to “save the rainforest,” and the students may feel they are being

---

18 The term ‘compassion fatigue’ was coined by media researcher Susan Moeller. She writes on how potential donors battered by so many appeals become weary of pouring money into crises that never seem to go away. The result is a “discouragingly contagious compassion fatigue” (Moeller 1999).

19 Mahogany is a tropical timber. According to the Rainforest Rescue, the exploitation of mahogany and other tropical timber has not decreased in recent years, rather “[w]e encounter tropical timber increasingly often in everyday life in terraces, garden furniture, window frames and even toilet seats” (Rainforest Rescue, n.d.; my emphasis). The result of the deforesting “is profound environmental change and loss of biodiversity in highly complex and sensitive habitats” (ibid.).
asked to participate in a greater project, while not having to bear the whole responsibility themselves. Most significantly, they are met with an attitude of humor, tempering a potential grand emotional appeal by locating guilt, outrage, and indignation within a low-intensity emotional regime.

As mentioned above, there has been a striking lack of photographs of the recipients on the ODW front covers in recent years. An exception is the previously mentioned 2012 front cover, showing a collage of photographs of youth in the project country. The collage consists of circles with texts and images. In the two outer circles, there are several photographs of children in plain clothes, most of them with serious faces. In the center, there is a photograph of two smiling girls dressed in finer, colorful clothes. The collage indicates a wish to move from the outer to the inner circle, from serious (and troubled) to smiling youth. This front cover differs from earlier representations of youth in the project countries by not demanding that the viewer enter an imaginary relationship with the portrayed youth/people to the same degree as a portrait of a single person would. Instead, the collage image displays a playful aesthetic. The 2012 front cover has parallels to the examples Chouliaraki analyzes, which rely on a problematizing form of photorealism:

In so far as these appeals still rely on the force of the imagery of suffering to construct the humanitarian cause, they do not drop photorealism. They do, however, shift away from photorealism as authentic witnessing towards photorealism as yet another aesthetic choice by which suffering can be represented. (2010, 116)\(^\text{20}\)

In the last four years, ODW have abandoned using photographs all together on the booklet front covers.

Avoiding Photographs Altogether

The ODW 2013 and the ODW 2014 campaigns neither represent the recipients nor play with photo images. Instead, they address the students’ own attitudes and behavior directly. Both booklet covers have a simpler layout than earlier booklets.\(^\text{21}\) They display a plain,

\(^{20}\) Chouliaraki focuses her analysis on the World Food Programme’s “No food diet” appeal (2006) and Amnesty International’s “Bullet. The Execution” and “It is not happening here now” campaigns (2006/07).

\(^{21}\) The ODW 2013 booklet depicted here was for use in middle school. For high school, they made a small folder, which has the same slogan: “Who Cares?” The depicted booklet has a hole, approx. 1 ½ cm in diameter, all the way through the booklet. I have been told by the ODW National Committee that it symbolizes a bullet hole. The hole is not round, but sort of a pentagon, probably due to difficulties in the
colored background with block letters, build on puns that address the students, and connote school situations. The 2013 page looks like a notebook with scribbles on it, and the 2014 page has a “handwritten” Post-it note stuck to it, resembling something the class clown could do to make fun of a statement. Rather than referring back to the brand, which Chouliaraki describes as typical for post-humanitarian style, ODW’s new aesthetic expression refers back to the organization’s ethos within the communicative situation. It is not just ethos related to the suffering other, but also related to the addressee—the students. They are saying, in a sense: “Look, we are a cool organization. We share your sense of humor.”

