



Doing good reality, masculine care, and affective capitalism

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abstract

In recent years reality television has increasingly been preoccupied with various forms of charity and humanitarian work. This article explores the question of affective capitalism in the emergence of 'doing good' reality by focusing on particular masculine representations of care. It is argued that the 'doing good' television (also referred to as ethical entertainment, charity TV and makeover humanitarianism) exemplifies affective capitalism and resonates with at least two larger shifts: the increased commercialization of the humanitarian field and the increased convergent strategies in digitalized media environment. While much of the work on affective economies of reality TV has focused on women's work, this article explores what happens when men perform care in popular television. By focusing on two case studies (*Arman ja Kamerunin kummilapset*, *Duudsonit tuli taloon*), this article points out how emotions and affectivity work across gender and appear as significant part of masculine representations of humanitarianism and care work. The masculine humanitarians of reality TV propose new kind of authenticity to humanitarian work through self-made expertise and down-to-earth sentimentality. Moreover these shows use the convergent strategies of online participation to monetize the sentiments of compassion to humanitarian organizations as well as the brand of the celebrities. By acknowledging the popularity and enthusiasm evoked by these reality shows, the article critically discusses the contradictory implications of doing good reality for solidarity and care work at large.

Introduction

On the popular Finnish reality show *Duudsonit tuli talon* (DTT), four men¹ who were previously known for their live stunt performances on the television show *Extreme Duudsonit* now help to solve different families' various problems. These problems include family members' feelings of marginalization in their community due to disability, poverty, or their ethnic background as well as problems inside the family due to divorce, loss of a family member, or other hardships. In each episode, the 'Dudesons' arrive at the family home to help by using their straightforward style, which involves pushing the boundaries of everyday life with pranks, extreme stunts, and public performances. In this format, the tough guys of entertainment television have found a social mission – they use their fame for doing good. This shift from reality stunts to care work depicts the emergence of a larger trend of 'doing good' (Ouellette and Murray, 2009: 2-3) or 'ethical entertainment' (Hawkins, 2001) in television culture. It involves 'examinations of ways to live: information about the care and management of the self, [and] explorations of the tensions between collective versus self-interest' (Hawkins, 2001: 412-413). Television industries have realized that philanthropist perspectives can be profitable and add value to shows (Driessens et al., 2012). This kind of 'charity TV' illustrates an amalgam of television entertainment and aid organizations that require publicity and attention². Examples of such shows include *Arman ja Kamerunin kummilapset* (AKK) (Finland 2014, Channel Jim), funded by Plan Finland, where reality TV host Arman Alizad searches for the child he sponsored in Cameroon; *Go back to where you came from* (Australia 2010 to present, SBS), an Australian series created in co-operation with UNHCR, which uses the reality format to depict refugees' journeys as experienced by ordinary Australians; and *Extreme makeover: home edition* (USA 2003-2012, ABC), where new homes are built for families that have experienced unusual hardships (Douglas and Graham, 2013; Ouellette, 2012). DTT, AKK, and *Go back* have also won national television prizes for their social address³. The 'doing good' reality concept has gained some foothold in

1 The members of the Dudesons are as follows: Jarppi Leppälä, Jukka Hildén, Jarno Laasala, and Hannu-Pekka Parviainen. *Extreme Duudsonit* (Finland, 2001 to present) was produced by their production company, Rabbit Films. That was followed by *Dudesons in America* (Finland-USA, 2010), a series filmed in the US in co-operation with Johnny Knoxville and Jeff Tremaine from the equivalent American show, *Jackass*. The Dudesons' homepage is located at <http://dudesons.com/>.

2 Also defined as makeover humanitarianism (Orgad and Nikunen, 2015).

3 DTT awards: *Formaatti-Finlandia*: The best domestic TV format 2012, and Golden Venla: The best TV programme 2012, The best reality TV programme 2013 and 2014. AKK awards: Golden Venla: The rift of the year 2014, Arman Alizad the best performer 2013. *Go back* awards: Australian teachers award 2011, International

global television markets. The format used in *Go back* has been sold to at least nine countries, while the *DTT* format has been sold to four other countries⁴. Laurie Ouellette and James Hay (2008: 36, 55) connect this emergence of ‘charity TV’ with liberal governance that draws on a promise of empowerment through self-help and fosters citizenship through the practices of volunteerism and philanthropy. While this is identified particularly in the context of the United States, the concept has also gained popularity in Europe with a similar promise of empowerment through entrepreneurship (Orgad and Nikunen, 2015).

