Afropolitanism, celebrity politics, and iconic imaginations of North–South relations

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# AFROPOLITANISM, CELEBRITY POLITICS, AND ICONIC IMAGINATIONS OF NORTH-SOUTH RELATIONS

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## ABSTRACT

 'Afropolitanism' has become a disputed term referring to diverse engagements by Africans who are typically members of the cultural elite and participate in diaspora politics, online activism, fashion and literature debates. Simultaneously, in discussions of development aid, celebrity has become a way of mediating between proximity and distance in imagining relationships between South and North. Afropolitanism can be usefully considered as an Africa-specific, post-colonial form of cosmopolitanism that spans discourses of elite pan-African culture to theories of elite global aid culture. We argue that there are essential connections between the rise of Afropolitanism and the celebritization of North-South relations. In this realm, "Afropolitanism" is an idea combining cosmopolitanism's notions of kindness to strangers in a world where the 'kindness' is aid and the 'strangers' are Africans. We analyse two archetypical Afropolitan performances by Danish aid celebrities to argue that their representations of Africa's external relations are theoretically more interesting, and politically more dangerous, than is currently understood. In doing so, we expand the debates around Afropolitanism and celebritization from the realm of cultural politics to one of International Relations.

In discussions of African cultural politics, a new label of 'Afropolitan' refers to various engagements by people with African heritage who are typically members of the cultural elite, and participate in diaspora politics, online activism, fashion and literature debates. Afropolitanism works as a marker for transnational, post-colonial identity trying to rehabilitate Africa's image and act as an antidote to Afro-pessimism. Yet while Afropolitan may be one of the 'ideas of the decade,' its critics are sharp: '"Afropolitan" is not a politics, but it dresses in the commodified residue of political struggle, Fela Kuti's style stripped of its revolutionary substance.'[1] Simultaneously, in discussions of development aid and humanitarianism, celebrity has become a way of mediating between proximity and distance in imagining relationships between South and North. The 'public faces of development' of celebrities make aid seem simultaneously easily engaged by citizens in the North and ethically good for people in the South.[2] Critics of celebrity humanitarianism criticize the 'amateur expert' status of celebrities in North-South relations, and reject celebrities' use of

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[1] Aaron Bady, "'Afropolitan'", *State of the Discipline Report*, April 2014, <http://stateofthediscipline.acla.org/entry/afropolitan> (1 February 2016).
[2] Matt Smith and Helen Yanacopulos, 'The public faces of development: An introduction', *Journal of International Development* 16, 5 (2004), pp. 657–664.

advocacy as a corporate 'branding' exercise with negative implications for democracy and participation.[3]

This article argues that there are essential connections between the rise of Afropolitanism and the celebritization of North-South relations. As aid becomes more celebritized, opportunities open for Afropolitians to present the public faces of North-South relations. These Afropolitans perform an embodied cosmopolitanism centring on Africa. Analysing these connections can lead to a greater understanding of Africa's external politics and an evaluation of the possibilities offered by cosmopolitanism for grounding North-South relations.

To understand this unique intersection, we develop a two-pronged analytical framework: Afropolitanism and celebritization. We begin with the emerging concept of "Afropolitanism" and its theoretical foundation in cosmopolitanism. Then we explain the celebritization of North-South relations and its representational politics of the iconic celebrity. Using these multi-disciplinary literatures, we analyse two archetypical Afropolitan performances of aid celebrity in Denmark to argue that their representations of Africa's external relations are theoretically more interesting, and politically more dangerous, than is currently understood. We expand the debates around Afropolitanism and celebritization from the realm of cultural politics to one of International Relations.

Our case study suggests significant limitations of cosmopolitanism for grounding political struggles in these contested contexts. Afropolitan engagements in North-South relations provide a unique opportunity to understand the potential and limitations of post-colonial cosmopolitanism. The potential of Afropolitanism lies in the subtle shaping of local citizens' aspirations based on cosmopolitan ideals which manifest themselves through what Vivienne Jabri characterizes as space for 'solidarity' on the basis of the 'assertion of presence'.[4] The limitation of these cosmopolitan ideals is their reliance on local values for traction. Thus, as imaginations of North-South relations become celebritized and articulated in "Afropolitan" terms, they call forth a particular kind of politics. This politics is ideally linked to Kwame Anthony Appiah's 'ethics in a world of strangers,'[5] yet in practice relies on elite performances of provincialism and has little to do with Africanizing mutual obligations across borders.

*Methodology and case selection*

[3] Lisa Ann Richey (ed.), *Celebrity humanitarianism and north-south relations: Politics, place and power* (Routledge, London and New York, NY, 2016); Dan Brockington, *Celebrity advocacy and international development* (Routledge, London and New York, NY, 2014); Maxwell T. Boykoff and Michael K. Goodman, 'Conspicuous redemption? Reflections on the promises and perils of the "Celebritization" of climate change', *Geoforum* 40, 3 (2009), pp. 395 – 406; Jo Littler, '"I feel your pain": Cosmopolitan charity and the public fashioning of the celebrity soul', *Social Semiotics* 18, 2 (2008), pp. 237–251; Lisa Ann Richey and Stefano Ponte, *Brand aid: Shopping well to save the world* (University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2011); Mark Wheeler, *Celebrity politics* (Polity, Cambridge, 2013).
[4] Vivienne Jabri, 'Cosmopolitan politics, security, political subjectivity', *European Journal of International Relations* 18, 4 (2011), pg.11.
[5] Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a world of strangers* (W. W. Norton & Company, New York, 2007).

We use empirical material to explore cosmopolitanism as linked through Afropolitanism and celebritization in the practices of engaging the public in North-South relations by comparing two fundraisers for Africa by African-Danes.[6] This is not without precedent. Gerard Delanty, whose use of cosmopolitanism relies on the incorporation of non-Western notions of cultural transformation and modernity, writes that cosmopolitanism 'offers both a critical-normative standpoint and an empirical-analytical account of social trends'.[7] Also, following Appiah's philosophical engagement of the cosmopolitan obligation to Others (notable by a chapter entitled, 'Kindness to Strangers') and his surprisingly empirical conclusion that more cosmopolitanism will result in more humanitarian aid, we look specifically at the performances of Afropolitan 'aid celebrities' engaged in Africa campaigns. Aid celebrities merge the modalities of the celebrity into the practices of aid by embodying a manufactured consensus, letting simple moral truths substitute for rational debate, and through their performances, managing the affective need of those who would solve the world's problems.[8]

We explore the limitations of cosmopolitan ideals within empirical material selected at all levels to produce an exemplary case— a political context in Denmark generally characterized by support for aid and without the defining experiences of colonialism (although this is up for some debate).[9] The limitations we see in this case should be generalizable, and even amplified, in other aid contexts. We analyse performances from two events specifically selected for their exemplary character. The first is a development aid celebrity game show called 'Dilemma' in 2007 with the aid celebrity Karen Mukupa, which kick-started a celebrity trend in Danish aid promotion. The second case involves the biggest celebritized media fundraising event in Denmark '*Danmarks Indsamling*', a telethon for Africa's women hosted in 2010 by the aid celebrity Hella Joof. Both of the aid celebrities we selected for analysis are mixed-race Danish women, placing them racially and culturally between Denmark and Africa in an embodiment of Afropolitanism.

We are studying the celebritized performances of actors within these Africa campaigns, but we are not analysing the campaigns as institutions.[10] In both of these media events, popular African-Danish celebrities act as advocates for aid to Africa. In Denmark, this aid is typically funded by the Danish taxpayers through the bilateral development arm of the foreign

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[6] In his introduction to the virtual issue on Africa's International Relations, Carl Death makes explicit the mutual suspicion held by Africanists and International Relations scholars, but argues that understanding the nature of Africa's relations with external actors requires cross-disciplinary fertilization. See Carl Death, 'Introduction: Africa's International Relations', *African Affairs* (2015) https://doi.org/10.1093/afraf/adv041.

