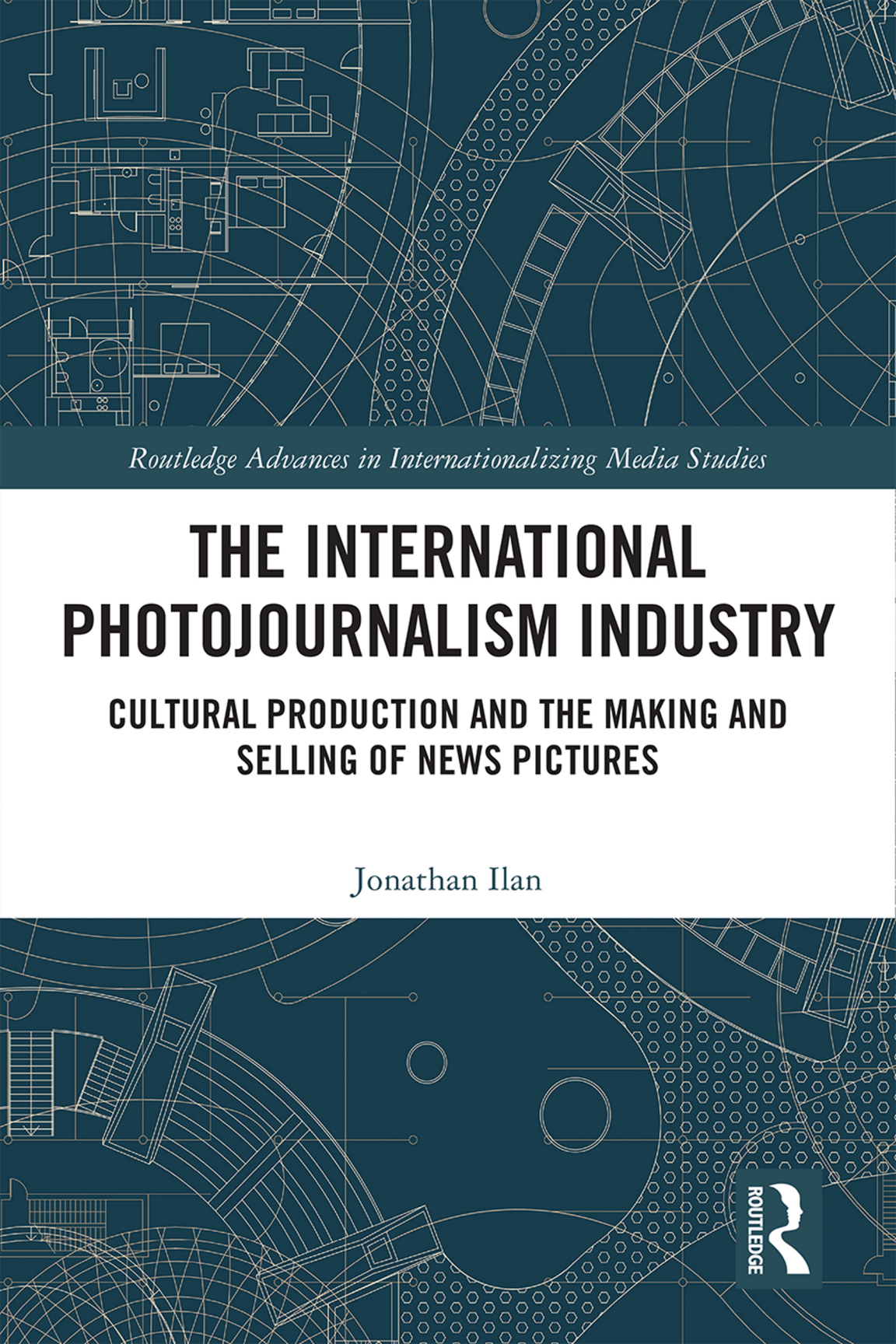




Routledge Advances in Internationalizing Media Studies

THE INTERNATIONAL PHOTOJOURNALISM INDUSTRY

CULTURAL PRODUCTION AND THE MAKING AND
SELLING OF NEWS PICTURES

Jonathan Ilan



The International Photojournalism Industry

How are events turned into news pictures that define them for the audience? How do events become commodified into pictures that both capture them and reiterate the values of the agencies that sell them? This book looks at every stage of the production of news photographs as they move to and from the ground and are sold around the world. Based on extensive fieldwork at a leading international news agency that includes participant observation with photographers in the field, at the agency's local and global picture desks in Israel, Singapore, and the UK, in-depth interviews with pictures professionals, and observations and in-depth interviews at *The Guardian's* picture desk in London, the findings in this book point to a wide cultural production infrastructure hidden from – and yet also nurtured and thus very much determined by – the consumer's eye.

Jonathan Ilan is Lecturer at the School of Communication at Bar-Ilan University, Israel.

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The International Photojournalism Industry

Cultural Production and the Making
and Selling of News Pictures

Jonathan Ilan

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In memory of my mother, Sarit Ilan



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share his passions and frustrations, and invite a stranger to ‘touch’ the hidden cords of his profession made me realize a thing or two about photography and news, facts and stories, and the theory and practice of media ethnography.

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געגורעם, אמא אהובה.

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List of Abbreviations

AFP	Agence France Presse
AP	Associated Press
EPA	European Pressphoto Agency
GPO	Government Press Office
IDF	Israeli Defense Forces
MADA	Magen David Adom (Israeli Paramedics)
PA	The British Press Association
UPI	United Press International
YESHA	Yehuda, Shomron & Azza
ZAKA	Zihui Korbanot Ason (Disaster Victims Identification)



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1 Introduction

On August 5, 2006, Reuters, one of the three largest international news agencies in the world, was at the center of public, media, scandal. In a Reuters picture distributed a day before, a neighborhood in the city of Beirut appeared to be engulfed in thick plumes of smoke after it was bombarded during the night by the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) during the war between the Lebanese Hezbollah and the state of Israel. The picture was taken by Adnan Hajj, a Lebanese freelance photographer who had worked for Reuters for 10 years. Its caption said that it was a picture of smoke coming out of burning buildings in a Beirut suburb after the attack, during which several buildings had been destroyed (Lappin and Bodoni, 2006).

Hajj's picture was just one among thousands distributed by Reuters during the war in Lebanon. It was certainly not one of those memorable ones engraved as part of some collective memory had it not been for Charles Johnson's suspicious eye. Johnson's *Little Green Footballs* blog had been operated for some time. The thick smoke in the picture seemed too thick for Johnson, who published his suspicions in his blog after a short inquiry. "This Reuters photograph shows blatant evidence of manipulation" said Johnson,

Notice the repeating patterns in the smoke; this is almost certainly caused by using the Photoshop 'clone' tool to add more smoke to the image [...] smoke simply does not contain repeating symmetrical patterns like this, and you can see the repetition in both plumes of smoke. There's really no question about it.