I argue that the phenomenon of ‘doing good’ television is connected with broader structural shifts in media production and humanitarianism due to increased commercialization and digitalization. In this article I discuss these changes through the notion of affective capitalism. The article explores how affective capitalism works in two ‘doing good’ reality programmes, *Duudsonit tuli taloon* (*DTT*) and *Arman ja Kamerunin kummilapset* (*AKK*). First, the article explores ‘doing good’ reality particularly from a gendered point of view. In their seminal work on reality TV as a technology of affect, Beverly Skeggs and Helen Wood (2008; Wood et al., 2009) argue that the management of intimate relationships and the visualization of women’s domestic work in reality television display the ways in which ‘capital is engaged with socialization of affective capacities’ (Skeggs and Wood, 2008: 560). By sensationalizing intimate relationships, reality television also educates on normal and ideal (gendered) versions of care and relationships. This article extends that focus on the construction of *masculine* care in the context of humanitarian communication by showing how masculine authority is reclaimed and extended to the areas of help and care work. Second, the article explores online participation of the digital television culture to examine how the sentiments of compassion, evoked through ‘doing good’ reality television, are monetized. Before going into the case studies, I will introduce the theoretical concept of affective capitalism and the ways in which it connects with reality television.

Affective capitalism

For some time now, scholars in media and cultural studies have pointed out how capital has extended into new spaces, ‘creating new markets by harnessing affect and intervening in intimate, domestic relationships’ (Skeggs, 2010: 30). This is

Emmy award, an Australian ACCTA, and a Logie award 2012 (for more on *Go back* see Nikunen, 2015).

4 *DTT* has been sold to France, Germany, Denmark and Norway with the title *Rockstar home invasion*; however, the show has not been realized in any of these countries by 2016.

part of a longer development that is connected with the emergence of service economies in areas of care and help (Hochschild, 1983/2003, 2012; Reber, 2012). The marketization of intimate life, feelings, and care work has been discussed in terms of emotional capitalism (Illouz, 2007) and affective economy (Skeggs, 2010; Skeggs and Wood, 2008). These concepts describe the extension of capital into the intimate domain, such as relationships, in the post-Fordist era. This means that private spaces (such as the home) and activities connected with privacy (caring, helping, and nurturing) are increasingly subsumed within capitalism. These developments coincide with the development of digital technologies through which knowledge and information are used increasingly as areas of continuous self-improvement and self-promotion. Personal and voluntary digital participation becomes part of professional productions (Staples, 2007).

In this sense, affective capitalism refers to structural shifts in the production processes of cultural industries with blurred borderlines between public and private, increased time-flexibility, individualization, and entrepreneurialism (Hearn, 2011; Hesmondhalgh, 2010; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2008; Hochschild, 2012; Terranova, 2000). These changes characterize the lives of many self-employed bloggers, writers, and performers whose work and private lives are entangled. These changes are also present in the ways in which audiences are increasingly invited to voluntarily engage in the production processes.

At the core of the scholarly discussion on affective capitalism is the attempt to understand the changing conditions of cultural production and the ways in which value is generated from immaterial actions, such as affect, knowledge, care, and emotions (Hochschild, 1983/2003; 2012; Skeggs, 2010; Terranova, 2000)⁵. In the literature concerning affective capitalism, affect seems to refer to feelings, emotions, communication, cognition, relationships, or even participation in general, or anything that creates hidden or indirect value in digital media⁶. Such broadness sometimes makes it difficult to assess what is

5 The debate on affective or immaterial labour responds largely to work by autonomist Marxists (particularly Hardt and Negri, 2000); however, this is not in the center of argumentation here.

6 Even the so-called affective turn includes various definitions and understandings of affect (Gregg and Seigworth, 2010; see also discussion on affect in feminist theory, Liljeström and Paasonen, 2009). While Sara Ahmed and Beverley Skeggs tend to use affect and emotions interchangeably and connected with the meaning-making process, Nigel Thrift (2008), among others, discusses affect as emergent, becoming, and unattainable – and ultimately separate from consciousness and representation (see Wetherell, 2012).

meant by affective or emotional capitalism. To clarify, I define, in line with Skeggs (2010) and Ahmed (2004), affect in this paper as an emotional dimension as represented and evoked by media. I do not consider affect to be something 'uncanny' and beyond the meaning-making process, but an essential part of it (see Wetherell, 2012); the focus in this article is how emotions are mobilised in humanitarian reality television on the levels of representation and participation.

In terms of affective capitalism, I identify two areas of investigation that bear relevance for the purposes of this article. First, I explore affective capitalism in terms of the commodification of emotionally saturated activities that often concern relationships and take place in the private sphere (care, help, mourning, love, and affection). In the context of reality television, commodification is realized through representations and visualizations of emotional activity and relationships (such as care, compassion, and mourning). The reality television genre is preoccupied with the care and help of others, such as finding a better diet, house, wardrobe, or education. By dealing with care, help, sharing, and emotions, these programmes are part of an economy that makes value of emotional and affective activity of different kinds. As argued by Skeggs and Wood (2008: 560), the affective and emotional labour that is embedded in entertainment and lifestyle programmes makes caring an explicit responsibility to be performed. At the same time, it is a marketable essence of television shows. Thus humanitarian reality shows that focus on doing good, both market and propose claims of ideal forms of care and help (Illouz, 2007; Skeggs and Wood, 2008: 560). Much of the research in this area focuses on representations of women's care work, maintaining that women's lives in particular become commodified through affective capitalism (Skeggs, 2010). This article however demonstrates the value of masculine care in television entertainment.