[7] Gerard Delanty, 'The cosmopolitan imagination: Critical cosmopolitanism and social theory', *The British Journal of Sociology* 57, 1 (2006), pp. 25–47, p. 2.

[8] Richey and Ponte, *Brand aid: Shopping well to save the world*.

[9] Between the 1600s and 1800s, Denmark held a number of smaller areas and trading posts in Asia, Africa and the West Indies. The fort of *Tranquebar* in India was the most significant of the Asian possessions. On the African continent, Denmark held trading posts in the Gold Coast (contemporary Ghana), where the fort *Christiansborg* currently functions as the official residence of the Ghanaian president. See for example Lene Bull Christiansen, Lars Jensen, Pia Johansen, Sanne Kok, and Kirsten Holst Petersen (eds), *På sporet af imperiet: Danske tropefantasier* (Institut for Sprog og Kultur, Roskilde University, 2005). Most significant of the Danish colonies were the West Indian islands Saint Thomas, Saint John and Saint Cross (now part of the United States' Virgin Islands), where the Danish West Indian trading company had held concessions on slave trade and sugar production. See Birgitta Frello, 'Dark Blood', *Kult en temaserie*, Special issue: Nordic Colonial Mind, 7 (2010), pp. 69–84. We are not taking into account here Denmark's northern colonies of Greenland, Iceland and the Faroe Islands.

[10] See Graham Harrison, *The African presence: Representations of Africa in the construction of Britishness* (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2013), pg. 5.

ministry, Danida, and implemented by their "partners" in selected developing countries, most of which are in Africa.

Yet, "Africa", to which Afropolitan refers, is not an empirical actor in transnational relations of aid, but is a constructed 'Other' as typically understood by IR[11] and Africanist scholars.[12] We are not making any claim of empirical representativeness of how Africa is represented in all the media in Denmark, the West or elsewhere, of which Martin Scott's comprehensive scoping review shows that little is actually known.[13] Instead, we are investigating the use of imaginations of "Africa" as part of the cosmopolitan imaginary. The images of "Africa" thus produced are what Julia Gallagher terms 'relational' in that they 'straddle the interface between underlying "truth" and outlying expectations . . . but this straddling is not neutral'.[14] Graham Harrison astutely documents the historical process through which representations of Africa have come to constitute national self-perceptions in Britain, creating both British modernity and nationalism over time.[15] Thus, grounded in Africanist scholarship, we use these understandings to examine our empirical case.  In our Danish case study, we find the tensions between national self-construction and an imagined cosmopolitan vision, which underpins public perception of 'Africa' in celebritized aid to Africa.

We conduct both a visual analysis and a discursive one. The empirical material is comprehensive on the two events under study and has been collected and analysed in Danish, and then written up in English, but verbatim Danish language quotes are available from the authors. We have watched all video footage of the television shows' broadcasts, secondary commentary around the events, and relevant contextual material for the genre. We have also reviewed other performances by the celebrities under study that were available on YouTube, and popular news media reports on both the celebrities and the events. We have been able to select the most exemplary cases based on our knowledge of the Danish aid environment and international trends in celebrity humanitarianism.

The rest of the article proceeds as follows. First we develop the two-pronged analytical framework beginning with an elaboration of "Afropolitanism" and link this discussion of cultural politics to its theoretical roots in cosmopolitanism and its use in Africanist scholarship. Then we move to celebritization, the second prong of the analytical framework, and explain why celebrity performances are worthy of study to understand representational aspects of North-South relations, and how the aid celebrity performances will be considered through the use of Jeffrey Alexander's notion of the celebrity-icon.[16] The article then moves to the empirical case study with three subsections: introducing the Danish aid and race context and the celebritization of development aid; exploring aid celebrity Karen Mukupa and her development 'dilemmas'; and analysing Hella Joof, a Danish aid celebrity who

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[11] Sophie Harman and William Brown, 'In from the margins? The changing place of Africa in international relations', *International Affairs* 89, 1 (2013), pp. 69–87.

[12] See James Ferguson, *Global shadows: Africa in the neoliberal world order* (Duke University Press, Durham, NC, 2006).

[13] Martin Scott, 'The role of celebrities in mediating distant suffering', *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 18, 4, (2015), pp. 449–466.

[14] Julia Gallagher, 'Theorising image: A relational approach', in *Images of Africa: Creation, negotiation and subversion* (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2015), pp. 1–20, p. 8.

[15] Graham Harrison, *The African presence: Representations of Africa in the construction of Britishness* (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2013).

[16] Jeffrey C. Alexander, 'The celebrity-icon', *Cultural Sociology*, 4, 3 (2010), pp. 323–336.

functions as 'Afropolitan'. The article concludes with reflections on how celebrity functions differently in a local context than it could globally, as it articulates a cosmopolitan vision of Afropolitanism that resonates only, somewhat ironically, because of its intimate linkage with local culture and history. We suggest that an understanding of Afropolitan aid celebrities will expand the thinking around cosmopolitan possibilities in postcolonial relations between North and South.

*Afropolitanism*

'Afropolitanism' is an emerging concept that we move from its genesis in cultural politics to use in understanding North-South relations and Africa. Afropolitanism can be usefully considered as an Africa-specific, post-colonial form of cosmopolitanism that spans discourses of elite pan-African culture to theories of elite global aid culture. In doing so, Afropolitanism responds to the crisis of representation of 'Africa' that moves beyond the 'Afro-pessimism'[17] versus 'Africa Rising'[18] narratives. Martin Scott demonstrates that while there is a widespread belief in academic research that African pessimism dominates representations of the continent,[19] empirical research is inconclusive, as it draws on a limited number of countries, media events and texts. Thus, while negativity may dominate representations of Africa, the available empirical material simply is not able to support this claim. However, the claim to 'respond' to such narratives from a counter-hegemonic position of 'Africa Rising' has been useful when promoting various diverse corporate and government interests ranging from Tullow Oil (the largest independent oil company operating in Africa), to *The Mail* and *The Guardian*, and Mugabe's regime in Zimbabwe.[20] Afropolitanism pushes against this Afro-pessimism/Africa Rising dichotomy in interesting ways that signify and link Africa in the international system and the international system into Africa, described as 'extraversion' by Jean-François Bayart.[21] As Obadias Ndaba writes, 'Afropolitan is a conscientious corrective measure. . . It's a "counterattack" celebration, rooted in a troubled history between Africa and the rest of the world.'[22]

While the exact genealogy of 'Afropolitan' is uncertain, the term was popularized by a 2005 publication called 'The Lip' with an article 'Bye-Bye Babar' by Taiye Selasi (under the name Taiye Tuakli-Wosornu).[23] Selasi described:

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[17] Harrison, *The African presence*.

[18] Robert Rotberg, *Africa emerges: Consummate challenges, abundant opportunities* (Polity Press, Cambridge, 2013).

[19] Martin Scott, 'The role of celebrities in mediating distant suffering', *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 18, 4 (2015), pp. 449–466.

[20] Wendy Willems, 'Remnants of Empire? British media reporting on Zimbabwe', Special Issue on Zimbabwe, (2005), pp. 91–108, p.103 cited in Scott, 'The myth of representations of Africa', *Journalism Studies* 18, 2 (2015), pp. 1-20, pg.17.

[21] Jean-François Bayart, 'Africa in the world: A history of extraversion', *African Affairs* 99, 395 (2000), pp. 217–267.

[22] Obadias Ndaba, 'Afropolitanism and its discontents', in Dorothy L. Hodgson and Judith A. Byfield (eds), *Global Africa: Into the twenty-first century* (University of California Press, Oakland, 2017), pp. 366-375.

[23] Taiye Selasi, 'Bye-bye Barbar', *The Lip*, April 2005.