(Johnson, 2006)

A picture which Johnson said was the unaltered original was published in his blog. The same buildings appeared, this time under a thinner pall of smoke. The original picture, suggested Johnson, was in fact taken by a photographer named Ben Curtis working for AP, the American International news agency and Reuters' rival, on the 26th of July, two weeks before Hajj's picture was even published (Johnson, 2006). Not only that, but Johnson, now fully convinced of his hunch, pointed to additional alterations spotted in the picture in the form of cloned buildings as well.

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Soon enough, different websites taking Johnson's side had emerged, claiming to have proof of other manipulated pictures distributed by Reuters from the past. Particular doubts were also raised about previous Hajj pictures, and he was accused for having a political agenda.¹ A Reuters photographer saw Johnson's blog, and the next morning Reuters sent an urgent message to all of its clients advising them to stop using Hajj's picture and that it should be removed immediately from the archives, as there was reason to believe the picture had been altered using a graphic editing software during its editing process. In addition, Reuters said it would sack Hajj and that all of his pictures stored within the company's archive (920) would be removed immediately. Hajj had tried to save his skin by claiming that he was "[...] merely trying to remove a speck of dust and fix the lighting in the photos [...]", but Reuters' heavy machinery of crisis control was already in motion (Seelye and Bosman, 2006).

"On Saturday, we published 2,000 photos" said Paul Holmes, a senior Reuters editor responsible for the agency's standards and ethics at the time. "It was handled by someone on a very busy day at a more junior level than we would wish for in ideal circumstances" he said, adding that it was probably the result of some "human error" rather than malicious intent (Holmes cited in Seelye and Bosman, 2006). And later Reuters global pictures editor at the time, Tom Szlukovenyi, said:

There is no graver breach of Reuters standards for our photographers than the deliberate manipulation of an image. Reuters has zero tolerance for any doctoring of pictures and constantly reminds its photographers – both staff and freelance – of this strict and unalterable policy.

(Szlukovenyi cited in BBC News, 2006, August 6)

A thorough internal investigation was launched, fearing that Hajj's pictures were just the 'tip of the iceberg', and several editors along the chain of command were questioned (including a top Reuters photo editor for the Middle East who was advised to take a leave of absence. See Lang, 2007). Hajj, on the other hand, had gone underground and was nowhere to be found. The investigation, however, was of comfort to Reuters; it revealed no further doctored pictures. "We are fully satisfied, as we conclude our extensive investigation that it was unfortunate human error that led to the inadvertent publication of two rogue photographs" wrote David Schlesinger, Reuters editor-in-chief at the time, in the Reuters blog, referring to Hajj's doctored pictures (Schlesinger, 2007). "There was absolutely no intention on Reuters part to mislead the public [...] we were not satisfied with the degree of oversight that we had that allowed these two images to slip through" continued Schlesinger; "we have tightened procedures, taken appropriate disciplinary action and appointed one of our most experienced editors to supervise photo

operations in the Middle East” (Schlesinger, 2007). What is more, a set of detailed guidelines for an acceptable use of *Adobe’s Photoshop* software was posted, and the Reuters photo-editing process was restructured with greater supervision and additional training, using the help of outside experts on digital work environments. Reuters also began to consider technical solutions to recognize doctored pictures in the future. Finally, senior editors were said to deal with “[...] all potentially controversial photographs, and we [Reuters] have ensured that shift leaders are focusing solely on quality issues instead of doing editing themselves” (Schlesinger, 2007).

The Hajj’s controversy became a news event in itself, sparking the imagination of those fascinated with the complex relationship between the ‘real world’ and its various forms of visual representation. Indeed, the technical capacity to doctor pictures and manipulate photographs so as to deceive had long been acknowledged (see e.g., Ritchin, 1999). In fact, it was even discussed by the agency’s pictures managers themselves in the early 1990s with the emergence of *Photoshop* and its misuse potential. Yet this example seemed to have struck at the core of what was still considered by some (mainly from the news community) as an undisputable form of signification – the news picture. However, the Hajj’s controversy is, in fact, also fascinating from a rather different point of view, as it provides a glimpse inside the institutions who maintain news pictures, their systems, their production processes.

One way of looking at the picture’s history, then, is from the moment it was conceived as an idea and up to its final form as a new born news picture. But then if we also take into consideration its ‘career’ as a successful Reuters picture at first (hence distributed by Reuters to its worldwide clients) and later as a Reuters failure (now in the form of a doctored picture), it then becomes a rare document raising a number of questions: How is a news picture produced? What lies within that mysterious process of production hidden from the spectator’s eye? What are those different moments and sites through which it is transferred until it is stamped as a valid cultural product, branded? Who are those position holders responsible for its transformation from an idea into a product, and what are the different forces governing their daily routines? What are the economic and cultural powers making it so natural to us until we are willing to consider it as the highest form of representation (a picture that is also a news document), trustworthy?

These are the main questions addressed in this book, in the hope that it would shed some light on *the international photojournalism industry* at large. This is done by way of exploring a rather unique international news organization – a leading international news agency – and its news photos’ systems of manufacturing. Surprisingly, it appears that these queries concerning this powerful news organization and its international competitors were very much ignored in research and their

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processes of production almost entirely overlooked (more on this later in this chapter). Indeed, with the specific case of the agency that is explored in this book, such lacuna is a surprise in particular, for within the international news flow arena it is perhaps one of the most intriguing and significant players: (1) It is an international news agency and consequently focused on its clients – various news outlets – unlike local news providers that are committed to their audiences. As a result, it is, to an extent, located ‘further up’ the international news information flow. (2) It is a private company which has to make profit, an information industry, and perhaps the most profitable international news agency within the international news market; at its heart it is concentrated on selling information to non-media clients worldwide, and its news products are thus of great cultural importance. (3) Its products are aimed at the international market and are thus designed so as to have an international appeal. At the same time, however, they have also to be tailored to national markets and different domestic demands. They are, put simply, glocal products, much like their processes of production, and both might tell us more about the production processes of international media products.

News pictures are one of the most popular ‘lines’ of products in the agency’s media (apart from its TV products). They hold unique features given their universal and particular characteristics: products designed for a universal meaning (pictures that are also news information), which are also required to widen the company’s circle of clients. And they are meaningful cultural artifacts as well – extraordinary forms of representation taken daily as the ‘true’ mediators of reality, highly trustworthy, and are thus important to the understanding of the meaning of culture.