Second, I discuss affective capitalism in terms of immaterial aspects of (voluntary) labour or participatory activities of maintenance, caretaking, supporting, and sharing in digital environments. Voluntary work and unpaid contributions are seen as characteristics of affective capitalism in the digital media industry (Andrejevic, 2011; Arvidsson and Colleoni, 2012; Terranova, 2000: 37-8)⁷. Terranova argues that digital economy makes use of activities that are often difficult to recognize as forms of labor, such as participation in chat rooms, mailing lists, and amateur online productions. Voluntary participation by

7 The participatory cultures and free labour within digital media industries have been discussed in terms of exploitation; however, this view has been criticized for simplified value-creation models, unprecise notion of work, and failure to take into account the sense of agency or pleasure included in voluntary labour and activities (Hesmondhalgh, 2010; see also Jarrett, 2014).

users adds credibility and weight to online sites: the more vibrant discussions and activities online sites have, the more likely they are to strive for and attract advertising. The recognition of the value of such voluntary work for media industries marks the shift in value creation from the factory to the social networks (Terranova, 2000).

The quality and relevance of this kind of voluntary 'work' by audiences has also been discussed in terms of gender. Kylie Jarrett (2014), drawing on Leopoldina Fortunati (1995), uses the term 'women's work' to describe value-creation in digital media. This refers to social, reproductive work as 'differentiated from production economics of industrial workplace' (*ibid.*: 15). Jarrett argues that, for example, Facebook 'likes' and the sharing of news and images represent forms of participation that share the characteristics of social maintenance and reproduction of women's work that the economics of digital media industry relies on.

The link between women and care work appears to be relevant in the discussion of affective capitalism. First, there is an empirical connection between women and care work. This is important from the perspective of this article particularly in the context of humanitarianism. Humanitarian work and philanthropy have historically formed an avenue for (middle class) women in Western societies to enter public life and realize their role in civil societies (Jordansson and Vammen, 1998; Martin, 2008; Roberts, 2013; Saarinen, 1994). This historically gendered formation of humanitarianism bears relevance for the ways in which the humanitarian field is understood even today; for example, more 'natural' for women. It is therefore also an essential starting point for the construction of masculine representations of care work. It is the foundation on which the new set of meanings and value for 'doing good' reality TV are created. By focusing on representations of masculine care, this paper exposes and explores the gendered understanding of emotions and care work in the context of humanitarianism.

Second, as discussed above, Jarrett has made the connection between the characteristics of digital participation and the characteristics of women's work as reproductive, voluntary, and adaptable. While I understand this in principle, I find it problematic to theorize digital participation through such a narrow understanding of women's work as it entails the risk of universalizing and essentializing understandings of gender and work⁸. Therefore, my purpose here

8 I do agree with the feminist critique of the gendered division of labour that is based on reliance on unpaid domestic work by women and not addressed enough in theorizations of immaterial labour (see McRobbie, 2011). Here, however, I am concerned with the adaptation of the idea of women's (domestic) work directly to the digital environment. Such appropriation of the term might lead to an understanding

is not to interpret digital participation through gendered notions of care but rather to show that a gendered understanding of care itself acquires different meanings in different contexts and across time. Thus, this paper investigates how 'doing good' attaches value to particular masculine reality performances and how these performances might be applied to ensure affective responses in digital participation. Relevant here are the ways in which audience participation is channelled: who benefits from it and what are the structures of humanitarianism that digital participation supports. I understand that the value of affect and emotion is created beyond commodity logic, not only as a matter of calculation, but also as a matter of morality and justice. Therefore, the ways in which these reality programmes address audiences connects with questions of social justice, the good life, and moral education.

