10 'The Camera as Witness':
The Changing Nature of Photojournalism

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"Photographs excel, more than any other form of either art or journalism, in offering an immediate, viscerally emotional connection to the world."

Susie Linfield (2011), photography critic

"A citizen journalist – or, more precisely, a citizen photojournalist – is really a fancy way of describing someone with a camera who happens to be in the right place at the right time. […] Not only are we not surprised by photos taken inside an airplane that has crashed or a subway car that has been bombed, we have come to expect them. It is the undocumented disaster that we now find somehow strange."

Eric Weiner (2005), NPR reporter

Identifying the factors that make certain photographs recognisably newsworthy over and above alternative ones is notoriously difficult, let alone explaining why a select few will attain near-iconic status with the passage of time. Much debate has ensued over the defining images of the Arab Spring uprisings, for example, but it seems fair to suggest that one may well be a photograph of a young man or woman using a mobile telephone to document a tumultuous scene. As Guardian correspondent Peter Beaumont (2011) suggests:

"She's in the Medina in Tunis with a BlackBerry held aloft, taking a picture of a demonstration outside the prime minister's house. He is an angry Egyptian doctor in an aid station stooping to capture the image of a man with a head injury from

missiles thrown by Mubarak's supporters. Or it is a Libyan in Benghazi running with his phone switched to a jerky video mode, surprised when the youth in front of him is shot through the head. All of them are images that have found their way on to the internet through social media sites. [...] The barricades today do not bristle with bayonets and rifles, but with phones." (Beaumont, 2011)

Professional news organisations have frequently acknowledged the vital role played by camera-equipped 'amateurs' prepared to risk their own personal safety to engage in spontaneous, spur-of-the-moment efforts to record what they see, hear and feel. 'When protests first began in Libya', Al Jazeera (2011) reported, 'the media presence there was scarce so the story filtered out via social media thanks to courageous citizen journalists.' Diverse forms of photo-reportage, often circulated via social networking services such as Twitter, Facebook and Flickr, proved invaluable in focusing Western attention on the plight of ordinary civilians. 'The citizen journalists provide an alternative to the official media in their portrayal of the protests and the turmoil across the country', BBC Monitoring (2011) observed. 'While state media showed only pro-Gaddafi protests, pictures and video from mobile phones told a different story' (see also Allan, 2013a).

In setting out to explore the changing nature of photojournalism today, this brief example helps to illustrate a number of themes warranting closer scrutiny in this chapter. Here at the outset, however, we need to be aware that the very term 'photojournalism' is in a state of flux, its meaning open to a myriad of competing definitions. At a time when anyone with a camera-equipped mobile or smartphone can lay claim to practising the craft, some professionals are wondering aloud whether they will be presiding over the 'death of photojournalism' in the years ahead. Many of them maintain that the ready availability of images provided by ordinary citizens is undermining their role, forcing them to adapt to uncomfortable changes simply to protect their livelihoods. When set in relation to the larger political-economy of the crises confronting news organisations struggling to re-profile their news provision in order to survive, let alone prosper in a multimedia environment, this climate of uncertainty becomes all the more acute.

This chapter shall endeavour to provide an assessment of

the changing forms and practices of photojournalism in a manner alert to wider implications for reassessing its role within our modern news cultures. We begin by identifying several of the guiding tenets informing professional conceptions of photojournalism as they have emerged since the early days of photography. Next, we turn to discuss the rise of digital photojournalism, and with it the changing economic factors shaping its professional ethos. Against this backdrop, the chapter turns to address one of the key challenges confronting photojournalism today, namely the advent of alternative, impromptu forms of firsthand 'citizen witnessing' (Allan, 2013a). Especially worthy of examination in this context, we shall argue, is the ongoing redefinition of photojournalism, particularly where professionals and amateurs are forging new, collaborative relationships in the pursuit of important news stories.

Defining Photojournalism

Divergent opinions regarding what counts as photojournalism have always attracted lively debate, and never more so than today, when its very future is being called into question in the brave new world of the internet. Varied uses of the term encompass an array of different forms of visual storytelling, including a newspaper's on-the-spot breaking news photography, a news magazine's documentary photo-essay, a news site's multimedia slideshow, or a photo-blog's collection of digital snapshots, amongst others.