More specifically, this research focus, therefore, is on the making of distinct pictures observed as products at the end (or the starting point) of an exceptional news production process – *the production of news pictures in an international news agency*. This research, however, is not about the very ontology of news pictures. Rather, it is focused on the routines of their making whereby they become ‘unordinary’, arresting, forcing their spectators not to look away.² Their unusual status, I would argue, results of a wide cultural production infrastructure hidden from – and yet also nurtured by – the consumer’s eye: from the camera’s lens to the daily work of the photographer; the editor; the producer; the chief of the department; administrators; graphic designers; sales and marketing; the international news agency; the different news outlets; different media and other organizations; and their audiences, who are all responsible for the representation of one reality and the production of another (Carey, 1989).

In the following chapters I will analyze the complex international production process of news pictures, in the hope to shed some light on the overall production of newsworthiness. I hope to demonstrate that by entering into what Lutz and Collins (1993) described as “The Great

Machinery of Desire”, we might have a better understanding of the meaning of news pictures as cultural products and the reasons for their privileged status (as opposed other forms of signification) in our everyday lives. By exploring news pictures’ processes of production, we might have a better understanding of how we put a cultural economy into work and how it works on us.

The Methods

I mostly used ethnographic research methods: I tried to understand the process, its particular characteristics, and get as close as I could to the social world of the pictures professionals whose work routine I had followed – to ‘go native’.

I divided this project in two central stages carried out along two different periods of time and spread over a number of countries, a process that very much resembles what Hannerz (2003, 2004) described as a multisite ethnography:

- 1 In the first stage, I conducted participant observations taking place from the end of 2005 during a period of almost a year in two steps:
 - I Observing one of the agency’s most experienced Israeli staff photographers at the time, located in Israel. In my observations I managed to take part in a variety of more than 30 different news events (sometimes in several different events in a single day) that were observed – on and off – for almost a year.
 - II Conducting approximately 20 observations of the daily work of the pictures department of the agency’s local bureau located in Jerusalem for three weeks.
- 2 In the second stage, I conducted participant observations during the first months of 2010 in different locations and in three steps:
 - I Observing the daily work of several pictures editors in the pictures department of the agency’s local bureau located in London for one week.
 - II Conducting extensive observations of the daily work of several sub-editors, senior editors, and editors-in-charge in the agency’s global pictures desk, which was located in Singapore, for two weeks.
 - III Conducting several observations of the pictures operation of the British newspaper *The Guardian*, located in London, for two days.³

In addition to participant observations, I had about 30 in-depth interviews with key figures along the production processes of news pictures at the agency and at *The Guardian*, cultural mediators, conducted

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as followed: (1) A number of extensive interviews were conducted with the agency's staff Israeli photographer and two pictures editors working in the Jerusalem local bureau. (2) In-depth interviews were conducted with a senior editor and a senior editor-in-charge working in the pictures department of the agency's international desk located in London, and with the agency's head of pictures sales of Europe, the Middle East, and Africa. (3) Interviews were conducted with several subeditors, senior editors, editors-in-charge, and the deputy editor of the agency's global pictures desk, with editors and editors-in-charge from the magazine desk and keyword team and the desk's administrator; they were all working at the agency's global pictures desk in Singapore. (4) In-depth interviews were conducted with a graphic journalist working at the agency's global graphics desk in Singapore; with the assistant manager of the agency's pictures service; and with the head of its Brussels' picture desk, both had worked in the agency's pictures service in 1985. (5) Several interviews were conducted with *The Guardian's* head of photography; the website's senior pictures editor; the feature pictures editor; an assistant picture editor; and with the head of its subeditors.

Furthermore, an interpretive analysis of four different events covered by the agency's photographer, which took place between the end of 2005 and during 2006 in Israel, was also conducted. However, and as somewhat of an unorthodox research method, the analysis was focused on the biography of the pictures taken within those events. This unique method of analysis was used for two main reasons: First, since the production of news pictures, as I hope to make clear in the following chapters, begins way before the pictures are taken by a photographer in the field. Therefore, I came to realize the analysis of the events whereby the pictures were conceived (even though not all pictures are the outcome of 'real occurrences' as well) are highly significant, thereby adding additional meanings to news photos before they turn into photographic news texts in their 'final' form. Second, the entire process of production, as I demonstrate later on, is analyzed in this project not as a simple linear process maintained in a closed field of production and operated only by the privileged 'producers' (e.g., photographers, editors, managers etc.). Rather, it is an open system in which the audience plays a pivotal role at key moments and sites along the production routine, having both the pictures' 'producers' and their 'audiences' taken here in their complete experience, which therefore exceeds way beyond organizational duties; it is a constant dialogue between worlds of production.

A semiotic analysis of several pictures taken by the photographer from these particular events, that were then sent away for distribution (whether to the local bureau in Jerusalem first or directly to the agency's global pictures desk in Singapore and then to clients), was also conducted.⁴ Combining the analysis of the pictures themselves and of the events in which they were taken, I was hoping to demonstrate the circularity of

the process: from the moment the pictures were conceived as an idea and up to their form as cultural products for (and as an example of how they are published by) the agency's clients.

Finally, I was able to see the agency's archive in London and go over all the documents related to the agency's pictures service from the day it was established – from minutes of meetings to company brochures, from historical guiding books to personal memos.⁵

Combining several research methods, this research was an attempt to examine (1) What is news in its photographic form, and (2) In what ways the production processes of news pictures in the international news agency illustrate the overall production of newsworthiness.

Some Limitations

This research is of a specific time frame, since, much like institutions and their technologies, production processes are also subjects to historical change. Thus, this is not an attempt to identify a universal set of production processes. Rather, it is the story of a particular process taking place from the end of 2005 for nearly one year and throughout 2010. As it happened, this research ended up covering two extremely important points in the agency's time: before and after it had gone through a significant reorganization. Although not planned in advance, the two different time frames in which this project eventually took place may provide a comparative angle and contribute to the overall process and its financial backwind – particularly at the agency, but also to serve as a platform in order to understand better similar processes in international media organizations at large.

This project does not include an analysis of how news pictures are read by the audience. Nonetheless, the audience of the agency's pictures is fully acknowledged at different steps along this journey. In fact, as I argue later, those who operate the production of news pictures at the agency are themselves cultural consumers who quite often 'bring' their consumer baggage to work; consumer culture plays a substantial part at meaningful sites and particular moments of production throughout the entire process of decision-making and daily routines. Moreover, since the audience appears in the following chapters to be playing a pivotal role along the different sites of production at the agency, and so is found equally accountable to their final output (this will be particularly demonstrated in the analysis of selected events in Chapter 4), and since the process in question has a rather circular structure (but not just), the audience is treated in this project not simply in the form of an 'end' consumer, but rather a crucial element for a complete understanding of cultural production and its cycles in full.