The affective technology of humanitarianism

Since many humanitarian reality programmes are created in co-operation with aid organizations, it is useful to understand the ways in which affective capitalism connects with humanitarian organizations. Like most areas of culture and the economy today, humanitarian organizations are challenged by neo-liberalist structures of individualization and marketization (Barnett and Snyder, 2008). These changes have affected humanitarian organization across the globe. In Finland, ever scarcer resources and an increasingly competitive market have led aid organizations to adopt commercialized forms to address the public while simultaneously reflecting on the ways in which these changes shape and alter the core values of humanitarian work (Johansson, 2014). Traditional forms of humanitarian action have been accompanied by more non-governmental organizations – the so-called new humanitarianism – with a variety of actors from the military to commercial corporations and online technology firms (Joachim and Schneiker, 2012; Redfield, 2008; Schloms, 2003). In addition, transformations in the media environment with individualization, digitalization, and multiplication of media platforms have made it challenging to reach the public (Orgad and Seu, 2014). The fragmentation of audiences into smaller groups is accompanied by a diversity of interpretations (Höijer, 2004; Seu, 2010; Tester, 2001) and a growing cynicism towards aid campaigns (Chouliaraki, 2010). The audience practices of participation and the emergence of post-deferential culture (Andrejevic, 2013: 10-13) seem to have added reflexivity and access to information in ways that question traditional, emotionally-oriented aid

of women as naturally more caring than men, a stereotype that underlines justifications of segregation in labour markets, also in the cultural industries (see Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2008).

campaigns (Chouliaraki, 2013: 74). In this media environment, in which audiences are able to reshape, circulate, and manipulate news and images, programmes that aim to teach and educate people on how to feel towards others' suffering can easily appear patronizing.

To tackle these challenges, humanitarian organizations increasingly use affective technologies of digital media to reach the public. With affective technologies, I refer to the capacity of new media technologies to incorporate the moral imperative to act through participatory forms of digital media, such as tweets and online donations. In the humanitarian field, this has become a vital area of action. In technologized environments, care becomes quantified and measured by clicks, site visits, and 'likes'. Indeed, relying on and attracting audience participation, quantified online presence, and voluntary donations follows the logic of affective capitalism (Jarrett, 2014: 23). Lillie Chouliaraki (2010; 2013) describes this with the notion of post-humanitarianism. Post-humanitarianism involves a shift in humanitarian communication from grand emotions to playful self-expression, enhanced by new media technology and audience participation, also described as selfie humanitarianism (Koffman et al. 2015).

In a digital media environment, reality television provides an avenue for aid organizations to reach audiences by addressing the two areas discussed above: authenticity and participation. Authenticity is vital for getting the message through, while participation is needed to acquire donations. Both aspects are connected with doing good reality TV in specific ways. The technologized participation of reality television strives to make use of the audiences' affective responses, while visualizing the sentiments of care and compassion propose a sense of authenticity. I will move on to discuss in detail these dimensions of affective capitalism in the humanitarian reality television shows *Arman ja Kamerunin kummilapset* (AKK) and *Duudsonit tuli taloon* (DTT).

Self-made masculine care work

AKK (*Arman and the children of Cameroon*) is a Finnish television programme produced by Arman Alizad's production company, Armanin Maaailma, and sponsored by the Finnish branch of the children's development charity, Plan Finland. The programme was broadcast in Finland on 14 April 2014 and rerun on Christmas Eve 2014. In the show, reality TV presenter and producer Arman Alizad travels to Cameroon to meet the child that he sponsored (so called godchild). The host, Iranian-born Arman Alizad, is famous in Finland for his streetwise and outspoken extreme reality show *Kill Arman* (2009-2010, Channel Jim) and his adventure television series *Arman and the last crusade* (2013-2014,

Channel Jim). This series followed Arman's experiences in extreme and dangerous situations in different parts of the globe, including living in a slum in Manila, Philippines and begging for money with the street children in Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

In *AKK*, Arman travels to Eastern Cameroon to meet Assanga, who belongs to the vulnerable Baka tribe. Arman's quest is to find his godchild and, at the same time, inform audiences about the vulnerability of the Baka people and encourage donations for Plan Finland's child sponsor project. Arman appears as a streetwise expert who interacts and jokes with people, performing as their peer rather than as a distant helper. The sense of real, unscripted scenes is underlined by the ways in which Arman speaks to the camera and to his Finnish audience. Contrary to typical mediation of humanitarian projects, he uses colloquial language and ironic expressions.

This street-wise attitude also forms the core of the address in the other case study in this article, *Duudsonit tuli taloon (Rockstar home invasion)*. *DTT* follows the reality TV genre of helping 'ordinary' people in need through charitable interventions (Ouellette and Hay, 2008). In each episode, the four members of the Dudesons enter the home of those being helped. During the first season (2012), the problems were related to the internal dynamics of the families, whereas the second and third seasons (2013/2014) focused more on social issues, such as school bullying or marginalization due to racism or disabilities. The Dudesons enter the homes of the troubled children and youth to solve these problems using common sense and a 'badass'. For example, episode five on 'Marginalized refugees' (2014) focused on a Vietnamese refugee family that had settled in a small town in Eastern Finland called Punkalaidun. The Dudesons' task was to fight racism and help the family to be accepted in the community. To do this, the group organized various events including pranks, explosives and local games and a music event. The solutions in each episode of *DTT* are enacted and embodied through spectacles where people are expected to transform and exceed their limitations concerning fears or prejudices. *DTT* has gained popularity and garnered national attention for topics such as school bullying and marginalization. In addition to television performances, the group has participated in several events and toured Finnish schools with their 'We don't bully' campaign in 2014.