> They (read: we) are Afropolitans – the newest generation of African emigrants, coming soon or collected already at a law firm/chem lab/jazz lounge near you. You'll know us by our funny blend of London fashion, New York jargon, African ethics, and academic successes. . . There is at least one place on The African Continent to which we tie our sense of self: be it a nation-state (Ethiopia), a city (Ibadan), or an auntie's kitchen. Then there's the G8 city or two (or three) that we know like the backs of our hands, and the various institutions that know us for our famed focus. We are Afropolitans: not citizens, but Africans of the world.[24]

As Selasi's own writing has grown in popularity, 'Afropolitan' has been the label affixed to her and to many other contemporary writers with African origins. The term has been linked to online and popular culture movements such as 'the Afropolitan Experience',[25] a Texas-based forum for Africans in the diaspora; an online discussion of an award-winning popular blog 'racialiscious';[26] a South African-based magazine called 'the Afropolitan';[27] or the characterization of the target audience for the Nigerian media tycoon Nduka Odaigbena's glossy magazine *Arise* with a circulation of about 60,000 copies distributed in 25 countries (including 8 African countries).[28] The magazine's editor Helen Jennings described 'Afropolitan' as a blend of pan-African and global content.[29]

Indeed, Obadias Ndaba calls Afropolitanism, 'the Pan-Africanism of the hashtag, Twitter, and Facebook realm'.[30] In the popular blogosphere, the term has sparked debate, with Marta Tveit, a Norwegian-Tanzanian writer living in London, lamenting the use of the term 'Afropolitan' as a reductionist narrative that will license others to use it as well, reproducing a class-bias (what about the poor in the diaspora?), and asking how it could be constructive to separate an urbanite with African roots from other urbanites.[31] Teju Cole, an award-winning writer and photographer of Nigerian descent and who lives in the US, replies to the predictable queries on the term 'Afropolitan' in an interview by explaining that:

> the discourse around Afropolitanism foregrounds questions of class in ways the "I'm not Afropolitan" crowd don't want to deal with and in ways the "I'm Afropolitan" crowd are often too blithe about. Collectively, we could do better. The phenomena described— Afropolitanism, pan-Africanism—are real, and interesting, and discomfiting, and for very many of us, no matter how we squeal, the shoe fits.[32]

Ugandan scholar Brian Bwesigye writes in the online literary journal Aster(ix) that: 'The real issues that shape the life [of] Africans on the continent, like myself are sacrifices

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[24] *Ibid.*

[25] 'The Afropolitan Experience',< http://afropolitanexperience.tumblr.com/> (26 August 2016).

[26] 'Racialiscious', < http://www.racialicious.com/Afropolitan/> (25 January 2016).

[27] 'The Afropolitan', <http://www.Afropolitan.co.za/> (26 August 2016).

[28] http://www.arisemagazine.net/ (10 January 2013). Publication stopped in mid-2013, raising questions of its failure on blogsites like this one <http://www.blackfabulousity.com/where-is-arise/> (26 August 2016).

[29] Robb Young, 'Style magazines like Arise spring up for African women', *The New York Times* 4 October 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/05/business/media/05magazine.html> (26 August 2016).

[30] Ndaba 'Afropolitanism and Its Discontents', pg. 373.

[31] Marta Tveit, 'The Afropolitan must go', *Africa is a Country*, November 2013, <http://africasacountry.com/the-afropolitan-must-go/> (26 August 2016).

[32] Aaron Bady, 'Post45', *Interview: Teju Cole*, January 2015, <http://post45.research.yale.edu/2015/01/interview-teju-cole/> (1 February 2016).

Afropolitans are willing to make in their identity wars.'[33] With reference to the now globally popular TED talk by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie arguing against the 'danger of a single story' about Africa, Bwesigye reminds readers that 'Africa is not only about suffering and pain, but it also is not only about navel-gazing and lost in transnation 'aren't-we-the-coolest-damn-people-on-earth posture the Afropolitans are turning it into'.[34] Other authors like Yewande Omotoso (born in Barbados, grew up in Nigeria and lives in South Africa) take issue with the implicit Eurocentrism in calling an author 'Afropolitan':

> Being an Afropolitan to me sounds as if you are supposed to be a mediator between the West and Africa because you have travelled and lived overseas. I have no torn allegiances . . . I want to live here. I'm of the continent . . . The term Afropolitan only seems useful for the West as it gives the West an opportunity to understand and even 'consume' Africa. I am not from the West and I don't need anybody translating things for me.[35]

In our analysis of the empirical case, we will return to Omotoso's critique of how Afropolitan is primarily useful for opening up Africa for convenient Western consumption through its implicit call for Africans to mediate their experiences.

Perhaps because of its 'obvious' connotations to supposedly unproblematic notions of Africa and cosmopolitanism, the term has been taken up without conceptual clarification or explanation in relation to theories of cosmopolitanism. The scarce academic references to the term can be found in scholarship on popular culture, fashion or art, and used in reference particularly to South Africa.[36] Prominent African scholars and critical thinkers in cultural studies have begun to experiment with the term 'Afropolitan' in linguistic and visual art. For example, the Sudanese scholar Salah M. Hassan has engaged the notion of Afropolitanism as a non-nativist possibility for understanding African artistic work and cultural practices.[37] Drawing theoretically on an essay by the Cameroonian philosopher Achille Mbembe,[38] Hassan emphasizes the importance of movement and circularity in the concept, and he raises, but does not answer, the complex questions of privilege. 'Afropolitanism' has expressed an ideology, an aspiration,[39] an identity, or a description of a transnational identity yet to be defined. This critical humanist scholarship suggests useful directions for moving the concept of 'Afropolitan' into an analysis of politics and North-South relations, but to do so requires an understanding of cosmopolitanism and how it has been understood by Africanists.

*Cosmopolitanism and its utility for Africanist scholarship*

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[33] Brian Bwesigye, 'Is Afropolitanism Africa's new single story?', *Aster(ix) Journal*, November 2013, <http://asterixjournal.com/afropolitanism-africas-new-single-story-reading-helon-habilas-review-need-new-names-brian-bwesigye/> (1 February 2016).

[34] *Ibid.*

[35] Rebecca Fasselt, "I'm not Afropolitan--I'm of the continent': A conversation with Yewande Omotoso', *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 50, 2 (2015), pp. 231–24, p. 235.

[36] See Sonja Narunsky-Laden, 'Cultural economy in post-transitional South Africa', *Critical Arts: A Journal of South-North Cultural Studies* 24, 1 (2010), pp. 1–30.

[37] Salah M. Hassan, 'Rethinking cosmopolitanism: Is 'Afropolitanism' the answer?', *Reflections*, 5 (2012), pp. 1–32.

[38] Achille Mbembe and Laurent Chauvet (translator), 'Afropolitanism', in 'Afropolitanism', *Africa remix: contemporary art of a continent*, (Johannesburg Art Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa, 2007).

[39] Garth Myers, *African cities: Alternative visions of urban theory and practice* (Zed Books, London and New York, NY, 2011).

Cosmopolitanism has not been a popular theoretical framework within African studies. This is unsurprising, as its theoretical roots in the Western Enlightenment are notable for their neglect of non-Western subjects in theory, and their oppression and exploitation through colonialism in practice. In this section, we introduce the term theoretically, reading from Gerard Delanty and his use of Ulrich Beck[40] and then drawing on Africanist cosmopolitan scholarship from Appiah and James Ferguson. The essential elements of individualism, universality and generality that underpin cosmopolitanism as described by Thomas Pogge[41] are at odds with a post-colonial notion of North-South relations where making the Other conform to notions of the Self is no longer acceptable.[42] Jabri argues that we need to think of the politics of solidarity as potentially arising from the cosmopolitan governance of territory and subjectivity(ies).[43] Drawing on the postcolonial theory of Arjun Appadurai[44] and Partha Chatterjee,[45] among others, Jabri points out that the fundamental basis for cosmopolitan possibility and its corresponding 'government of others' is the Enlightenment, and this foundation is predicated upon both modernity and colonialism.[46] Thus, there are quite strong foundational reasons for the rejection of cosmopolitanism amongst post-colonial scholars.