While the entire production process of news pictures along its key moments and sites is spread over a number of distant places and operated in different countries (my observations only took place in Israel, the UK,

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and Singapore), the process itself is remarkably short in time. Thus, a picture taken in, say, Israel; then sent from the field to the local bureau in Jerusalem (or sometimes directly to Singapore); then sent to the agency's global pictures desk in Singapore; and then to clients; is published in what can sometimes be a matter of minutes. Since I have only myself to blame for what follows, I was obviously unable to track a single picture along the entire process in real time. As a result, the parts in this project whereby the entire production cycle is covered (i.e., Chapters 2 and 3) are based on the daily norms and operational routines at the different sites of production as a way of reflecting on the actual process as it takes place in real time.

It is also worth mentioning that certain bits of information concerning the production process in its different stages appear in several places in various chapters (although at different variations and contexts). This is clearly the result of a unique relationship that takes place between process and structure in organizations, and therefore one which requires several points of view in the study of media organizations and cultural institutions.

Finally, while the visual texts produced in the agency are often addressed in research as photographs or images, they were nonetheless termed "pictures" by the agency's picture professionals (*Pictures*, or *Pix* in short, was also the title that was given to the division by its personnel, and the term was (and still is) used to title different departments in the division, such as the global pictures desk, as well). Since work is mainly at the focus of this project rather than text (although certainly not just), that is also the term that I have decided to use in my analyses hereafter.

Ethnography for Some, a Problem for Others

In this journey I learned a great deal about the elusive nature of news pictures and their production. I also experienced the slippery position of a researcher conducting participant observation – those different delicate games of 'changing identities' from connected participant to independent excluded observer that the fieldwork required. It is because of those characteristics of methodology that I had to go through many obstacles along the way, which would perhaps be easier to start explaining with a story.

In one occasion I was notified by the photographer of an explosion which had resulted in casualties that took place near the city of TulKarem in Israel. Being a closed military area, civilians were not allowed to continue any further, although a few journalists had been allowed to it. Soon enough a great number of reporters, photographers, and TV crews arrived as well in order to cover the event. A soldier presented himself as part of the IDF spokesperson unit. Since Israel is a small country, journalists are often familiar with one another, as they are to the IDF

spokespersons, and since I was a ‘new face in town’ he kindly asked about why I was there and explained in a suspiciously nice way that I did not look familiar to him. Without thinking twice, I replied that I was from the agency (“Hmm, Text?” asked the soldier, as he noticed the notebook in my hand. I nodded) and pointed my finger to the agency photographer I accompanied. Surprisingly, it appeared as if he was satisfied for the time being and went his way.

Time passed, and I was deeply involved in my observation when the same soldier approached me once again, only this time he was not as kind as before, and notified me that in a few minutes the region’s Colonel would give a briefing to all the reporters at the scene and that I better not go too far. Clearly the soldier ‘meant business’, I said to myself, realizing that this briefing could have major consequences for my observation: The scene of events was relatively big and divided into three sub-scenes, and in order to observe the photographer from up close I had to move around between the three. If I attended the briefing, I was probably not able to observe the photographer as it was needed, and he could even get entirely out of my sight. On the other hand, if I decided not to attend the briefing, my cover could be blown and I would be forced to leave the scene, or worse. At the end, I decided to stick to the original plan and attend the briefing as if I was an agency reporter, while, at the same time, trying to observe the photographer’s work from a far.

Quite similar, I realized early on that it would be impossible for me to attend events without being noticed by the photographer and his colleagues. In fact, I could not get to the scenes without the photographer’s help. We met at the scenes quite often, and as time went by I got to know his fellow photographers from competing agencies. In many cases we drove together to the different events, and at times I felt as if I had lost the ‘naturalness’ of his surroundings, having ‘contaminated’ it with my presence. Yet early on, the car where we both spent hours of driving together from one scene to another slowly turned into the perfect setting to discuss the photographer’s daily work and the organization he was working for, and hours of waiting became my ticket into the thin cords of his world that would remain in the shadows if I chose a different path for my work. Quite often, I found myself caught in the middle of an essential crossing along the local department’s internal exchange of information flow: The photographer received updates from the editor in the office and sometimes from the chief photographer as well while we were both driving to and from the scenes of events. The photographer did not feel comfortable saying I was in the car, and thanks to a speaker phone I often overheard valuable bits of information in real time. Needless to say, these were all important lessons, allowing me to continue with my journey with a clear conscience and a sense of a valid project. The nature of a working environment is comprised of numerous layers; yet some are only revealed when others are hidden.

But observing a photographer in the field is one thing and observing editors in an office is another. In the field it is often easier to blend in; sitting in an office immediately turns an outside observer into an intruder whose presence often makes people feel uncomfortable. Moreover, since most picture editing is now done on computers, one can never fully comprehend the position of an editor without asking questions, and one soon discovers that there is a very thin line between what is seen as pure curiosity and an irritating presence. Quite often, observing ethnographers are perceived by the observed as ‘unemployed’ or ‘weird’ (and often being asked “so what are you going to do with this?”, or, my personal favorite: “so what do you *do*?”).

I was usually welcomed. Many of my subjects did not really understand what it was that I was doing (or did not care). In some cases (e.g., in the global pictures desk) I felt that my presence was enthusiastically welcomed. Did this compromise my position? Was my independence at risk? However, I came to realize that the warmth of my reception was because editors on the global pictures desk work extremely hard around the clock, yet even though their position is crucial in the overall process, they remain anonymous and their work is publicly unrecognized, while photographers win prizes, become famous, or at least get a credit. An outside observer can easily become a credit for editors, and I was fortunate to be there at the right time.

My work at *The Guardian*’s picture desk showed up similarities and differences. At the agency my prayers (and emails) were answered immediately, and I was given official permission rather easily (e.g., it only took a brief meeting with the global pictures editor to be able to conduct my observations in Singapore). With *The Guardian*, however, I had to chase its head of photography (virtually speaking) using all the connections I could think of for quite some time. In fact, if it was not for some strings pulled by my PhD supervisor at the time, and ‘a little help from her friends’, I would probably have been left with no reply at all. But I was suddenly invited to meet *The Guardian*’s head of photography in person, and he granted the access I needed. Access, it appears, works in mysterious ways and quite often it is a matter of trade. Sometimes you have to give something (e.g., a possible credit in the case of the Singapore desk) and can then expect something in return. Yet in most cases an outside observer has little to offer in exchange (what do I possess that *The Guardian*’s head of photography can possibly want?). But sometimes, if one is really fortunate, you happen to know someone who knows someone who owes someone a favor, and then all of a sudden you are in.