The 2013 front cover has the campaign slogan “Hvem bryr seg?” [Who cares?] printed in large black block letters on a yellow background. The ODW logo in the upper right corner shows the reader that it is meant for students, thus indicating that it is a call to youth, asking who (among the youth) cares or wants to care. The phrase is ambiguous and can also be read as “Nobody cares!” just as in the dismissive statement “Who cares?” The question of caring is, as mentioned, characteristic of the discourse of goodness: “Goddhetsdiskursen omhandler det å være ‘et godt menneske’, og kjennetegnes ved sin oppfordring om å ‘bry seg’” (Loga 2003, 65) [The discourse of goodness is about being “a good person” and is characterized by its appeal to care]. This discourse also plays into Jørgensen’s statement, where she encouraged the students to care for “bigger things.” While the students explicitly were told not to feel guilty for being born in a rich country, they implicitly got the message that they should pay attention to the issue at hand, the ODW 2013 pictorial series on global youth, and not remain preoccupied with their social media.

The phrase “Who Cares?” first and foremost comes across as a rhetorical question, with the implied answer “I do” or “I will.” But if the ODW and their material do not appeal to youth, it might be difficult to answer the opposite—“No, actually I don’t care (in the way you want me to)”—without being positioned as indifferent and selfish. As mentioned, Loga proposes that when you ask someone to care, you are indicating that they do not care enough: “I appellen ligger det også en vurdering av, eller anklage om, at tilhørerne ikke bryr seg nok” (2003, 71) [In the appeal, there is also an assessment of, or accusation, that the audience does not care enough].
Hence, posing the question “Who Cares?” also runs a rhetorical risk, as oppositional, rebellious teens might want to position themselves as refusing what comes across as a manipulatory ‘either/or’ positioning. Or—indeed—an informed student might oppose the call based on a rejection of the moral appeals of the development industry. This position was found in an empirical study of teens in New Zealand:

Students displayed an increasing amount of scepticism towards the [development] sector and a conflict of desires: on the one hand, wanting to help; on the other hand, showing feelings of guilt and annoyance at having to negotiate the demand to help. (Tallon and McGregor 2014, 1412)

There is no reason Norwegian students would not also harbor the same misgivings. In fact, the cover may be regarded as a response to precisely this type of skepticism.

Similarly, the 2014 front cover may also be a response to a post-humanitarian condition where an appeal, as Chouliaraki writes, “relies on each spectator’s personal judgement on the cause for action” (2010, 119). On a bright red background, the text “Det nyter ikke” [It is no use] is set in white block letters, while the text “å sitte på ræva” [sitting on your ass] is “handwritten” with a green pen on a yellow Post-it. There are parallels between the 2001 statement “Don’t give a shit about the rainforest” and the 2014 statement “There is no use—sitting on your ass.” They both use slang in big letters to catch the audience’s attention, and presumably to provoke a reaction.

The first phrase on the 2014 front cover can be read as what one might imagine students thinking when the campaign sparks off: “It’s no use.” The utterance reflects humanitarian aid criticism and is a commonly used excuse for not engaging in development aid. The many reports in the 1980s and 1990s about failed development projects gave rise to the claim that development work was wasteful and useless. The first phrase thus builds on this type of criticism.

The second phrase is a rebuttal that turns the meaning upside down: from “It’s no use” to “It is no use sitting on your ass.” The rebuttal appears to be written by students.

---

22 An example of this type of criticism directed at ODW is expressed in an opinion piece written by a Norwegian school teacher only two days before the ODW 2014-Day titled “50 år er nok for Operasjon Dagsverk” [50 years is enough for ODW]: “Ikke bare har bistand ingen effect på økonomisk vekst. Bistanden gjør situasjonen for landet verre. Den styrker personer og grupper, som bruker sin makt over de politiske og økonomiske institusjonene i landet til å mele sin egen kake og kjøpe seg støttespiller” [Not only does humanitarian aid not have any effect on economic growth, but it also makes the situation worse for the recipient country. Humanitarian aid supports people and groups who use their political and economic power only to improve their own situations] (Røgeberg 2014).
supportive of ODW. In sum, the utterances start out being critical students’ possible reactions to ODW and end up expressing ODW’s invitation to engage and participate. In such a reading, where the utterances hold both the critical and the supportive students’ possible opinions, the statement opens for and plays on different subject positions, seeking to ultimately unite them. It does so by provoking debate and dialogue, and through humor.