At stake, regardless of its inflection, is the implicit promise to provide an impartial record of a chosen moment in time, and in a manner consistent with journalism's wider investment in ethical codes and standards. Philip Gefter (2009), former picture editor at the New York Times, believes photojournalism is 'a breed of photographic imagery assigned or conceived to capture newsworthy events or to document conditions in the world expressly for publication in a news-based journal' (2009: 122). Underpinning this definition 'lies an unwavering adherence to fact,' a core principle for many journalists and their editors when countering criticisms of deliberate bias, slanting or manipulation. 'The photojournalist will shoot an event as it transpires without altering its anatomy with his or her presence,' Gefter maintains, before

making his key point that the 'camera as witness' may well be 'the profession's essential rule of thumb.'

This notion of the 'camera as witness' may be regarded as a helpful way to highlight a number of guiding tenets that have given shape to photojournalism since its early days.[1] The fledgling concept of 'journalism' itself was slowly securing its purchase, at least in the terms we recognise today, around the time photography as a technology was emerging in the 1830s. Long before it was possible to print photographs in newspapers, wood engravings of them were used to provide readers with a visual rendering of events (and thereby reaffirm the press's commitment to the dispassionate relay of accurate facts). Photo-reportage would not come into its own until the last decades of the nineteenth century, however, when improvements in printing processes enabled newspapers to begin adopting a more visually-centred conception of news values and priorities. In 1880, New York's The Daily Graphic was the first daily newspaper to publish a halftone reproduction of a news photograph. By 1904, London's Daily Mirror had been transformed into a pictorial newspaper, effectively becoming a showcase for photojournalism with considerable success. Some historians align the 'birth of modern photojournalism' with the arrival of the first 35mm camera, the German-made Ur-Leica, in 1925. Less technology-centred accounts privilege other considerations, of course, but by then it was readily apparent that telling news stories with pictures was here to stay.

In the mid-1930s, photojournalism entered what would be called its 'golden age' in retrospect, largely due to the growing recognition of the valuable role performed by photographers in news reportage. Important stories were documented in compelling terms, making the most of marked improvements in hand-held camera portability, wider lens apertures and image quality. In the United States, Life magazine was re-launched by Henry Luce as a weekly prioritising photojournalism in 1936, followed by Britain's Picture Post two years later. Both publications pioneered 'candid' photography, devoting their pages to images that captivated readers. Staff photographers for these publications, including Margaret Bourke-White, Walker Evans, W. Eugene Smith and Robert Capa, were responsible for bringing the human consequences of crises, such as the Depression and later the Second World War, to public attention with visu-

ally gripping poignancy. Their photos, along with those of photographers working for Magnum Photos (founded in 1947), the premier independent photo agency, form a crucial record of this portion of history. Post-war weekly news titles such as Stern (Germany in 1948) and Paris Match (France in 1949) similarly constituted important commissioners of photojournalistic work. Meanwhile 'spot' news photographs supplied to newspapers by news agencies, such as Associated Press, Agence France Presse and Reuters, competed for pre-eminence in the field. These organisations developed worldwide networks of photographers to cover local events on a daily basis for their newspaper clients. When a major story broke, their images could be transmitted internationally over telephone lines - hence the term 'wire service' – with great speed.

The onset of television newscasts from the mid-1950s signalled a formidable challenge to photojournalism's privileged status. Traditional customers for photojournalism, such as the popular weekly news magazines, would one by one close their doors. The final edition of the Picture Post appeared in 1957, while American favourites Life and Look struggled onward with dwindling sales, finally ceasing weekly publication in the early 1970s. The advent of colour news photography around the same time was one response, yet questions were being asked about its ability to compete with the near-instant immediacy of television coverage of breaking news. Such tensions came to fore with respect to photojournalism's crucial role in documenting and, equally significantly, memorialising conflicts, such as the Vietnam War (ending in 1975). Vietnam remains widely understood as a war that was 'lost' for the United States by negative, anti-war media coverage, despite evidence to the contrary complicating such assertions (Hallin, 1992). Still photographs such as Nick Ut's 'napalm girl' and Eddie Adams' 'summary execution of a Vietcong suspect' depicting the chaotic brutality of the war were understood to have played a role in shifting public opinion. Post-Vietnam, the US military became acutely concerned with 'managing' media access to the battlefield, leading to new controls over imagery, such as the 'embedded' journalism seen in Afghanistan and Iraq during 'the war on terror'.