When I did manage to ‘sneak’ inside *The Guardian*’s realm, I soon realized that things were similar to my Singapore experience. For, even at *The Guardian*, photography personnel felt slightly neglected and less like journalists. Picture editors felt that pictures are there to help text, that their work was to grab the readers’ attention so that journalists

(the term still overwhelmingly refers to writing reporters) could get attention for the ‘real work’ of writing. Such frustration is a great opportunity for an external observer, since it is at times such as these that one can ‘squeeze the juicy stuff’ out of interviewees just by pushing the right buttons; having your interviews conducted in a closed and isolated room is also highly recommended, and some say that a beer or two in a pub might do the same trick as well.

I was not always a welcome presence. During a sensitive crisis, on several occasions, and when I was at the agency’s local bureau in Jerusalem, I was asked to leave the room. There appeared to be tension between the photographer who I accompanied and the chief photographer of the local bureau, who knew about my research, and this made my observations in the office uncomfortable. I was first asked by the head of the local bureau in Jerusalem to sign a form, stating that I agreed not to connect any conclusions in my research to the agency (or even use its name), and I felt that I should be extra cautious in order not to jeopardize the entire project, but since these were busy times for a news organization in Israel, the form was forgotten and so I didn’t have to sign anything.⁶

A few years later I approached the agency once again to have its formal approval to publish a book based on the findings of my research and use the data that I had gathered from my interviews. My request, I was told, was delivered to the agency’s legal team. After a few weeks I received an email from the agency’s PR manager: “Thank you for getting in touch and for your continued interest in XXX” it said,

As you know when we agreed to provide access to XXX employees, we understood that the resulting interviews would be made available only for use in your PHD thesis. There was no suggestion at the time that the interviews would be published externally in any other way.

I hope you will therefore understand that we must consider your request to publish the results of the interviews in a book as a fresh and separate request, especially given the time which has passed since the original interview requests were approved – and that unfortunately on this basis we must decline your request for our participation in the project.

And just like that, when I already thought I was in, they threw me back out. This was certainly a frustrating moment to ponder about: On what grounds did *they* “understand” that I was not going to publish my results externally? Why is it that the request to publish my findings in a book had to be considered separately? And what difference does it make that time has passed since the original interview requests were approved? This entire thing seemed rather odd to me; after all, they already granted me the access at the time! It was clear to me there was nothing I could do about it (well, except, of course, being able to write

about it). If there is a lesson here to be learned, it is that it is becoming extremely difficult to gain access inside media institutions nowadays, and things, I'm afraid, are only going to get worse to the media production researchers of tomorrow, who would have to come up with creative solutions to gain access and to be even more creative so as to be able to publish their findings. And so, in order to fulfil my right to publish my work (and, at the same time, avoid the risk of facing any legal actions) I had to swipe out any 'clues' as to the specific organization that is at the heart of this book, which will be referred to as "the agency" henceforth, and summarize all the quotes of the agency's personnel whom I had interviewed in my own words.

More generally, even though journalists' profession is not unlike the act of ethnographers (they observe and they intervene), it is no secret that they often do not like being observed themselves; they become suspicious and unwilling to cooperate. In my experience (and perhaps as part of the agency's policy at the time, although this proved to be the case at *The Guardian* as well, at least up to the point when I was 'kicked out') this was not the case. Early on, the journalists I met were very cooperative, and I was taken more and more seriously as the project evolved. In some cases, however, I was asked to keep certain bits of information off-the-record. Unlike, to a certain extent, the way things are done in journalism, it is exactly what is left off-the-record (but certainly not just) that ethnography is very much interested in; the work of journalists is one thing, while an ethnographic research on journalism is another.

Even though this book deals with *the international photojournalism industry*, at its heart lies a process that begins in Israel – clearly, a very particular news story. This is because early parts of the project are based on the making of pictures in Israel, while I am originally from Israel and was also living in Israel at that time. As an Israeli it was easier for me to get to events. But it also meant that I was conversant with, and sensitive to, local cultural codes and nuances. Moreover, even though the production process in question, as I hope to make clear in the following chapters, has no clear beginning, middle, and end, research is clearly rather different and eventually has to start somewhere. My starting point was Israel. This, however, was only to illustrate the overall process in full, having Israel serving as a meaningful case study of the 'local' stages of production.

Finally, my wife has been working as a TV producer for the agency long before I had started this journey. In many ways, this project was inspired by her personal experiences, and her stories sparked my imagination. As time went by, we often argued (we still do) on the particular characteristics of her profession as an agency journalist in Jerusalem. Thus, after gathering a great deal of information on the agency and its pictures service and 'bragging' with my agency knowledge, she would often break my theory to pieces, making me realize that by observing

from the outside one can never fully grasp what is within. And while having a ‘not-so-bad’ sense of the process as a whole, she was willing to agree that an outside observer is as good as any. Thanks to her, I found myself in various agency events, memorizing quotes from heads of desks, administrators, photographers, TV crews, and others, and was familiar with some fascinating agency’s inside stories. Thanks to her, I know now what it means (and what it takes) to examine an international news organization from up-close. Some might find this slightly problematic. The way I see it, it is as ethnographic as one can get.

A Political Economy from Below or Cultural Studies from Above?

The conceptualization of the political economy of culture (see Williams, 1981) represented an important recognition gained by the supporters of both cultural studies and the political economy of communication, with the emergence of ‘the cultural turn’ in the 1970s and 1980s (Wittle, 2004). But what could be recognized as Williams’ ‘warm hospitality’ would turn into a theoretical turmoil, pitching political economy against cultural studies. It is on the borders of the two, and at the heat (or boredom) of such debate, that the following project begins (Grossberg, 1995).

Capturing a wide range of approaches, political economy was recently defined as “[...] *the study of control and survival in social life*” (Mosco, 2009, p. 3. *Italics in origin*). Political economy of communication was divided by Mosco (2009) into three main streams of thought, stemming from three different regions: the North American *Schiller-Smythe tradition*, the European *Garnham, Murdock, and Golding tradition*, and a third stemming from what is known as the *Developing world* (see Murdock and Golding, 1973; Schiller, 1976; Garnham, 1979, 1990; Mattelart, 1986; Mie’ge, 1989; Herman and McChesney, 2001).