Yet other scholars find cosmopolitanism valuable. Mara Leichtman uses a 'flexible cosmpolitanism' for understanding global Islam while remaining rooted in local cultures in Senegal.[47] In his award-winning book on cosmopolitanism, Appiah argues for embracing a partial cosmopolitanism. His book is based on the philosophical tradition of the fourth century Cynics who coined the term for 'citizen of the cosmos' and on his lived experiences with a father who was a leader of the independence movement in what was then the Gold Coast and an English mother with deep connections in England.[48] For the success of cosmopolitanism, Appiah relies on practices, not principles of 'universality plus difference'.[49]

When applied to Africa, cosmopolitanism has been a convenient, if somewhat vague, term to capture the values underlying political tolerance. It may be signified by particular cultural practices such as using a cellular phone,[50] or dining in ethnic restaurants with names like 'Davinci' for South Sudanese officials,[51] or it may be the binary opposite lens to "provincialism" through which Burundian refugees view the engagement of "the big nations"

[40] Ulrich Beck, 'The Cosmopolitan Society and Its Enemies', *Theory, Culture & Society* 19, 1-2 (2002), pp. 17–44.

[41] Thomas Pogge, 'The Influence of the global order on the prospects for genuine democracy in developing countries', in *Debating cosmopolitics* (Verso: London, 2003), pp. 117-40.

[42] Helen Yanacopulos and Matt Smith, 'The ambivalent cosmopolitanism of international NGOs', in Anthony J Bebbington, Sam Hickey, and Diana C. Mitlin (eds), *Can NGOs make a difference: The challenge of development alternatives* (Zed Books: London and New York, NY, 2007), pp. 298–315.

[43] Vivienne Jabri, 'Cosmopolitan politics, security, political subjectivity', *European Journal of International Relations* 18,4 (2011), pp. 1–20.

[44] Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at large* (University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1996).

[45] Partha Chatterjee, *The politics of the governed: Reflections on popular politics in most of the world* (Columbia University Press, New York, NY, 2004).

[46] Jabri, 'Cosmopolitan politics, security, political subjectivity', p. 11.

[47] Mara A. Leichtman, *Shii cosmpolitanisms in Africa: Lebanese migration and religious conversion in Senegal* (Indiana University Press, Bloomington, IN, 2015).

[48] Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism*.

[49] *Ibid.*, p. 151.

[50] Michael Bratton, 'Briefing: Citizens and cell phones in Africa', *African Affairs* 112, 447 (2013), pp. 304–319.

[51] Clemence Pinaud, 'South Sudan: Civil war, predation and the making of a military aristocracy', *African Affairs* 113, 451 (2014), pp. 192–211.

in conflicts between Hutu and Tutsi.[52] However, engagement in these practices is not strongly associated with the acknowledgment of basic moral obligations to others on the basis of shared humanity.[53]

The practices of cosmopolitanism, coined 'ordinary cosmopolitanism'[54] amongst Africans, was explored in James Ferguson's *Expectations of modernity: Myths and meanings of urban life in the Zambian Copperbelt*.[55] For Ferguson, defining and analysing cosmopolitanism among Copperbelt residents was a way of describing the social experience of decline. Drawing on classic performance theorists such as Judith Butler,[56] who insists that the doer is constituted in the deed, this understanding places the performative elements at the centre of analysis rather than assuming that they are simply expressions of pre-constituted identities. Cosmopolitanism is understood as a specific form of cultural style that has affinities with youth and privilege but is reducible to neither.[57] Cosmopolitan style could refer to Zambians who were educated and professionally employed, but also to many of the prostitutes and street criminals who distanced themselves from the expectations and properties of "home".[58]

For research from the 1990s, 'cosmopolitanism' was a term that required significant reflection and justification by Ferguson when applied to the understanding of urban Africa.[59] Ferguson asserts that cosmopolitanism 'has the great advantage of underlining that what is really distinctive about the style is neither its urbanness nor its association with high social standing, but rather its distance from, and rejection of, a socially circumscribed "local"'.[60] The ways in which the Copperbelt workers distinguished themselves from their rural social base 'implies nothing about travel or cultural competence; it is less about being at home in the world than it is about seeking worldliness at home'.[61] Thus, there is a potentially productive tension between the cosmopolitan concept of bringing the world home and the Afropolitan notion of embracing multiple locals described in the previous section.

The defining characteristic of this cosmopolitanism is that it is 'generative of practices that have the global as the remit of their operations', and Jabri sees in these possibilities space for 'solidarity' on the basis of the 'assertion of presence'.[62] This 'assertion' can be seen in the performances of aid celebrities. Drawing again from Appiah, to see the potential for Afropolitanism for advancing cosmopolitan ideals in the political world, we would look to increasing public support for aid on the basis of a shared moral obligation.

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[52] Simon Turner, 'Under the gaze of the 'big nations': Refugees, rumours and the international community in Tanzania', *African Affairs* 103, 411 (2004), pp. 227-247.

[53] Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism.*

[54] Michele Lamont and Sada Aksartova, 'Ordinary cosmopolitanisms: Strategies for bridging racial boundaries among working-class men', *Theory, Culture & Society* 19, 4 (2002), pp. 1–25.

[55] James Ferguson, *Expectations of modernity: myths and meanings of urban life on the Zambian Copperbelt*, (University of California Press: Berkeley, CA, 1999).

[56] Judith Butler, *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity* (Routledge: New York, 1990).

[57] *Ibid.*, p. 213.

[58] *Ibid.*, p. 92.

[59] Ferguson, *Expectations of modernity.*

[60] *Ibid.*, p. 289, fn 2.

[61] *Ibid.*, p. 212.

[62] *Ibid.*, p.11.

The focus on celebrities as the actors through which normative cosmopolitan ideas are publicized, performed and transmitted across publics is not unprecedented. James Brassett situates the celebrity as a central component in his working conceptualization of cosmopolitanism, stating: 'Cosmopolitanism is therefore understood as a set of ideas that is embedded within—*and developed by [*italics in original text*]*—key thinkers (e.g. Habermas), institutions (e.g. the UN), particular actors (e.g. Bob Geldof) and discourses (e.g. human rights)'.[63] How particular kinds of celebrities, understood within their own contexts of production, transform parochial needs for belonging into a cosmopolitan, transnational performance can bridge the classical cosmopolitan dilemma of how to speak with a voice from nowhere.[64] We argue that the Afropolitan is positioned as both cultural insider and the exotic Other that functions as an anchor for positive as well as negative affective connotations, while at the same time, neither reinforcing nor contesting classical North-South narratives of 'white men saving black women from black men'.[65]

*Thinking cosmopolitanism through a particular form of celebrity-icon*

At the intersection between culture and traditional politics, celebrities have become proxy philanthropists, statesmen, executives and healers.[66] Matthew Benwell, Klaus Dodds, and Alasdair Pinkerton argue that 'the diverse interventions of celebrities in global issues can be usefully examined precisely because they complicate some of the core categories inherent to contemporary geopolitical research'.[67] Mark Wheeler makes the claim for a better understanding of how 'a celebritization of politics has brought about alternative forms of political engagement which indicate cultural changes in the concepts of citizenship and participation'.[68]

Critics argue that celebrities exacerbate the exclusion of marginal voices and perpetuate exploitative relations for Africans. In the words of Patricia Daley:

> Celebrity advocacy means that social movements seeking to address wider political and economic dynamics that impoverish people, especially capitalist exploitation in Africa, can be marginalized precisely at the moment when the extension of social media to Africa offers so much opportunity for transnational alliances.[69]

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[63] James Brassett, 'Cosmopolitanism vs. terrorism? Discourses of ethical possibility before and after 7/7', *Millennium-Journal of International Studies* 36, 2 (2008), pp. 311–338, p. 316.