Overall, the 2014 front cover can be read as an attempt to socialize Norwegian youth, asking them to pull themselves together, to stop being self-absorbed, to make something of themselves, and not be lazy and uncaring. They are to engage globally and in the classroom. This is a typical school/parent/government rhetoric directed at young people. It is based on a type of doublespeak. On the one hand, ODW tells Norwegian youth not to feel guilty for caring about their social media or for being from a rich and privileged country. On the other hand, the Norwegian youth are made to feel guilty, self-centered, spoiled, and lazy unless they display global solidarity by participating in ODW. In that sense, the cover is yet another variation of a persistent Norwegian discourse of goodness.

As mentioned above, the booklet covers function as what Genette calls “threshold texts,” inviting the students to engage further with the learning material. According to Genette, threshold texts can function as “a ‘vestibule’ that offers the world at large the possibility of either stepping inside or turning back” (1997, 2). Both the 2013 and the 2014 front covers run the risk of students “turning back”: 2013 by opening for the answer “I don’t care” (even though it would place the students as selfish), and 2014 for being read as the typical rhetoric youth are accustomed to hearing and tuning out. On the other hand, the 2013 and 2014 front covers can be read as humorous eye-openers inviting the students to turn the page, learn more, discuss, evaluate, and make up their own minds regarding the particular cases. The front covers will appeal differently to different people and in different contexts; nevertheless, the question remains of whom the front cover is made for, whom it is designed to interpellate, and what it reveals about how students are socialized as good Norwegians.

**Conclusion**

ODW appeals to Norwegian students to give. Specifically, they ask students to give one day of their education to support the education of young people in the global South. On a

---

23 There is no teaching on the ODW-Day in the schools participating in the campaign, so, in sum, the
more general level, they ask young people to participate in a humanitarian aid discursive practice—a discourse that intersects with a Norwegian discourse of goodness. While the covers in the 1980s and ’90s were dominated by images of the recipients of the campaigns, covers from around the turn of the millennium until today have a different focus on the aesthetic expression. In Roman Jacobson’s terminology (1959), the communication may be said to have shifted from a referential function to a more poetic, conative, and phatic function: poetic as it uses slogan-like statements, conative in the vocatives and imperatives (i.e., “Shit in the rainforest [i.e., do not give a shit about the rainforest], or save what is left” or “Who Cares?”), and a phatic function in trying to ensure that they catch the students’ attention.

The ODW traditional humanitarian aid appeals are more moderate than Chouliaraki’s concepts of ‘shock effect’ and ‘positive image’ appeals. There are examples of front covers with images that can evoke pity, but there are also several front covers with more neutral facial expressions or smiley children in the representations of global others. On the ODW covers in a post-humanitarian style, focus has shifted away from a referential function of representing the campaigns’ recipients towards attention-capturing statements challenging the attitudes and behavior of the students in Norway instead. The ODW material sets out to evoke more humor than in Chouliaraki’s examples. The use of humor could be an attempt by ODW to alleviate possible feelings of guilt and shame among youth, as well as a means to attract their attention. In a sense, ODW is caught in a position of ambivalence regarding the image of Norway as an idealistic regime of goodness. It is a sense of discomfort reflected in the ironic mode of the recent booklet cover appeals, which are, after all, created by students in the first place.

ODW operates within an educational setting with ideals of solidarity, unity, and Norwegian goodness. A post-humanitarian style, however, responds to an overall individualization and has to acknowledge that people are different, and they evaluate problems and their potential solutions differently. A discourse of goodness may lead to a large part of the student body feeling resentful and alienated. This may split the student body (as Loga indicates), but it may also lead to a larger reflection, or even discussion, in which stating different, individual points of view becomes possible.

students have one day less of school than the students in schools not participating.
Works Cited