Both programmes appropriate reality TV aesthetics that merge the theatrical and the everyday to create a sense of engaging immediacy (Raphael, 2009) and authenticity (McCarthy, 2009). The underlining message of both programmes is the possibility of a better life through transformation. Thus the programmes propose a narrative of what constitutes valuable life and how it can be achieved.

Both programmes introduce masculine expertise as a response to problems in relationships and, in this way, extend masculine expertise in areas of care and intimacy. The hosts acquire self-made expertise that is typical of reality TV (Ouellette and Hay, 2008: 3). The expertise is built on problem-solving techniques, step-by-step demonstrations, and intimate feedback, all of which creates a sense of a grassroots education and real-life lessons. Through the show, the Dudesons have acquired a role as experts in areas of domesticity, family relationships, raising children, and social marginalization, whereas Arman appears as the expert voice of care for distant suffering. In this way, reality television constructs new forms of education or pedagogy where experts teach 'ordinary' people how to eat, dress, cook, decorate, fall in love, raise children, or solve personal problems (Ouellette and Murray, 2009; Redden, 2007). Through these representations, care work becomes commodified as something that educates on how to have a good life with a new marketable package for television audiences (Deller, 2014; Skeggs and Wood, 2008). Yet, these two programmes propose self-made expertise in distinctly different ways. Arman appropriates a cosmopolitan dimension of aid work through the scope of the programme as well as through his persona and Iranian origins. As a representative of the new immigrant population of Finland, he negotiates and bridges the different social contexts and the distance between the wealthy North and the global South. Arman's role as a mediator between these different worlds is underlined in his recent shows, created by his own production company, that build on his experiences and travels in the global South. As for *DTT*, starring four blond Nordic men, expertise of care is proposed in a national context. The star image of the Dudesons capitalises on the outlaw masculinity of the rural area of Ostrobothnia, famous for its history of knife fighters and troublemakers. Having been able to achieve an international television career with their boyish pranks and stunts, the group has become an object of national pride. Thus, while Arman proposes humanitarian work in the cosmopolitan frame, the Dudesons address transformation towards better life in the national context of Finland.

Both programmes appropriate streetwise expertise that bears particular significance in the context of humanitarianism. Replacing the traditional educational tone with a more adventurous approach creates a sense that the message is credible and produces the effect of an accentuated reality, taking place here and now. *DTT* and *AKK* represent television culture, where things appear to be shown 'as they are' rather than as they should be. Foul language, conflicts, unscripted events, and strong emotions remove aid work from noble properness to a grassroots approach with a sexy twist of excitement. On-camera addresses and straightforward attitudes offer a sense of no-nonsense pedagogy that appears useful for everyday life.

For example, Arman educates audiences in a straight forward way by visualizing his own experiences with the Baka. He shows concretely, step-by-step, by searching for food, fishing, and visiting a local school, that life in the jungle is hard and therefore donations are needed to get school books for children who can acquire a better life through education (Orgad and Nikunen, 2015). The Dudesons' expertise is likewise concrete. In the episode where the Dudesons help the refugee family to integrate, they organize a community event of 'Finnish games' such as the 'wife carrying competition'. Locals and refugees are 'mixed' in pairs in a competition where men carry women through a rough racetrack. The aim is to enhance a sense of community through spectacular events that force people to encounter and appreciate each other. This tone departs drastically from what is usually associated with humanitarian messages and care work. The gendered and class-bound dimensions of the shift are fundamental: the image of masculine humanitarian draws on toughness and practicality rather than softness and literal education.

These grass root approaches emphasize bodily dimensions of help and connect care to physical labour, which in turn attaches material value to humanitarian and care work. This becomes emblematic in scenes where Arman is shown carrying wood (12:24), climbing a tree (23:00), catching fish with the Baka (37:20), and carrying sacks of rice (41:40) to their village. This is also the case in *DTT* in scenes where the Dudesons wrestle, play sports, and create spectacles with explosives. Care and aid work appear as hard physical work and fun that is exemplified through the masculine body. Illustratively, in one of the final scenes, Arman concludes that the connection between him and his god-daughter Assanga was not found through words, it was found by *doing*. Thus humanitarian work is material and concrete; it is doing rather than talking. The new pedagogy of reality TV refashions care work with 'masculine' meanings in a genre that is often seen as a women's genre (i.e. *How clean is your house*, *What not to wear*, *Wife swap*, see Skeggs, 2010: 43). These men arrive in the scene as rescuing heroes who are able to solve a range of problems, but they do not necessarily appear to be morally superior to the individuals who they are helping. In the humanitarian context, this imagery of the masculine helper-hero proposes a transformation from educated femininity to ordinary masculinity and exemplifies a demotive turn in pedagogy (Turner, 2011). The masculinization of expertise is crucial to the ways in which help and care are performed as applicable, common sense solutions.