[64] Toni Erskine, "Citizen of nowhere' or 'The point where circles intersect'? Impartialist and embedded cosmopolitanisms', *Review of International Studies* 28, 3 (2002), pp. 457–478.

[65] Gayatri Spivak, 'Can the subaltern speak?', in Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (eds), *Marxism and the interpretation of culture (communications and culture)* (Macmillan Education, Basingstoke, 1988), pp. 217-313.

[66] John Street, 'Celebrity politicians: Popular culture and political representation', *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 6, 4 (2004), pp. 435–452.

[67] Matthew C. Benwell, Klaus Dodds, and Alasdair Pinkerton, 'Celebrity geopolitics', *Political Geography* 31, 7 (2012), pp. 405–407, p. 407.

[68] Wheeler, *Celebrity Politics*, p. 170.

[69] Patricia Daley, 'Rescuing African bodies: Celebrities, consumerism and neoliberal humanitarianism', *Review of African Political Economy* 40, 137 (2013), pp. 375–393, p.389.

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These celebrities, Julie Wilson argues, represent a form of global governmentality that brings Western audiences into alignment with international programs.[70] Celebrity advocacy is assumed to preserve stereotypes, particularly about the Western Self and the African Other, which fits conveniently into the wider discourse of assumptions about the natural order of world politics.[71] But what if celebrity advocacy for African causes can also work differently, and instead of simply reproducing traditional notions of World Order or North-South divides, it manifests a cosmopolitan ideal type? To explore this question, we look toward critical cosmopolitanism and its popular culture manifestations.

Celebrity studies scholarship recognizes that the topic of study, the celebrity, is a person and a thing, subject and object, entrepreneur and commodity—all at once. As Jo Littler notes, not only are celebrities exceptional people from 'the cadre of privileged cosmopolitan global elite who can travel at will', but they are also commodities whose images are packaged, bought and sold across national borders.[72] Graeme Turner brought attention to the particular type of commodity that celebrities manifest: 'celebrity is not only a discursive effect. The celebrity is also a commodity: produced, traded and marketed by the media and publicity industries'.[73] Maxwell Boykoff and Michael K. Goodman argue that 'these are commodities and politics made flesh—and vice versa—in the individualized bodies and bodily performances of the famous'.[74] We use this conceptualization of hybrid 'body politics' in our analysis of mixed-race Danish aid celebrities who represent both donor and recipient through performing as a particular form of celebrity-icon.

This construction comes from the sociologist Jeffrey Alexander's categorization of the 'celebrity-icon' as a form of collective social representation that is central to the meaningful construction of contemporary society.[75] In Alexander's frame, celebrities may be ethically problematic, politically contentious and culturally defined, but they are social facts and can be studied as such. The celebrity-icon is structured by the interplay of surface and depth: 'the surface of the celebrity-icon is an aesthetic structure whose sensuous qualities command attention and compel attachment'.[76] This surface-level engagement with celebrity-icons is connected to a depth in which the connection is made between human experience and the sacred. Thus, the beauty of the celebrity-icon represents both an aesthetic and a moral power. Cornelia Brink explains: 'When they are understood as symbols, icons . . . claim to condense complex phenomena and represent history in exemplary form . . . They create an immediate and effortless connection'.[77] Without diverging too extensively into theories of aesthetics and transcendence, what is useful about the notion of the surface-depth tension depicted in Alexander's celebrity-icon is that transnationalism in the Danish case is represented by a

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[70] Julie A. Wilson, 'A new kind of star is born: Audrey Hepburn and the global governmentalisation of female stardom', *Celebrity Studies* 2, 1 (2011), pp. 56–68.

[71] Jemima Repo and Riina Yrjölä, 'The gender politics of celebrity humanitarianism in Africa', *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 13, 1 (2011), pp. 44–62.

[72] Jo Littler, 'Introduction: Celebrity and the transnational', *Celebrity Studies* 2, 1 (2011), pp. 1-5, p..1.

[73] Graeme Turner, *Understanding celebrity*, p.9.

[74] Maxwell Boykoff and Michael K. Goodman, 'Conspicuous redemption? Reflections on the promises and perils of the 'Celebritization' of climate change', *Geoforum*, 43 (2009), p. 403.

[75] Alexander, 'The Celebrity-Icon'.

[76] *Ibid.*, p. 324.

[77] Cornelia Brink, 'Secular icons: Looking at photographs from Nazi concentration camps', *History and Memory* 12, 1 (2000), pp. 135–150, p. 141.

similar tension between skin and its colour, and nationalism and identity, and then a movement beyond them through Afropolitanism.


*Afropolitan engagements in promoting Danish development aid to Africa*


As James Brassett appropriately reminds us, celebrities need to be understood as entering into, constructing and affecting pre-existing politics.[78] The empirical point of departure for this article is celebrity and Afropolitan engagements in promoting Danish development aid to Africa. Although internationally development aid has always been in tension between shifting security interests, the Danish aid tradition has also been based in idealist notions of global responsibility, equality and visions of peace and security through the eradication of poverty.[79] Denmark supported liberation struggles, particularly in Southern Africa, which went hand in hand with aid initiatives, setting the Nordic countries apart from their Western allies during the cold war.[80] As such, a Danish self-image as 'the defenders of Human Rights and global equality' has traditionally been attached to development aid and Africa.[81] Development aid has been a high priority issue, reaching its peak in the 1990s, when it accounted for 1.5 percent of the Gross National Income.[82] The state, through Danida, has traditionally been the dominant actor in the field of Danish development aid as the largest donor in multilateral, bilateral and NGO-driven initiatives.

However, starting in 2000 a series of shifts in the conditions attached to Danida's funding of NGO-driven development aid demanded increasing 'popular support' of NGOs.[83] The most dramatic shift occurred in 2005, when Danida funding for NGO-driven information and education (*folkeoplysning*) was terminated.[84] This sped up a process where both Danida and NGOs shifted from 'information about' to 'promotion of' development aid, in a drive to popularize aid. Celebrities are often used as proxies for more democratic, mass participation.[85] Thus, not surprisingly, we saw a shift towards increasing celebrity involvement in development aid campaigns.

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[78] James Brassett, discussant comments, International Studies Association Annual Meeting, Power, principles and participation in the global information age, April 1st - 4th, 2012 San Diego, California, USA.

[79] Espen Brunbech, Annette Skovsted Hansen, and Kristine Midtgaard, 'Historier om dansk udviklingsbistand', *Den Jyske Historiker*, Special Issue, 120 (2008), pp. 5-6.

[80] Christopher Munthe Morgenstierne, *Denmark and National Liberation in Southern Africa - A Flexible Response* (Nordiska Afrikainstitutet: Uppsala, 2003), p. 13.

[81] Christian Friis Bach, 'Foregangslandet under forandring 1989-2005', in Carsten Due-Nielsen, Ole Feldbæk, and Nikolaj Petersen (eds), *Idealer og realiteter: Dansk udviklingspolitiks historie 1945-2005* (Gyldendal, Copenhagen, 2008), pp. 390–538, p. 524.

[82] Carsten Due-Nielsen and Nikolaj Petersen, 'Indledning', in Carsten Due-Nielsen, Ole Feldbæk, and Nikolaj Petersen (eds), *Idealer og realiteter* (Gyldendal, Copenhagen, 2008), pp. 15–23, p. 15.