The emergence of the political economy of communication approach, as is its international resonance, can be attributed to Smythe and Schiller. Yet its European representatives managed to establish a more careful, and less deterministic, approach to the political economy of communication, focusing on the study of communication, the mass media, and cultural practices (Hesmondhalgh, 2013). Communications was perceived by the Europeans to be well organized and strongly situated within a wider capitalist system; it was found essential to the understanding of production and reproduction, recognized as “[...] industrial and commercial organizations which produce and distribute commodities” (Murdock and Golding, 1973, pp. 205–206; Mosco, 2009). Cultural production and the cultural industries, at the same time, were considered complex and uncertain by the Europeans (although having the same concern with the industries’ expanding power as did their

North American colleagues) who realized their ambivalence and considered the flaws within a one-sided approach, as Garnham (1979) put it:

[...] The real weakness of the Frankfurt School's original position was not their failure to realize the importance of the base of the economic, but insufficiently to take account of the economically contradictory nature of the process they observed and thus to see the industrialization of culture as unproblematic and irresistible.
(p. 131)

But the relationship between cultural production and the valorization of capital was conceived with contradictions, and as the setting for constant tensions between capitalist and noncapitalist social formations. Similarly, social class relations were also considered to be essential to the political economy analysis – whether in the form of media owners; with those who take part in the labor process; or between cultural commodities and their reception by their audiences. But these were all considered a set of complex and contradictory processes that are not at all governed by a dominant ideology (Mosco, 2009).⁷

Questioning issues of power, ethics, and private businesses often circulated under a capitalistic cover while challenging the extent to which powerful businesses serve the interests of the powerful, cultural production certainly has a 'warm spot' in political economy, especially within the borders of its critical incarnation. Unlike rather conservative approaches to economics, a critical political economy manifested by Garnham and others is considered more holistic, capturing those crucial elements that will be demonstrated in my process analysis in the following chapters: It takes into consideration a particular sociohistorical context; sees the relationship between the free market and the public as complex rather than one-sided; and goes "[...]beyond technical issues of efficiency to engage with basic moral questions of justice, equity and the public good" (Golding and Murdock, 2005, p. 61).

From a different angle, cultural studies were taken in the beginning of the decade 2000–2009 as

[...] the distinctive approach to culture that results when we stop thinking about culture as particular valued texts and think about it as a broader process in which each person has an equal right to be heard, and each person's voice and reflections about culture are valuable.
(Couldry, 2000, p. 2)

What troubled Garnham and others in regard to private businesses and the articulation of cultural products under capitalism was, in fact, that which bothered the supporters of cultural studies, although observed from a different perspective; they considered culture "[...] in a non-dominative way [...] as a space of multiple voices and forces" (p. 4).

Much like critical political economy approaches, culture can thus be seen from a rather materialistic scope – whether in the form of Marx’s inability to escape the “[...] cycle of social production and exchange”, within a certain economic umbrella (Marx cited in Couldry, 2000, p. 12). Or, that cultural production processes are, by definition, material processes, although not only maintained within the constraints of an economic system of production, for they are “[...] not simply derived from an otherwise constituted social order but are themselves major elements in its constitution” (Williams, 1981, p. 12. Thus, culture cannot simply be grasped at the economic level, while, similarly, the materiality of culture cannot be escaped (Couldry, 2000). Celebrating the everyday and having one of its core foundations as culture’s ordinariness, it involves us all and therefore its texts “[...] should never be seen as isolated entities but always as part of a shared practice of making meanings involving everyone in a particular culture” (Couldry, 2000, p. 24). Put simply, we all contribute to the production of culture and are responsible to its organization, as active producers of meanings (Williams, 1961).

During the 1980s and 1990s, such universal notions of culture (as with the term itself) were criticized as well (most notably its ‘Britishness’): Treating culture as a dominant force repressing other formations of culture rather than the form of the ‘ultimate democracy’, its ordinariness was then addressed as a matter of local complexity rather than one joined terrain (see e.g., Ngugi Wa’s explanation of the ‘cultural bomb’ in Ngugi Wa, 1986). One of cultural studies’ main challenges in relation to social power was thus mainly focused on the issue of authority: to those who speak and those who listen; to those centered and those marginalized. It became the common setting to discuss the politics of social identity; questions of class, gender, ethnicity, race, and sexuality and their articulation in the form of cultural identity. Cultural studies, put more generally, became a secured site to consider differences and struggles (Hesmondhalgh, 2013).

The supporters of cultural studies believe that culture matters and that people are by no means ‘cultural dupes’ manipulated by some dominant structure; they consider the complexities and contradictions between culture, power, and people while paying attention to the influence of economic structures, and that there are other forms of power than class, with varying degrees of autonomy. Moreover, they see problems of gender, nationality, and identity as equally important (Grossberg, 1995). By contrast, classic political economy argues for a dominant structure of which waged labor and the exchange of commodities is essential to creating the conditions of existence and the very conditions whereby cultural studies operate as well. It argues that gender, race, or nationality are themselves, as manifested by the supporters of cultural studies, systems of domination, but ones that can never ‘survive’ on their own outside a capitalist class system of domination, and their struggles and

conflicts can only be measured when placed within a political economic context in which those are constituted by specific cultural practices (Garnham, 1995).

When both approaches are ‘melted’ together, they can be seen as making substantial contributions to each other’s ‘black holes’ while facing a similar challenge: Works within cultural studies emphasize the subjective and social constitution of knowledge, and that culture is produced by all social actors and not only by the privileged; they propel the importance of everyday life, seeing cultural identity as increasingly affected by gender, race, or nationality, as well as class. However, at the same time, these can now be considered in particular sociohistoric contexts whereby culture is produced and struggled over. The supporters of political economy, on the other hand, can maintain now that its substance is eventually the lives of ordinary people along their daily confrontations with different institutions and world representations. And its terrain should now become more appealing than ever for ‘culturists’, attracting cultural studies to address the processes of labor and its institutions, production, and consumption and their high value to the construction of meanings.

In the following chapters, both approaches, whether ‘divorced’ or ‘reconciled’ (Garnham, 1995), resonate: Indeed, the agency’s pictures service is part of a powerful private organization with a well-known profit orientation. In fact, with most of its revenues coming from non-media clients from the supply of financial information worldwide (Boyd-Barrett and Rantanen, 2004; Boyd-Barrett, 2008), and with reports at the beginning of the 1990s that half of all international financial information was flowing through the agency’s technology daily, this leaves little room for mistakes: The agency is not only a pivotal player in the business of making money. It is, in many ways, making money what it is worth.

At the same time, however, its news pictures are rather unique. Of course, they are part of the agency’s line of products and are thus produced and distributed to agency clients to enhance profit. But they also belong to an extraordinary system of visual representation – cultural artifacts, signs belonging to the symbolic world that are thus loaded with meanings absorbed in the different sites of their production and consumption. Those meanings circulate in a complex system – a ‘circuit of meaning’ maintaining the construction of social practice, enabling us to ‘make sense’ of the world (Du Gay, Hall, Janes, Mackay and Negus, 1997). To that end, their producers are not simply part of an organized force of the agency’s labor, but are also males or females, Israelis or Palestinians, religious or secular, etc.; those might come across as conflicting dimensions of cultural identities at different sites of the pictures’ production, serving also as the foot prints of different ways of lives.