The advent of digital technologies signalled a new age for photojournalism. 'The computer is at the heart of a revolution

in image making,' Fred Ritchin (1984), former photo editor of The New York Times had declared on its pages in 1984. His colleague, Edward Klein, editor of the Times's magazine, chimed in soon after: 'This new technology has the potential of undermining our faith in photography as a reflection of reality' (cited in Reaves 1987: 43). Proving particularly contentious was the apparent ease with which 'computer retouching' could be performed, signalling the prospect that recurrent concerns regarding photographic manipulation would be taken to new levels. 'The problem arises in the day-to-day detailed temptation to "improve" the images,' publisher Stewart Brand remarked. 'Digital retouching, though not yet a very public issue, is in the thick of how we think about communication and "truth" about communication – the very broadest fabric of civilization' (cited in Reaves, 1987). Photography critic Mark Power (1987), writing in the Washington Post in 1987, similarly sounded the alarm that 'electronic photography' was threatening 'to destroy our traditional faith that the camera never lies.' Pointing to the 'fierce debate' it had ignited 'among print-media professionals over the ethical consequences of electronic retouching and manipulation of pictures,' Power wondered aloud about the impact on photojournalism's future viability. 'Photojournalism, already moribund if not actually terminal since TV, is also likely to change,' he argued. 'In order for us to trust the veracity of an electronic image we'll have to believe what we see is being photographed in 'real-time' – that is, live' (see also Allan, 2013b).

Until the 1990s, the wire services and the independent photography agencies had largely served different constituencies, with the wires providing spot news photos for daily use and independents offering longer-form photo essays for the supplement and magazine markets. The growing significance of digital photography, especially on the internet, led to dramatic economic changes in the market, allowing the wires to transmit greater numbers of images at increased speed, maintain (and sell) from larger archives of photos displayed online, and move to greater production of photo essays as well as spot shots. Their global range of coverage, efficiency of distribution, and pricing all began to benefit them over smaller agencies, particularly with photo editors struggling to cope with much-reduced image budgets. 'We pay a monthly fee to AP,

AFP and Reuters, so the bill is the same whether we run one of their photos that month, or a hundred,' the deputy director of photography at The Los Angeles Times explained' (Lemos, 2005). For newspapers pressured to cost-cut their own staffers in expensive overseas bureaus, these agencies were relied upon to fill the void left behind, particularly in international news sections. Smaller agencies were hit particularly harshly by this shift, as traditional clients proved less willing to pay separately for the longer, exclusively-distributed photo essays they traditionally distributed.

By the start of the twenty-first century, newspapers and magazines were openly struggling with the challenge of how to monetise these new online spaces effectively. Fears were being expressed that the day was not far off when readers would cease to pay for news, should it be possible to read selected items of interest for free online. Declining sales and circulation figures for newspapers, in particular, compounded the problems of a business model based primarily on advertising revenues. These worrying trends had a knock-on effect in relation to the consolidation of the photo agency industry as well. Several mid-size agencies with significant history and influence in the photojournalism market - including Sygma, Gamma Liaison and Saba - were bought by two large corporations, Corbis and Getty Images. Both Corbis and Getty took advantage of the digitising revolution in photography taking place to acquire historic photo collections, digitise select images, and sell usage rights for these online as 'one stop shops'. Their image products encompassed all forms of news photography, as well as sports, stock, fashion, entertainment and art imagery. Photojournalists' opinions of this consolidation within their industry were mixed. Many felt that Corbis and Getty were not sufficiently aware of how photojournalism worked as a profession. Criticisms included that they were too market-centred in their thinking, striving to push large volumes of images into vast online collections with little thought to the current priorities - and future needs - of photojournalists themselves (EPUK, 2000).