[83] Tommy Brandi Krog, 'Skjult opgør med ulandsbistanden', Copenhagen, *Ingeniøren*, November 2002, p. 10; Karl Erik Nielsen and Ole Damkjær, 'Strengere betingelser for u-landsbistand', Copenhagen, *Berlinske Tidende*, October 2000, p. 9; Udenrigsministeriet, *Strategi for dansk støtte til civilsamfundet i udviklingslandene – herunder samarbejdet med de danske NGO'er*, (Copenhagen, 2000).

[84] Kim Faber, 'Analyse: Flere hug til de rapkæftede ulands-organisationer', Copenhagen, *Politiken*, August 2005, p. 4; Ulla Poulsen and Britta Søndergaard, 'Viden om u-lande afgør viljen til hjælp', Copenhagen, *Kristeligt Dagblad*, March (2005), p. 1.

[85] Brockington, *Celebrity advocacy and international development*.

In order to understand the role that Afropolitan celebrity icons play in connecting Denmark and Africa to cosmopolitan ideals, it is crucial to introduce the dominant local cultural and political meanings ascribed to blackness.[86] Because of Denmark's relatively limited colonial history and post-World War II solidarity initiatives in Africa, the contemporary African minority in Denmark has a different history from that of the US and the other European former colonial powers (e.g. Britain and France), where larger African minorities have had a significant historical impact on society. Until the late 1960s, Denmark was a racially homogeneous society (in relative terms), and this homogeneity has been at the heart of contemporary political struggles over immigration policies.[87] Blackness, as opposed to other racial markers, especially Middle Eastern bodily signifiers, holds a particular place in the local cultural imaginary.[88] On one hand, Africans share a history of being 'exoticized' alongside other 'non-Western' people in the late 1800s and early 1900s.[89] On the other hand, Africans have also been connected with Danish (and Nordic) exceptionalism vis-à-vis postcolonial critiques,[90] in which the solidarity politics relating to anti-colonial struggles in the global south were held as 'proof' of a Danish anti-racist stance.[91] This is why choosing the case of Danish mixed-race aid celebrities to examine the Afropolitan possibilities is a purposive selection of the exemplary case for theory building, not an argument that these cases are representative.

We have chosen to analyse the two most widespread popular public campaigns for African fundraising conducted by Danish-African aid celebrities. We characterize them as Afropolitan, yet by comparing the two very different performances, we can see the limits of the concept itself. These Afropolitan celebrities raising money for Africa were part of a larger context of the privatization of aid and the increasing involvement of celebrities and the public.

After the 2005 cut of public funding to development education, we see the most spectacular example of a celebrity campaign in a highly controversial Danida aid-promotion project called '*Dilemmas in development aid' (*2006-2007). The 'Dilemma project' can be credited with kick-starting a celebrity trend within Danish aid promotion as it sought to harness 'star-power' to educate the public about the difficult dilemmas of having to select specific development projects for funding. Five Danish celebrities were each tasked with visiting three development projects in Africa to decide which projects should be allocated Danida funding. The celebrities would then appear in TV-documentaries, talk shows and other media in an effort to educate the public about development aid.[92] It became widely criticized when one of the most popular celebrities, comedian Timm Vladimir, dropped out due to pressure

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[86] For a deeper examination of race in Danish celebrity politics, see Lene Bull Christiansen and Lisa Ann Richey, 'Celebrity-black: The meanings of race and performances of aid celebrity outside the mainstream Hollywood-UK circuit' *Celebrity Studies* 6, 4 (2015), pp. 1-14.

[87] Rikke Andreassen, *Der er et yndigt land: Medier, minoriteter og danskhed* (Tiderne skifter, Copenhagen, 2007), p. 9.

[88] Frello, 'Dark blood', p. 84.

[89] Rikke Andreassen, 'The `exotic' as mass entertainment: Denmark 1878—1909', *Race & Class* 45, 2 (2003), pp. 21–38.

[90] Frello, 'Dark Blood'; Lars Jensen, 'Provincialising Scandinavia', *Kult en temaserie*, Special issue: Nordic Colonial Mind, 7 (2010), pp. 7–21, p. 74.

[91] Morgenstierne, *Denmark and National Liberation in Southern Africa - A Flexible Response*, p. 17.

[92] Udenrigsministeriet, *Danidas Årsberetning 2007: Danmarks deltagelse I det international udviklingsarbejde* (Copenhagen, 2008), p. 182.

from public protests objecting to the use of celebrities and not aid experts. Vladimir's exit refocused the original aim of the programme from 'how difficult it is to decide what causes to support in the third world,' towards the use of celebrities who 'knew nothing about the complexities of development aid'.[93]

When Vladimir left the 'Dilemma project' in protest, Karen Mukupa stepped onto the show to take his place. It is well known in Denmark, as written in a popular newspaper, that 'Karen Mukupa Thurøe Rasmussen's exotic middle name comes from her Zambian mother'.[94] Known by this 'exotic' name, Mukupa became famous in Denmark in the early 1990s when she was part of a hip-hop/reggae duo 'No Name Requested'. She won the Artist of the Year Award by 'Celebrate Africa' in 2008.[95] She was also the host of a popular children's television cooking show. In the Dilemma show, Mukupa, whose mother is Zambian and father a Danish aid-expatriate, was positioned as the Other voice amongst the celebrities remaining on the programme. Mukupa grew up with her development-expert parents in Tanzania. When taking over from Vladimir, who presented himself as a celebrity with insufficient expertise to negotiate the complex world of development aid, Mukupa positioned herself instead as knowledgeable. She justified her work with Danida's Dilemma saying:

> My father has worked for both Danida and Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke [a development NGO]. Therefore I have lived in Tanzania for almost 14 years, and have clearly seen how much of a difference development aid can make.[96]

Mukupa stressed that she was personally engaged and keen to 'gain a greater insight into how things go on'.[97] She described the project as a good platform for creating debate about 'how things could be done differently'.[98]

Mukupa here performs a multi-layered positionality: the newspaper articles illustrate their coverage with pictures in which she is shown either 'on location' in Africa, or dressed in 'African styles,' which to a local audience will place her in-between Africa and Denmark. Her self-representation moreover stresses not only her 'African insiderness' via her mother's Zambian heritage, but also her own history of growing up in Tanzania as a privileged 'expert', layered with an insider-view on development processes. As such, the illustrations and her self-representation amount to positioning her as 'Danish African'.

This layering of positionalities is a significant feature of Afropolitanism, where subjects are agents constructing their subjectivities and asserting their presence as 'Africans' from the outside.  It is notable that Mukupa's performance in and around Danida's Dilemma project

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[93] Anita Bay Bundegaard, 'Ministerens dilemma', *Politiken*, February 2007, p. 4; Jyllands-Posten, 'Debat: Hvor blev fagligheden af?', *Jyllands-Posten*, December 2006, p. 8; Ritzaus Bureau, 'Eksministre til Tørnæs: Du sælger ud', *Ritzaus Bureau*, November 2006.

[94] Nanna Balslev, 'Mange synes, det var vildt, at jeg kunne være væk fra min datter, når hun var så lille', *www.bt.dk*, 30 April 2015, <http://www.b.dk/relationer/mange-synes-det-var-vildt-at-jeg-kunne-vaere-vaek-fra-min-datter-naar-hun-var-sa> (8 August 2016).

[95] 'Celebrate Africa - Karen Makupa Artist', *Celebrate Africa DK,* January 2009 <http://www.celebrateafrica.dk/shows/best-african-achievement-awards-2008/african-female/13/> (8 August 2016).

[96] Lasse Nørgaard, 'Mukupa slår et slag for danske ulandsprojekter - International', February 2007, <http://jyllands-posten.dk/international/article3356110.ece> (January 2009).