Drawing from the two approaches, the analysis in the following chapters may be of some contribution to the overlooked ground of cultural production, particularly its manufacturing processes, in cultural

studies (as opposed to a vast amount of scholarship focusing on cultural texts and their reception). But also to the subjective complexities affecting media institutions and their industries from within – a perspective that is often ignored in the study of private media organizations in the political economy of communications, that too easily are taken as dominated and repressed systems of production whereby power is often attributed to ownership.

Explored from a certain interdisciplinary point of departure, the analysis of the particular process that is at the focus of this book would hopefully suggest that a dominant structure is always operated and produced from below, while there is “[...] no view from above, from nowhere” (Harraway in Couldry, 2000, p. 14; Wittle, 2004). More generally, I am in the hope that this research would eventually demonstrate how theories are not enough on their own right and that their borders should be questioned and challenged time and time again, for “[...] the only theory worth having is that which you have to fight off, not that which you speak with profound fluency” (Hall, 1992, p. 280).

Cultural Production and the Industries of Culture

In the late 1970s it was the American Peterson who laid out a production-of-culture doctrine in the attempt to shift the attention “[...] from the global corpus of habitual culture” to the “processes by which elements of culture are fabricated in those milieus where symbol-system production is most self-consciously the center of activity” (Peterson, 1976, p. 10. See also Dimaggio and Hirsch, 1976; Kadushin, 1976). Peterson’s point of departure, however, was rather limited, mainly by the dominant sociological perspective of its time whereby cultural texts are determined by organizational factors (see Frosh’s observation in Frosh, 2003). Thus, identifies Hesmondhalgh (2013), such perspectives in organizational studies seem to come in the form of “isolated systems” that are “cut-off from political and sociocultural conflict” (p. 48); these should be synthesized into a far more comprehensive vision of the ways in which the production of culture and cultural consumption fit into economic political and cultural contexts that are wider. That is to say, it requires focus on the cultural institutions, their role as part of giant corporate industries, and the industrialization aspects of cultural production.

In fact, the debate over the industrial aspects of culture and production can be traced back to the canonical work of Adorno and Horkheimer’s ‘Culture industry’. In a critical Marxist analysis, they addressed the industrialization of culture – once in its highest form as art and as the means of liberation from the constraints of the real world, which have become commoditized, lost its ‘authenticity’, and have thus become industrialized (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1977/1944; see also Negus, 1997).

In the 1960s and the late 1970s, however, the term was converted into ‘cultural industries’ (or *industries culturelles*).⁸ New approaches had emerged, opposing Adorno and Horkheimer’s ‘unified field’ of culture industrialization, thereby offering a more uncertain notion of cultural production, with different logics in play (see, e.g., Mie’ge and Garnham, 1979; Mie’ge 1987, 1989): how, for example, various types of cultural production are performed in different cultural industries (Mie’ge, 1987; Hesmondhalgh, 2013); how the consumption of different cultural commodities is highly selective (Mie’ge and Garnham, 1979); or how cultural labor can be productive (under capitalist cultural production) or unproductive (under noncapitalist production of cultural products), while production can be divided into reproducible or semi-reproducible products, or when the involvement of cultural workers is not always necessary in their production (ibid).

More specifically, it was mostly Adorno and Horkheimer’s pessimism that was questioned, since they did not consider the use of new technologies and innovations and their role as part of the articulation of cultural products (particularly within the arts); the industrialization of art as a process of capital valorization adapting to new fields with specific conditions; how the industrialization process can, and does, come across oppositional and resisting voices; and how the cultural process of production coexists with other forms of production (Mie’ge, 1989). Finally, pointed Mie’ge (1989), there are clear disadvantages in a single approach to the study of cultural manufacturing, since “[...] the capitalization of cultural production is a complex, many-sided and even contradictory process”, and that it “[...] cannot be analyzed in simple or unilateral terms” (p. 12).

Cultural industries are operated by personnel in various positions at different sites of production (see, e.g., Negus, 1992). But these personnel are also part of different, and often contested, occupational communities in particular organizations (Gregory, 1983). Similarly, organizational divisions can also be seen as the result of constant classification struggles, thereby turning the organizing unit into an arena whereby different departments/divisions/sections, or personnel at different positions, struggle over social power and control (Bourdieu, 1986). Cultural industries are propelled from the outside, but also have influential internal pressures, and so we need to understand, as Williams put it, “[...] right inside the productive process how these difficult modes of address and forms are actually constructed” (Williams in Heath and Skirrow, 1986, p. 14). From such micro point of departure, cultural production is therefore a key moment in the production of meaning within a great ‘circuit of culture’ (Du Gay, 1997; Du Gay et al., 1997), whereby the economy and culture perform as *hybrid categories* in the overall circulation of cultural products; a *cultural economy* where,

‘Economic’ processes and practices – in all their plurality [...] depend on meaning for their effects and have particular cultural ‘conditions of existence’. Meaning is produced at ‘economic’ sites (at work, in shops) and circulated through economic processes and practices (through economists’ models of how ‘economies’ or ‘organizations’ work, through adverts, marketing materials and the very design of products) no less than in other domains of existence in modern societies.

(Du Gay, 1997, p. 4)

Organizations and industries are in the ‘business’ of manufacturing cultural products (although these are often put under strong pressures by certain cultural intermediary occupations, e.g., advertising, design, or marketing, that are accountable to tightening the relationship between production and consumption. See Du Gay et al., 1997). But these institutions are also significant sites that are essential to the construction (and reconstruction) and managing of the organizational culture and the formation of identity. The cultural process of production, put simply, is both an economic process and a cultural phenomenon – a formation of the production of culture and cultures of production (Negus, 1997).

This shift into the delicate micro formations propelling the industries from within – as complex sites of production – pointed to the recognition in the ‘human factor’; to those structures that are “[...] produced through particular human actions”; and to how “[...] *economic* relationships simultaneously involve the production of *cultural* meanings” (Negus, 1997, p. 84). In so doing, it also allowed for a more holistic conceptualization of the cultural audiences and their desires – extraordinary ‘sites’ of consumption that also play a key role in the circulation of cultural production (see, e.g., Gendron, 1986). To that end, cultures of production can therefore be seen as ‘cultural worlds’, and the sites of cultural production as the setting whereby a complex set of collective practices, interpretations, and experiences are interwoven together (Jensen, 1984). Thus, pointed Negus (1997),

It is important to consider the culture of production not only within the organization in terms of particular occupational cultures but in terms of how these connect with broader social divisions and how these are given specific cultural meanings within the production process.