Small to mid-sized for-profit agencies, together with co-operatives like Magnum, historically provided important up-front funding and assistance for freelance photographers struggling to pay for long-term projects they wanted to undertake. They

also played an important role in managing freelancers' archives and negotiating sales. Evidence suggests that Getty and Corbis have both begun to take these aspects of the photojournalism market more seriously, but questions remain over the extent to which they will preserve the large archives they purchased with these agencies, many of which cover key news events of the last sixty years.

Digital Quandaries

A further dimension of the 'digital revolution' unfolding during the 1990s revolved around safeguarding the integrity of the news photograph, not least because the computer hardware and software necessary for image manipulation was becoming increasingly affordable for professionals and amateurs alike. 'With taps on a keyboard, or the sweep of a mouse, the new breed of image-maker can take an object in a real photograph and clone it, move it, paint it a different color, rotate it, flip it, or switch it to another photo scene entirely,' the Washington Post's Kathy Sawyer (1994) observed. While 'phonied photographs' were not new, 'the latest technology makes deceptions much easier and faster to accomplish and much harder – if not impossible – to detect.'

Alarm bells had been ringing for some time amongst commentators concerned about photojournalism's commitments to truth-telling. Writing in the New York Times, Andy Grundberg (1990) alerted readers to how 'the veracity of photographic reality is being radically challenged' by the rise of digital photography. As he explained:

> "The immediate menace - although by no means the only one - is known as computer imaging, an outgrowth of electronic technology that allows anyone to alter a photographic image at will. This much-touted technology makes it easy to recompose and combine photographic images, and to do so in a way that is virtually undetectable.
>
> In the future, it seems almost certain, photographs will appear less like facts and more like factoids - as a kind of unsettled and unsettling hybrid imagery based not so much on observable reality and actual events as on the imagination. This shift, which to a large extent has already occurred within

the rarefied precincts of the art world, will fundamentally alter not only conventional ideas about the nature of photography but also many cherished conceptions about reality itself." (Grundberg, 1990).

Although the principle of objectivity in news photography remains deeply-held by many photojournalists, particularly those employed by newspapers and the wire services, there are clear indications that they are beginning to think of their craft differently. As opportunities for publishing in traditional media have declined, photojournalists are presenting their work in contexts where critiques of objectivity and impartiality have longer standing, including galleries, exhibitions and commercial spaces. Photojournalism's familiar styles and conventions have continued to evolve to make the most of digital technologies, sparking debates about its relative openness to outside influences – not only its close relation, documentary photography, but also by various forms of art and commercial photography.

Despite such changes, most photojournalists and documentarians working in these spheres hold to the principle that their work fulfils, as Derrick Price argues, 'a minimal condition of documentary [is] an account of events that have their own existence outside the frame of the photograph or the confines of the studio walls' (cited in Wells, 2009: 115). In recent years, collaborations with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have also allowed photojournalists to pursue long-term projects they might otherwise be unable to finance. Such projects often give photographers an opportunity to cover global socio-political issues consistently under-covered in mainstream media in ways that are 'authentic' but not necessarily 'objective'. In such projects, photojournalists may act as educators and take a position on such issues in ways not always accepted within mainstream media. Ed Kashi's work on the ecological and social consequences of oil exploitation in the Niger Delta and Marcus Bleasdale's long-term investigation of mining's impact on protracted conflict in eastern Congo are two examples of this phenomenon. Both Kashi and Bleasdale are members of VII, a relatively-new photojournalistic agency whose approach to the broader industry will be discussed further below.

Despite ongoing concerns regarding monetization and fi-

nancing, the internet has also offered new, ostensibly ever-expanding platforms for distributing photographic work. Emergent online models are securing 'crowd-source' funds for longer-term photographic projects, illustrating that pessimistic claims about the looming 'death of photojournalism' may be overstated. Online multimedia formats are one area in which significant development involving photojournalism has occurred. This is evident on many photo agency websites; for example, Magnum has created its Magnum in Motion section, and VII has VII Multimedia as well as the more recently launched VII Magazine, which includes multimedia features. This format is diverse: variations include mixes of still or moving images presented with voice-over, written text, music or accompanying dialogue. Within this hybrid genre, distinctions have arisen between the production of short items - both in length and in preparation/production time- on breaking or daily news items, on the one hand, and long-term, in-depth and expanded documentary-style productions, sometimes 10-20 minutes in duration, on the other. The shorter style has been used widely online, including by traditional news websites, thereby reflecting the huge success of public video-sharing sites, such as You-Tube. Some agencies specializing in multimedia production - such as MediaStorm – cater to clients as varied as Starbucks and The Council for Foreign Relations.