[97] *Ibid.*

[98] *Ibid.*

relied on narratives of her lived experience in Africa, as well as her first-hand witnessing of development aid. Thus, Mukupa does not claim to represent Africa or the developing world in the dilemmas surrounding Denmark's engagement in aid on the basis of being biologically part-African, but on the basis of a rational presentation of credentials that are experience-based, not innate. In the Dilemma scenario, celebrities like Mukupa were representing 'ordinary' Danes taking on the dilemmas of cosmopolitanism and the practical obligations of kindness to strangers; however, in the next case study, we see an Afropolitan aid celebrity embodying a cosmopolitan vision through work as an extraordinary celebrity icon.

Hella Joof provides this contrasting example of an Afropolitan aid celebrity through her performances in the annual aid-to-Africa telethon, *Danmarks Indsamling,* where she was the co-host of the 2010 show. *Danmarks Indsamling* is organized by the national media corporation Danmarks Radio (DR) in collaboration with the 12 leading private humanitarian organizations in Denmark. The TV-show is the culmination of coordinated media coverage in radio, social media, newspapers and TV over the weeks preceding each broadcast.

The theme of *Danmarks Indsamling* 2010 was 'Africa's Women', and in choosing Hella Joof as co-host of the 2010 show, *Danmarks Indsamling* simultaneously cast one of the leading cultural figures in the country, and an African-Danish aid celebrity. Since the mid-1990s, Joof has been an 'A-list celebrity' in Denmark, working as a television host, comedian, singer, actress, director and public intellectual. Joof had her acting debut in 1985 playing Josephine Baker in a 'variety show',[99] and she revisits this role, playing with racial stereotypes, in a promotion campaign for the Danish branch of Fair Trade, where she has been an 'ambassador' since 2011 and her image is adorned with a large banana headdress.[100] We have elsewhere argued that during the telethon, Joof performed multi-layered representations of simultaneous 'racial difference' and 'cultural insiderness,'[101] which speak to the possibilities and limitations of a cosmopolitan form of aid celebrity politics. In her role as the television host, Joof's outfit for the show— a black leather, body-covering, wrap-style dress, with a matching leather turban—signalled inspirations from modest African fashion as well as from contemporary Danish leather fashion trends.

In this televised visual image, Joof embodied on the one hand 'the African woman', on behalf of whom the show was appealing for donations (read together with photographs of African children posted on the podium in front of her), and on the other hand, a sophisticated, fashion conscious, edgy, successful Danish woman. As a representative of Afropolitanism in Denmark, and perhaps the 'inner Dane' in all African women, Joof was recognized for her celebrity leadership role. After *Danmarks Indsamling*, Joof was awarded a 'Best African Achievement Award' by the Danish African association 'Celebrate Africa' for her 'outstanding contribution to Danish culture' and 'for being a role model for both Danes and Africans'.[102] On that occasion, Joof expressed that she was happy, but also very proud, to be considered 'an African'.[103]

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[99] Katja Maria Salomonsen and Jeppe Michael Jensen, 'Ærlig klovn', Copenhagen, *BT Søndag*, June 2009, pp. 6–9, p. 8.

[100] Fairtrade Denmark, 'Mød holdet, ambassadører, Hella Joof', *Fairtrade Denmark*, October 2012.

[101] Christiansen and Richey 'Celebrity-black'.

[102] BT, 'Afrikansk ærespris til Hella Joof: Jeg er rørt', Copenhagen, *BT*, September 2010 <http://www.bt.dk/kendte/afrikansk-aerespris-til-hella-joof-jeg-er-roert>. (8 August 2016).

[103] *Ibid.*

Joof is an outspoken public intellectual, who has, on the one hand, used her own experiences of growing up black in the 'white culture' of 1970s Denmark to critically reflect on racial blind-spots of Danish cultural self-perceptions, and on the other hand, used her blackness as a source of comedy and satire.[104] As the illustration from her advocacy for Fair Trade Denmark illustrates, Joof is not only outspoken about how her racial identity has affected her life, career and public persona; she also uses her celebrity status to destabilize cultural stereotypes of black women. In 2004, Joof gave an interview in a leading newspaper, in which she debated the implications of racial difference in her own life and in Danish culture.[105] The caption for the photograph of Joof that accompanied the interview is telling of how this iconic embodiment is portrayed in the Danish public imaginary: 'Her father is from Africa, her mother from Birkerød [a Danish middle-class suburb]. She herself is "as Danish as a pear" – and negro. [We have] met Hella Joof for a talk about being black'.[106]  In this interview, Joof interprets blackness and consequently 'African womanhood' as a genetic fact, which affects her despite her 'all Danish' upbringing. She relays how she only met her Gambian father on one occasion, when she visited him and his family in The Gambia at the age of 14. However, in her depiction, this affected how she saw herself both culturally and racially:

> I always knew that my father was from Africa, my mother made a fuss about telling me about this. However, it was not until I met real black people as an adult that I began behaving black. …I behave much more black now, I believe that it has become more outspoken with age. I can see that the older I get, the bigger my ass gets in that black way, and after I've visited my father's family in Africa, I know that as a 60-year-old, I'll be sitting on the porch smoking a pipe with big curly hair looking like something out of The Color Purple.[107]

The position of an 'African woman' is one that Joof steps in and out of,[108] while being simultaneously 'negro' and 'as Danish as a pear'[109]—with its implied metaphorical links to a natural, bland, white, and 'grown out of the Danish soil' identity. This iconic identity is both African and Danish, and a form of embodied and articulated Afropolitanism. Joof is representing herself as black against the most common cultural reading of her as non-raced. The effect that Joof has as a celebrity icon is, in short, that race matters.

Joof has always in her public persona played on and with her 'racial difference'; thus her appearance of visually representing the 'African Woman' was not foreign to the audience, and neither was it entirely out of character. However, in other such contexts, her performance of 'racial difference' comes in the form of satire or comedy, whereas in *Danmarks Indsamling*, Joof appeared against the background of other visuals of African women who were in need of aid, and therefore not fodder for comedy (and certainly not satire). The African women who formed the background for *her* performance of 'African' were depicted

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[104] Tonie Yde Mørch, 'Så snakker vi ikke neger om det!', *Berlinske Tidende*, October 2004 <http://www.b.dk/kultur/saa-snakker-vi-ikke-neger-om-det> Accessed. 20. January 2009.

[105]  *Ibid.*

[106] *Ibid.*

[107] *Ibid.*

[108] *Ibid.*

[109] This metaphor dates to the early 1900s, depicting peasant like manners, juxtaposed against more sophisticated German manners. Contemporary uses of the idiom connote 'real Danish identity', with racial undertones, implying a rural Danishness, often used in jovial mockery (Ordbog over det danske sprog, at: www.ordnet.dk/ods/ordbog).

as worthy, dignified, suffering, and hard-working, that is, entirely earnest. Thus, her performance can neither be read as social commentary (satire) nor as comedy. Rather, her visual presence throughout the show functioned as a constant visual reminder for the audience of the 'real' African women with whom they were meant to engage emotionally. When read via the lens of celebrity, the performance of Hella Joof as both representing the 'African Woman' and simultaneously embodying the Danish collective's empathy for African women places her as an Afropolitan as both-and-neither-nor. As a celebrity, Joof is instantly read as known, a cultural insider against whom the public mirrors their own values, norms and emotions, therefore she cannot be read as solely Other. She only makes herself a body-commodity, *visually* available as Other while in all other respects functioning as a 'cultural insider' and celebrity icon.

The changing relationship between the Danish state and civil society organizations working in aid has opened up a space for increasing engagement of celebrities, including celebrity icons like Hella Joof, in these public debates. Violaine Roussel's study of American artists and performers and their political involvement against the Iraq war suggests that in spaces where the figure of the 'public intellectual' is stronger, such as France, there may be less acceptance of the legitimacy of fame as a basis for representing 'the public'.[110] In Denmark, a country with a social democracy, strong public intellectual engagement and a political culture based on discourses of egalitarianism, we might expect to find a different sort of celebrity politics: one that allows more direct political, rational and expertise-based debate. We might find that celebrities are discredited as development actors, or perhaps simply unnecessary. However, the two examples of the case of Danish aid celebrities suggest that North-South belonging is created through constructing a role model who embodies an iconic synthesis of 'Self' (Western, Danish-speaking, donor) and 'Other' (black, female, Africa, recipient). Thus, in embodied ways, Danish Afropolitan celebrities are 'just like us' and 'exemplary' as we see ourselves in a Danish national context and a global situatedness. The development aid industry and the culture industry benefit from the aid celebritization of African-Danes.