Both Arman and the Dudesons apply playfulness and humor in their streetwise acts. At the same time, they emphasize dangerous travels (*AKK*) and destructive stunts (*DTT*) as an essential part of their care work. By combining humor and danger, they perform help with heroic manhood acts (Schrock and Schwalbe,

2009) that draw on the imagery of adventurous men conquering new territories. This time the territory is that of care work, intimacy, and humanitarian help. Indeed, these shows demonstrate not only the transformation in humanitarian communication but the ways in which this transformation involves a restoration of masculine authority by extending and claiming expertise in private life, care and aid work.

Tears of solidarity

The self-made expertise described above is importantly accompanied, and authenticated, with emotionality. For example, in the final scene in the *DTT* episode concerning the Vietnamese refugee family, the locals, gathered in a dance hall, cheer as the daughter of the family sings in Finnish. This final scene is cross-edited with comments by the Dudesons who describe their emotions in the moment: ‘Shivers went down my spine when the crowd started to dance together and the place practically melted. I felt a bit puzzled myself, is this really happening?’ recounts Jarno Laasala (Season 3, episode 5, 37:10). In another episode concerning divorce, Jukka Hildén explains the situation to the camera in a broken voice and with tears in his eyes: ‘We didn’t believe in this when we started this... but their life actually changed, the children’s lives changed.’ (Season 3, episode 3, 39-40:00.) These emotional reactions follow the realization that, they, the Dudesons, have made a difference in someone’s life.



Figure 1: *The Dudesons'* Jukka Hildén emotional in episode 3, season 3. Image still by Kaarina Nikunen, under fair use.

These emotional moments form a standard element of each episode of *DTT* and they are what Laura Grindstaff (2002) describes as the ‘money shots’ of the

reality format. The emotional is visualized through scenes where the men explain their inner feelings directly to the camera, in tears, and with a cracking voice. These tearful moments operate to prove that the mission is genuine and add an affective value to their star image.

In a similar way, though less tearfully, Arman shows an emotional bond with the locals in scenes where his godchild finally takes his hand (39:40), or in scenes where he, upset about injustice and vulnerability of the Baka people (26:40, 28:50), addresses the camera to the accompaniment of dramatic music (30:40). Arman expresses anger and frustration towards the logging companies that are destroying the surrounding forests (36:00), as well as concern over the future of the Baka people who move from the jungle to the city (42:30). Arman's intensive and emotional address, which reminds audiences of global injustices, has become a recognizable trademark. It is something that his earlier series are remembered for.



Figure 2: Arman explains the struggles of Baka-people. Image still by Kaarina Nikunen, under fair use.

The *feel* of solidarity is visualized in close-ups where men narrate the personal involvement and emotional effect of their work. Such affective moments of confession 'shore up semblances of authenticity' (Davis et al., 2014; see also Biressi and Nunn, 2005). They operate to reveal the true emotion that helping others engenders: the emotional reward of doing good. The combination of adventure and care proposes a tough masculinity that is accentuated by a sensitivity, which in turn constructs a particular form of acceptable citizenship (Deller, 2014). Such sentimentality resonates with the reality TV representations of national heroes, the police and the firemen that humbly labour for the safety and security of the community and the nation (Carroll, 2008; Kirby, 2013). Thus,

the emotions, resulting from labour of care, become aligned with social responsibility and collective good. This is citizenry built with the intimacy and appropriated through the trope of the sentimental soldier-hero (Koivunen, 2012). As argued by Hamilton Carroll (2008) in her research on working-class masculinity, the combination of steel and tears, valor and sacrifice, are essential characteristics of sentimental masculinity that is proposed on reality TV in response to post-industrialist economy and the collapse of the division between public and private. The sweat and tears of solidarity in *DTT* and *AKK* propose similar sentimental citizenry of neoliberal times.

This sentimentality is essentially connected with post-humanitarianism. By circulating the feel of solidarity, these shows illustrate the post-humanitarian ethos of self-expression and privileging the Western self, through whose eyes and emotions we learn about the troubles and suffering of others (Chouliakraki, 2013). The emotional responses of the hosts, Arman and the Dudesons, operate as affective facts (Massumi, 2010: 54) and as moral education, showing viewers how to react and what to feel in those situations. This is how post-humanitarianism collides with affective capitalism. Building on individuality and entrepreneurship with elements of self-made expertise and sentimentality, the programmes propose humanitarianism in a marketable package.