Brian Storm of MediaStorm has been an outspoken advocate of the 'return' to serious, long-form documentary journalism, which nevertheless uses some of the newest production and distribution technologies available. Storm argues that journalists should embrace new technologies while simultaneously refusing the current market approach to journalism, which he perceives to be damaging the quality of journalism. For Storm, new digital camera and web publishing technologies in the hands of citizens mean a positive, democratic enlargement of the public sphere for communication and debate. He feels that 'the crowd' is less likely to pursue long-form journalism themselves, however, thereby allowing professional journalists to reclaim one of their most important roles. 'For me, the larger question is why we are wasting our time and skills covering stories that the crowd is all over. Why are we, as professional journalists, allocating our resources for such daily, perishable stories?' (Ludtke, 2009). Storm follows his own rules, produc-

ing stories of long-term relevance on a time-scale decided by the needs of the story rather than a 24-hour news-cycle.

At VII Photos, managing director Stephen Mayes has discussed a new approach that appears closely related to Brian Storm's focus on 'quality'. He describes VII as doing 'integrity', rather than selling photographic 'products':

> *"When I look at an environment where there's absolutely too much information, information becomes valueless. What everyone is suffering from is that a photograph is just more information. It becomes very hard to put a price on it because there are too many pictures out there, but if you suddenly start rethinking it and saying, 'We're not selling photographs, what we're selling is believability,' then actually we have more value than we had before."*
> (Mayes cited in Risch, 2009).

Mayes' ideas for monetizing the value of VII photographers' reputation for excellence, particularly in telling visual human-interest stories in conflict zones, in part involve creating more frequent partnerships with organizations outside the media industry, such as non-governmental organizations. NGOs such as Medecins Sans Frontieres and Human Rights Watch have had symbiotic relationships with photographers for years, helping them to gain access to their story subjects and occasionally hiring photojournalists to document their relief programmes. This type of work can provide an alternative source of income for photographers outside the media sector. It can also go beyond straight photographic assignments undertaken by photographers for NGOs to joint bids for governmental and philanthropic funds, with NGOs and photographers working as teams on projects that have journalistic, campaigning, educational and/or fundraising components.

In a nutshell, then, agencies like VII, Magnum and MediaStorm have made significant steps towards becoming their own cross-platform content distributors and cultivating direct relationships with audiences for their work through new social networking platforms. These audiences are in many cases specifically targeted as opposed to the broader base still pursued by much of the mainstream media. While Mayes has spoken about moving away from the standard approach of sell-

ing units of visual content towards monetizing the value of particular photographers' reputations for integrity and quality (Risch, 2009), to a large extent the value of all photography circulating as 'news' on various platforms remains reliant on longstanding journalistic benchmarks of 'accuracy' and 'verifiability', whether these are made explicit or not. This point is made repeatedly by those who stress the continued importance of professional photojournalists and documentarians in the face of growing competition from 'citizen photojournalists,' particularly in online reporting of breaking news events.

The Citizen Photojournalist

The notion of the 'citizen photojournalism' is arguably as old as photojournalism is itself, yet it has claimed its placed in journalism's vocabulary much more recently. Specifically, it gained wide recognition as a vital strand of what was being called 'citizen journalism' in the immediate aftermath of the South Asian tsunami of December 2004. 'Digital cameras blew the lid off Iraq's Abu Ghraib prison and exposed a major scandal,' journalist Mike Barton (2005) observed, 'and now with the Asian tsunami disaster people with digital cameras and video recorders have delivered the first and most vivid accounts from the scene.' News organizations found themselves in the awkward position of being largely dependent on amateur reportage to tell the story of what was transpiring on the ground. 'Never before has there been a major international story where television news crews have been so emphatically trounced in their coverage by amateurs wielding their own cameras', observed one British newspaper; 'Producers and professional news cameramen often found themselves being sent not to the scenes of disaster to capture footage of its aftermath, but to the airports where holiday-makers were returning home with footage of the catastrophe as it happened' (The Independent, 2005; see also Allan, 2006; Allan and Thorsen, 2009; Liu et al., 2009).