To understand the limitations of Afropolitan performances of cosmopolitan ideals, we return to the comparative case study of the other Danish-African actress from our analysis, Karen Mukupa. From within the same national, cultural context of blackness, language and liminality,[111] the difference between the performances of Mukupa and Joof analysed above suggest different forms of celebrity politics. Afropolitanism rests not only in the body (female, black, multi-racial), but also in the iconic performance itself and the commodification of celebrity. Mukupa constructs herself as a legitimate celebrity mediator between the African recipients of Danish transnational involvement in aid and humanitarianism. Mukupa claims her authority through her lived experience in Africa and work in the world of development projects. Mukupa's performance of race is that of a social construction, open to debate. Joof, on the other hand, performs an essentialized version of 'the African' body, where race is performed as a biological fact, as opposed to Mukupa's race, which is a social fact. Through the interplay between the surface characteristics of race, Joof functions as Alexander's celebrity icon, literally embodying a Danish Afropolitanism.[112] This is an affective politics of relationship and trust based on emotional familiarity. It is

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[110] Violaine Roussel, 'Occupational logics and political commitment: American artists against the Iraq war', *International Political Sociology* 1, 4 (2007), pp. 373–390.

[111] See Bjørn Thomassen, *Liminality and the modern: Living through the in-between* (Ashgate: Farnham Surrey, 2014).

[112] Alexander, 'The Celebrity-Icon'.

radically different to a politics of dilemmas, difficult choices, resistance and conflict that spring from rational debates of aid and development in the postcolonial context. Mukupa steps outside of her role as a celebrity and as an African Dane to engage in the debates, partisan politics, and development dilemmas in the public sphere. Joof pushes further and embraces the role as celebrity-icon. She uses it to perform, visualize and realize a cosmopolitan possibility of Afropolitanism in Denmark that allows a Danish public to 'feel' African in Joof's black skin, without engaging in the conflictual realm of aid politics, inequality debates, or race as a contentious issue.

*Conclusion*

This article has theorized and investigated Afropolitanism, a popular culture concept that we have transported to help understand the cosmopolitan possibilities and changing politics of North-South relations and Africa. If in these contexts cosmopolitanism is characterized as 'kindness to strangers' in which the 'kindness' is aid, and the 'strangers' are Africans, as suggested by Appiah, then Afropolitanism should be most viable at the intersection of popular culture and aid. Thus, we examined contrasting performances of aid celebrities in fundraising campaigns for Africa within the context of an aid-positive social democracy. To understand the performances of Afropolitanism by African Danes, we argued, will show us a best-case scenario for the possibility of cosmopolitanism towards Africa. We have critically examined two African-Danish aid celebrities and their interventions for fundraising for Africa. In doing so, we have demonstrated the links between public imaginations of aid and celebrity performances of Afropolitanism. This suggests significant limitations of cosmopolitanism for grounding political struggles in African North-South relations. What does this understanding tell us about our ways of thinking about Africa in the world?

First, it contributes to the development of the concept of cosmopolitanism and International Relations from an Africanist perspective. Afropolitan engagements in North-South relations provide a unique opportunity to understand the promise and shortcomings of post-colonial cosmopolitanism. Our focus on Afropolitans produces not a global imaginary of local poverty in Africa, as called for by Branwan Gruffydd Jones,[113] but rather a local imaginary of cosmopolitan relationships that can underpin 'kindness to strangers' through aid. The possibilities offered by the performances of Afropolitanism are based on a manifestation of cosmopolitan ideals through what Jabri characterizes as space for 'solidarity' on the basis of the 'assertion of presence'.[114] The normative cosmopolitan vision has been reasonably critiqued as deeply embedded in the Enlightenment project's framing of the majority world as empirical tests in contrast to the conceptual theorizing from a European centre. Perhaps such performances could open up theorizing the notion of cosmopolitanism by Afropolitans—to reflect on what the world might look like when North-South mediation is done by a different kind of politics, albeit an elite celebrity politics. However, the empirical case presented here suggests that the performative element of Afropolitanism—what the concept enables—may be more limited than the proponents of using cosmopolitanism in postcolonial contexts would like. While we can claim that Afropolitans do perform Jabri's 'assertion of presence' to create political space across the boundaries of state and culture, the success of such a

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[113] Branwen Gruffydd Jones, 'Africa and the poverty of international relations', *Third World Quarterly* 26, 6 (2005), pp. 987–1003.

[114] Jabri, 'Cosmopolitan politics, security, political subjectivity'.

cosmopolitan politics is dependent on exactly that— the contextualization of state and local culture.

Second, our case study demonstrates how Afropolitanism represents an open subjectivity that links constructed and performed local identities of Danish and African with the universal referent of cosmopolitanism. As an emancipatory ideal type, Afropolitanism may allow 'development' for all, based on morality that goes beyond familial and local affection. However, as a political subjectivity at the local scale, it is limited by the Danish-African transnational history, contemporary development aid politics, and lack of explicit articulation and debate on race or class (as one might find in African diaspora or post-colonial politics). Afropolitanism legitimizes a form of North-South relations whose grounding is emotional and normative (the desire to 'do good'), providing a feeling of cosmopolitanism without the necessary local debate (in Denmark or aid recipient countries in Africa) over the grounds for action.

Third, when considering the local context of Denmark considered in this article, it appears that the risks of this Afropolitanism align with those described by Ferguson's account of the Copperbelt cosmopolitans.[115] From the Zambian case, Ferguson concludes that in times of economic crisis, cosmopolitanism became less useful as a strategy for the mobilization of critical resources, and localism was re-embraced by his Zambian interlocutors. In the Danish case, the government recently cut the international aid budget by nearly 20 percent, under the guise of addressing the refugee crisis in Europe. Thus, while the country still gives the recommended 0.7 percent of GNI from 2016 (a drop from 0.85 percent in 2015), if the costs of receiving refugees in Denmark are omitted from the calculation, the aid budget amounts to only 0.56 percent of GNI from 2016 and onwards.[116] Perhaps like the Zambians of the Copperbelt, the Danes are turning away from cosmopolitan performances and re-embracing localism. From a political economy perspective, it would seem that the Danish commitment to an Afropolitan politics may be only skin deep.

Finally, the politics suggested by the rise of Afropolitanism and celebritization of aid is more dangerous than the common critique that they are limited to transnational elite Africans. The real danger comes not from a lack of popular participation in this politics, but from the kind of politics that these sorts of performances engender. The exemplary case of aid celebrities in Denmark shows a transition from a politics of rational debate to one of passionate engagement. This affective politics of Africa that comes from Afropolitanism remains iconic in their presentation of effortless connection; it provides the assertion of presence. However, this assertion of presence remains delinked from the dilemmas of development aid, of North-South financial flows, and of global inequality. Afropolitanism may provide an alternative vision for imagining North-South relations, and understanding it can help us to better understand the nature of Africa's relations with external actors. However, it engenders a politics of an imagined solidarity that is above debate, relies on elite performances of provincialism, and has little to do with asserting mutual obligations across borders.

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[115] Ferguson, *Expectations of modernity*.

[116] Lars Engberg-Pedersen, *DIIS blog* 'The paradoxes of Danish development policy: foreign aid has been cut heavily', <http://www.diis.dk/en/research/the-paradoxes-of-danish-development-policy> (24 February 2016).

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