Importantly, both Arman and the Dudesons are entrepreneurs with their own production companies through which this emotional labour of helping others is made and marketed. Clearly, the masculine tears of doing good hold market value in the contemporary television industry. Similarly to how misery has become a marketable commodity in the genre of talk television (Illouz, 2003), tears of solidarity carry (moral and monetary) value for humanitarian reality television. Here, the moral value being generated from care and emotions benefits particularly, but not solely, the media image of the hosts, Arman and the Dudesons. Both the Dudesons' and Arman's public images have grown from being reality entertainers to caring citizens who use their fame to alleviate the suffering of others. Through affective performances on TV, related campaigns, and images circulating on Facebook and Twitter, Arman and the Dudesons have achieved a star image with social responsibility, thus following the trend of Hollywood stars in doing good (Kapoor, 2013; Littler, 2008; Mustafanezhad, 2013; Repo and Yrjölä, 2011). Humanitarian organizations gain value through the visibility and through the refashioning of humanitarian work: it appears to be fun, adventurous, uncomplicated, and down-to-earth (Orgad and Nikunen, 2015). Yet, there is more value to be collected through online participation.

Volunteering citizens

As argued in the beginning of this article, reality TV, as a popular and immersive genre, offers an interesting avenue for humanitarian organizations to garner the attention of wide audiences and turn audience participation into humanitarian action. Audience participation forms an important dimension of the shows and it is essential in their multiplatform strategies (Andrejevic, 2013; Jenkins, 2006). Instead of creating one programme, the message is distributed in multiple platforms, including TV advertising, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube channels. *AKK*, for example, was aired as a must-see event that was promoted through multi-platform advertising through television, radio, and the internet. The real-time viewing of the show was particularly relevant for Plan Finland, which ran direct donation bids during each commercial break of the show. As the host, Arman's role was extended into the commercials, and he also made a special appearance in a live episode of a comedy series the following evening. Finnish television channel Nelonen and Plan Finland applied convergent media strategies to create an event that would carry on beyond the programme. Social media provided another platform for potential donations. According to Plan Finland, this strategy was highly successful and increased their visibility and donations (Laiho, 2014). For humanitarian organizations in particular, the way in which television programmes build avenues for donations – through narratives, advertisements, and social media – creates opportunities to reach audiences and obtain donations on multiple levels. They use the emotional response engendered by the series to garner attention and donations for the organization. These donations are also relevant for the media company as a sign of success that can attract other funders, and therefore they form an important *promise* for the economic structure of production. The ways in which digital platforms and convergent media strategies are used to harness the sentiment of care and compassion among audiences appear as a model case of affective technologies of humanitarianism.

While *DTT* follows similar convergent logics of multiple platforms and adaptations, the direction of action is quite different from *AKK*. *DTT* is recycled as video-clips on multiple platforms including the TV channels' website, the Dudesons' own website, and Youtube, and sold separately as DVDs. Audiences can take a look at the most moving moments of the series, bloopers, or extras. Although different non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and social agents have helped the group in the series, no connections are made with NGOs on the website. The case of the Vietnamese refugee family was introduced by a local refugee worker from the Red Cross; however, the Red Cross is not mentioned in the programme. This may of course be at their own request; however, all the online material concerns only the Dudesons and their own productions. Thus,

the 'doing good' dimension evoked by the series is directed at building the star image of the Dudesons rather than towards the organizations that are responsible for care and aid work on a permanent basis. Indeed, the development of the Dudesons' brand from pranksters to prominent social figures has been recognized by various corporations and the state. Besides a TV presence, the Dudesons now have their own jewellery and stamp collections that are advertised on their website. Their success has also been recognized with a highly valued invitation by the President of Finland to an Independence Day gala (2013), where they appeared in tailor-made national costumes of Ostrobothnia.⁹ Their star image is strongly connected with national branding: they are considered one of the most successful cultural imports of the Finnish television industry.

In these two cases, audience participation operates in different ways. In the case of *AKK*, audience participation is geared to benefit the NGO, Plan Finland, through volunteer donations advertised through multiple platforms. In the case of *DTT*, audience engagement is geared towards building the Dudesons' own brand and production. The actual financial profits from the audience participation are difficult to detect. However, Plan Finland is satisfied with the donations geared through *AKK*. Plan continues co-operation with Arman and a new programme (focusing on Aymara children in Bolivia) has been created as a result of the success of *AKK*. For the Dudesons, audience engagement results in profits through DVDs and merchandise as well as in possibilities to realize new productions. After *DTT*, the Dudesons have created one new TV series (*Posse*) and continued with their original prankster series (*Duudsonit*). The value of audience participation for both shows is that of a promise of funding for future productions. However, the ways in which audiences are addressed and invited to participate in 'doing good' speaks of a broader and a more significant structural shift, namely the privatization of aid, humanitarianism, and welfare. Both cases propose participation in the frame of voluntary work and entrepreneurialism. As such, the programmes invite audiences to realize their citizenship in the structure of privatized humanitarianism and selective philanthropy (Ouellette and Hay, 2008: 55). The problems presented in the reality shows are solved through self-made expertise. The help is offered for chosen and worthy individuals, and further aid is geared through private donations, advertised through the programmes.