Despite its ambiguities, the term 'citizen journalism' was widely perceived to capture something of the countervailing ethos of the ordinary person's capacity to bear witness, thereby providing commentators with a useful label to characterise an ostensibly new genre of reporting. The remark-

able range of eyewitness imagery – much of it posted online through blogs and personal webpages – being generated by ordinary citizens on the scene (holidaymakers, in many instances) was widely prized for making a unique contribution to mainstream journalism's coverage. One newspaper headline after the next declared citizen journalism to be yet another startling upheaval, if not an outright revolution, being ushered in by internet technology.

The significance of bottom-up, inside-out contributions from ordinary individuals in relation to the top-down, outside-in imperatives of professional news reporting was being increasingly regarded as indicative of a broader 'citizen journalism movement' throughout 2005 (Schechter, 2005). The summer of that year saw a crisis unfold that appeared to consolidate its imperatives, effectively dispensing with claims that it was a passing 'fad' or 'gimmick' for all but its fiercest critics. The immediate aftermath of the bombs that exploded in London on 7 July destroying three underground trains and a bus, leaving 56 people dead and over 700 injured, was thoroughly recorded by citizens making use of digital technologies. In the face of official denials that anything was amiss, news organisations seized upon diverse forms of citizen witnessing to piece together the story. 'What you're doing is gathering material you never could have possibly got unless your reporter happened by chance to be caught up in this', BBC News's Vicky Taylor maintained on the day (cited in Jesdanun, 2005).

Mobile telephones captured the scene of fellow commuters trapped underground, with many of the resultant images resonating with what some aptly described as an eerie, even claustrophobic, quality. Video clips were judged to be all the more compelling because they were dim, grainy and shaky, and – even more important – because they were documenting an angle on an event as it was actually unfolding (see also Allan, 2006; Reading, 2009; Sambrook, 2009). The individuals in question were proffering a firsthand, personal vantage point, rather than the impersonal perspective of the dispassionate observer. 'The value of this is you'll know more about what's actually happening, why you should care, what it means,' online editor Will Tacy said at the time. 'You know about what's happening to individuals. That's always been the best of journalism' (cited

in Parry, 2005). Remarking on this transition of news source to news gatherer, he added: 'We aren't even close to where this is going to end up in inviting the public into our world.'

In the days to follow, appraisals of the changing nature of the dynamics between professional journalism and its amateur, citizen-led alternatives frequently employed a discourse of partnership. 'We are in the earliest stages of a revolutionary relationship, and its current urgency is bound to be tempered by setbacks,' Emily Bell (2005) of the Guardian surmised. The rewards to be gained by 'opening doors and distribution platforms to everybody' were substantial, she believed, but not without risk. 'It might take only one faked film, one bogus report to weaken the bond of trust, and, conversely, one misedited report or misused image to make individuals wary once again of trusting their material to television or newspapers.' News organisations wasted little time fashioning new strategies to verify the authenticity of submitted imagery or 'user-generated content,' even when aware that checking veracity offered no absolute guarantees where safeguarding against duplicity, let alone hoaxes, was concerned.

Still, over a range of crisis events to follow, assessments of how the news-gathering process was being effectively democratised by 'digital snappers' tended to be upbeat. Commentators pointed to examples of how such imagery surpassed that offered by professionals, such as during the French riots in the autumn of 2005, the Buncefield oil terminal explosions in December that year, the execution of Saddam Hussein (a prison guard's mobile telephone recording, distributed anonymously over the web, being key) in December 2006, as well as students' camera witnessing during the shootings at Virginia Tech University in April 2007, amongst others.