While such privatized humanitarianism and welfare may be a familiar phenomenon in the USA, in the Nordic context the role of the state has

9 Their outfits also made reference to the history of *häjyt* (i.e. troublemakers or knife fighters) from around the mid-nineteenth century in Ostrobothnia, which is the source of many folk legends (see Ylikangas, 1998).

traditionally been strong in terms of providing and distributing help for the marginalized (Christensen and Petersen, 2001). However, as the foundations of the welfare state have been restructured with increased privatization and outsourcing during the past decades, these new forms of humanitarianism have also found more support and foothold as alternatives for the state-structured development aid and welfare (Julkunen, 2006). Private donations for aid organizations have increased at the same time as public funding for development has decreased (Punainen Risti, 2010, 2012, 2014; Plan, 2014; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2015). Volunteer work has become increasingly visible in the public as a way to maximize citizenry (Nykänen, 2014). For example, in September 2015, the leading national newspaper organized a 'do good' event where citizens could find volunteer work suitable for them. Volunteer work abroad has also become a new business model that attracts young adults from Western countries (Berner, 2014; Höckert, 2015). Both *DTT* and *AKK* are part of this development. They address audiences as individuals who can grow together with the performers on their journey to help others in need. By donating and consuming goods offered by these programmes audiences also support the branding of entrepreneurial solidarities. In this way, the visualization of care proposes particular forms of action connected with larger structural shifts in society.

Conclusions

This article set out to explore the question of affective capitalism in the context of 'doing good' reality. By focusing on men performing care work on popular television, this article wishes to point out how the masculinization of care in the context of humanitarianism operates as part of broader structural transformation in the humanitarian field and in cultural industries. Following the demotive turn in cultural production, the masculinization of care asserts a particular kind of authenticity in the post-deferential world: it offers expertise and emotionality with a sense of reality, efficiency, and common sense. In this way, care work becomes commodified and sold to reality TV audiences. This kind of marketability of care is relevant for humanitarian organizations that suffer from criticisms of elitism and struggle with how to reach audiences. In the digitalized media environment, the participatory dimension of reality TV can be used to gear the sentiment of help to encourage private donations, branding, and entrepreneurialization of philanthropic celebrity (Chouliaraki, 2013:100-101).

How should we then understand the social impact or meaning of these programmes? Surely the fact that helping others in need has become a popular, valued asset and exemplary behaviour in public life is not meaningless. As argued by Beverley Skeggs (2010: 49), 'by manipulating affect, reality television

engages the audience in “feeling” about the things that matter to them’. These performances touch and move thousands of people, who by watching the shows may evaluate their relationships to care and to other people. In these television shows, helping others appears accessible, fun, and even useful. The visualization of men performing care work may encourage and expand the gendered understanding of *who* can perform care work in general. The programmes make the need of help visible and call people to action – to maximize their citizenship. As such, these programmes construct understandings of how to perform care and fight injustice. The question that arises here concerns not whether people should help or care about others but rather *how* they should do that: what are *the conditions of action* that these programmes propose.

Care work, in this visualized context, happens through voluntary work, by helping individuals fast and efficiently. In line with post-humanitarianism, it offers individualized solutions and emotionally strong televisual moments. Such focus is both based on and strengthens the commercialization and individualization of humanitarianism. Here, the elements of affective capitalism come together: emotions are geared for showing solidarity and caring for others within an individualistic frame that appears as the one efficient and common sense way to act in the contemporary world of injustice. In this sense, it is easy to agree with Ouellette and Hay (2008: 40), who contend that ‘doing good’ reality neo-liberalizes (and privatizes) social welfare.

An affective response to media representations should not, however, be seen as a matter that can be completely directed or predicted. Affective imageries carry an excess that may induce unexpected responses and social action. They may produce responses that also work beyond their original inspirations and sometimes beyond their limitations. However, reality television operates in the realm of symbolic power and the ways in which understandings of care and opportunities for actions are constructed, matter. These television shows propose horizons for action and avenues for contemplating what is useful, relevant and possible in humanitarian work. More importantly, these reality TV shows are an integral part of the privatization of cultural production with entrepreneurship at the heart of it. While they represent heart-breaking moments of care, they do so by celebrating individualized volunteerism as the efficient form of citizenship that shadows more permanent and sustainable structures of care work. This mobilization of self-made sentimentality exemplifies affective capitalism: although it *feels* good, it works against the structural foundations of equality.

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