For those welcoming this 'new army of citizen reporters', a paradigm shift appeared to be underway. Traditional photo-reportage, with its adherence to longstanding principles of dispassionate rely, was open to the charge of being formulaic in its appeal to objectivity. Moreover, its polished aesthetic qualities risked being perceived as bland, even contrived, particularly when focused on the esoteric world of elites. Citizen photojournalism, in marked contrast, inspired a language of revolution in the view of advocates. Journalism by the people for the people was heralded for its alternative norms, values and

priorities. It was immediate, independent and unapologetically subjective. 'You can never know exactly where or when something compelling or newsworthy will happen,' Dave Boyle, photo editor at the New York Post argued in 2007. 'It's important to be open to receiving images from new, non-traditional sources' (cited in Business Wire, 2007).

Camera-equipped bystanders had long provided news organisations with this type of imagery (Abraham Zapruder's home-movie of the Kennedy assassination or George Holliday's videotaping of the LAPD beating of Rodney King, being two of the more noteworthy historical precedents), simply not at this volume nor with such speed. 'New technology has made it easier to capture and distribute imagery, leading to citizen photojournalism that is increasingly relevant to the news cycle,' Jonathan Klein of Getty Images similarly maintained at this time. 'While this genre will never replace the award-winning photojournalism for which we're known, it's a highly complementary offering that enables us to meet the evolving imagery needs of a broad customer base' (cited in PR Newswire, 2007; see also Allan, 2013a).

For critics, however, citizen journalism's dangers outweighed whatever merits might temporarily catch the eye, with news organisations at serious risk of losing credibility in their rush to embrace forms of imagery they could not always independently confirm or verify as accurate. Citizen photojournalism may be cheap and popular, hence its not inconsiderable appeal for cash-strapped newsrooms. Still, in a world where facts matter, ethical codes warrant respect, and audience trust is paramount, it was sparking intense debates throughout many newsrooms.

Conclusions

If everyone equipped with a camera-phone can be a photojournalist, then who needs photojournalism? This rather flippant question goes to the heart of an interesting debate. Here it is possible to discern a continuum of sorts, with voices proclaiming photojournalism's imminent demise on the one end, and those heralding its dramatic rebirth on the other end. One need not occupy a stance at either of these two endpoints, however, to recognise that traditional conceptions of photojournalism are

looking increasingly outmoded in emergent digital contexts. Many newsrooms, under intense financial pressure to trim expenditure wherever possible, regard the resources vital for photojournalism to be a luxury increasingly difficult to justify. As a result, the very integrity of photojournalism as a craft risks being compromised, many fear, when its guiding principles threaten to collapse in a climate of managerial indifference.

Too many recent examples come to mind, but perhaps the most shocking of late was the decision taken by the Chicago Sun-Times to eliminate its entire award-winning photography staff on a single day in May 2013. The newspaper executive's public statement read in full:

> "The Sun-Times business is changing rapidly and our audiences are consistently seeking more video content with their news. We have made great progress in meeting this demand and are focused on bolstering our reporting capabilities with video and other multimedia elements. The Chicago Sun-Times continues to evolve with our digitally savvy customers, and as a result, we have had to restructure the way we manage multimedia, including photography, across the network."

Initial reactions from across the mediascape ranged from the incredulous to the appalled, soon giving way to the scathing. The Newspaper Guild expressed its outrage that the paper's 28 staff photographers (amongst them Pulitzer-Prize winner John H. White) and photo editors were being summarily dismissed without notice, but there seemed little hope this latest cost-cutting move would be reversed.

Within hours of the announcement, rumours were circulating on social media sites that Sun-Times reporters would be undergoing training in 'iPhone photography basics' in order to supplement the work of freelance photographers wherever possible. Commentators pointed out that there was much more to photojournalism than equipping journalists with cameras, a point underscored by Dan Mitchell (2013), writing in Fortune Tech:

> "Reporters, it should be noted, are in general terrible at taking pictures. Photographs snapped on iPhones by photographically inept reporters who are also trying to gather information at an accident scene, for example, are not going to impress anyone, digitally sav-

*vy or not. [This is...] pushing the idea of 'multimedia journalism'
– that is, having reporters take photos and shoot video [...]. Most
often, this results in nothing more than one person doing three
jobs poorly rather than doing one job well. It also tends to sabo-
tage the notion that all of these are professional endeavors and to
strengthen the false notion that anybody could perform any of
them equally well. This reveals a shocking level of disrespect for
both journalists and readers."*

Photojournalism's 'death spiral' was gathering momentum, other
commentators warned, with the very notion of it being a pro-
fessional craft coming unravelled. 'Nobody is actually saying it,'
blogger Samuel Smith (2013) maintained, 'but I'm also willing to
bet that they'll be "crowdsourcing" more "content" from "citizen
journalists" with camera phones.'

In the wake of these and related developments, it appears likely
that the next few years will prove decisive in determining how the
political economy of photojournalism – including newly forged
citizen-professional relationships – will adapt to such pressures.
Currently divergent approaches to distribution, funding models
and content curation may well begin to converge into a basis for
re-interpreting how best to secure the viability of 'visual journal-
ism'. In this context, it is important to note how agencies such
as VII and Magnum are continuing to develop niche markets for
themselves, and in so doing 'monetising' the social and journal-
istic value associated with the track record of their professional
photographers. At the same time Getty, Corbis and the wire agen-
cies are using their economies of scale – and longstanding historic
relationships – to cater to the needs of a market segment where
members are constantly looking to cost-cut their own content
production resources. At present, these mega-agencies are ex-
panding their genres of image provision; Reuters, for example, is
working to enhance its offering of longer-form photo essays and
multimedia pieces (Interview, Hamish Crooks, June 2012). Such
developments may well further erode the business position of
smaller, independent image agencies.

In late 2012, Corbis acquired London-based Demotix, a small
video and image agency specialising in the distribution of free-
lance and amateur-produced imagery founded in 2009 (Laurent,
2012). Demotix had become an important link between main-
stream media image markets and as-yet-unknown citizen jour-

nalists and freelancers over recent years, particularly in non-Western European countries. The company's ethos was boldly signalled via its mission statement: 'to rescue journalism and promote free expression by connecting independent journalists with the traditional media.' Betting on the inevitability of a citizen-fuelled approach to collecting news content, Demotix's employee's fashioned new strategies to provide verification procedures to ensure the authenticity of its photos (which remains a highly important factor of value in commercial terms). In this way, it appeared to at least partially fit the role of crowd-powered journalism that Brian Storm suggested would comprise one sector of the new media market (as noted above) and that others have claimed will help to democratize visual news production and distribution. Demotix has grown rapidly, currently boasting over 30,000 users in 212 territories, with 4,750 active photo and video journalists (Demotix website, 2013). It promises users that it 'can broker your photos and videos to newspapers, magazines, TV channels and websites, multiple times and simultaneously.' Post-buyout, the Demotix website explains that 'Corbis will be taking a very small cut of all revenues they generate from sales of your photographs. We (Demotix and you) - will split the rest 50/50, as ever.' While incoming revenue may be comparatively small from this venture, Demotix arguably offers Corbis access to yet another image genre for marketing and sales, thereby expanding their image libraries to an even more impressive scale. From a media economics perspective, it will be interesting to watch how enduring this latest example of market consolidation will be in the years ahead.

To close, then, this chapter has aimed to briefly highlight several vantage points from which to assess the challenges confronting photojournalism as it continues to evolve in contested circumstances. Precisely what counts as 'photojournalism,' particularly in online contexts, will demand close attention in the years ahead. We need to be alert to the potential for new types of photojournalism to emerge while, at the same time, aware of how these opportunities will be shaped by negotiated compromises wrought by structural pressures and constraints. In seeking to move debates about how best to secure its future beyond the soaring rhetoric of advocates and critics alike, the importance of carefully appraising these conditions of possibility becomes all the more pressing.

Notes

1. In our view, this notion of the 'camera as witness' is a suggestive one, helping as it does to bring to the fore the importance of the photographer's role in bearing witness to events. Here we caution, however, that it must not be understood too literally. Care must be taken to recognise that human agency corresponds to the photographer's relationship to the camera enacted in practice, lest responsibility be mistakenly perceived to reside in the technology itself. See Allan (2013a) for further discussion of this critique.

Challenging Questions

- Do news photographs reflect reality or do they construct it?

- To what extent have digital technologies changed the norms, values and conventions of photojournalism?

- What distinguishes the professional photojournalist from the amateur or citizen news photographer?

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