(Negus, 1997, p. 102)

Consequently, it may perhaps be more cautious to address the form of cultural production not simply as a ‘brick’ in the ‘circuit of culture’ (see Du Gay et al., 1997), but rather a complex circular structure in itself.

Commercial Photography Production

Inspired by semiotic, psychoanalytical, and Marxist approaches, photography has been at the center of attention with regard to its different cultural contexts and to the ideological reality it represents (see Lutz and Collins, 1993; Tagg, 1988; Hardt and Brennen, 1999; Wells, 2004). A cultural point of departure provided an exceptional perspective whereby the unique relationship between photography and reality can be explored. This allowed, for example, for an examination of the various reading practices of photography, as well as the ways it influences different aspects of the reader's daily routine. It was that cultural prism that also helped in shifting the focus inside industrial photography's production apparatuses that are intrinsic to the photograph's meaning, thus serving as a footprint leading towards the maintenance of the cultural industries and the industrial production of cultural goods.

But while the field of photography is perhaps overloaded with scholarship focusing on the analysis of the photographic text, or on its reception practices, there is, unfortunately, far too little scholarship on industrial photography's work, with a particularly alarming neglect on the photo-journalism industry (see more recent scholarship on visual news-making in Bock, 2008; Mäenpää, 2014; Pogliano, 2015; Pantii and Sirén, 2015). This scholarly lacuna was addressed, for example, by the emergence of rather materialistic approaches to the photographic meaning traced back in the 1970s – a call for an inspection of different social institutions that need to be taken into account together with semiotic approaches, questioning the photographic meaning (Burgin, 1982). But apart from several reminders to the importance of the production processes of commercial photography and its institutions during the following years (see, e.g., Ritchin, 1999), the field was barely touched.

Hall's determinations of news photographs back in the 1970s (1973) is concerned mostly with the ideological determinants of news pictures; he found that in the case of news photographs “[...] the rhetoric of connotation saturates the world of events with ideological meanings [...]”, and at the same time, “[...] distinguishes or displaces this connection” (Hall, 1973, p. 187). Media representation in the form of news pictures, put simply, is never naïve but rather highly intentional, systematic, and ideological. However, assuming some sort of a ‘dominant – meaning patterns’ system in the form of some dominant ideology based on the social knowledge of media audiences and media producers seems “too simple”, as Schudson put it; it makes “[...] of human beliefs and attitudes a more unified, intentional and functional system than they are” (Schudson, 1989, p. 277). When the process of news pictures’ production is in question, such a distinction is crucial: It stands, for example, as to what distinguishes between Hall’s newspapers as a unified

system of production to the newsrooms that are discussed in the following chapters – the setting of endless struggles and conflicts over different variations of social power and control.

Rosenblum (1978a) used ethnographic research methods to demonstrate how work organization affects style. She connected the types of social structure with photographic styles and addressed the stylistic differences between news, advertising, and fine arts photography so as to explain “[...] why each photographic style looks the way it does” (Rosenblum, 1978a, p. 5). Yet her research is inadequate, having some of its flaws to appear early on in the research methods section. To begin, although dealing explicitly with specific patterns of style and their differences (e.g., matters of light and lines, content and form, space and place), or addressing the ways these might be read and accepted by spectators, Rosenblum fails to support her conclusions with either textual or audience reception analysis. Apart from the inevitable connection between photography production, the photographic text, and its consumption practices, these might have also contributed to a better understanding of the complex relations between the three styles of photography that were independently analyzed by Rosenblum.⁹ As a result of such absence, Rosenblum’s analysis seems a little flat and thus reveals the inadequacy of her research (e.g., how she describes the ways *we* read news pictures [do we all read news pictures the same way?]; or, in her too general assertions about the particular stylistic features of news, advertising, or fine arts pictures).¹⁰

Second, there is also the decision to make a distinction between the styles of photography. This appears in the book’s form (three different chapters dealing with newspaper photography, advertising, and fine arts), but is far more disturbing in content, as Rosenblum specifically states that she treats “[...] one particular style of photography as a totality” and each style’s socioeconomic system “[...] as a totality of patterns” (Rosenblum, 1978a, p. 9). In fact, Rosenblum acknowledges that there is probably some borrowing and exchange between the different styles (although, for some reason, she sees news photography as the least penetrable of the three); one possible explanation for this, to her view, is the mobility of photographers between the various worlds of photography. While such strict borders between genres could easily be challenged in terms of style, this total separation is simply misleading in terms of their production systems. Some photojournalists, for example, see themselves as artists, and news organizations are now strongly affected by stock, suggesting that these worlds are not simply separated. Rather, they are maintained in a complex ecosystem of photography genres (see the following chapters for a broader discussion on these issues). In fact, the analysis later in this book will be very much based on Rosenblum’s second diffusion explanation as to why these borrowings might occur, when she points to the possibility that “[...] the stylistic conventions

become part of the larger culture [...]” (Rosenblum, 1978a, p. 9. See also her discussion on separation between style and content in p. 112). Yet unlike Rosenblum’s offer that seems too little and appears far too late in her book (p. 112), it is this ‘larger culture’ that will be addressed from a holistic point of view in the following chapters at key moments and particular sites of news pictures’ production.

More specifically, Rosenblum sees news photography’s style as the sole outcome of the work organization, ignoring the “[...] historical or cultural explication of the styles and their development, the insensitivity to nuance and complexity [...]” (Frosh, 2003, p. 53). While many news pictures are indeed produced by different news organizations (but not just) and are thus the outcome of a certain ‘closed’ commercial system of production, the analysis of the process in the following chapters will in fact illustrate an open system of production maintained at different crossings in a relation of cause and effect by various ‘producers’ (e.g., how news pictures are also contributed by the end-users, from the bottom up).

Finally, it is precisely Rosenblum’s idea of newsworthiness, taken as a natural given (e.g., when some events tend to be simply “newsworthy”, p. 13), that is unpacked in what follows. To that end, the professionals whose daily work routine is examined in this book are not seen as simply maintaining a certain “news mood” (p. 14), and news is not treated simply as “real life events” (p. 55). Rather, it results of a complex system of cultural production shared daily by news organizations, their operators, their products, their clients, and their audiences, putting the production of a cultural economy in motion, but that are also propelled by it.¹¹

In Lutz and Collins’ “Reading national geographic” (1993) pictures are taken as complex documents which might “[...] reinforce or challenge shared understandings of cultural difference” (p. 2). Focusing on National Geographic’s pictures, their processes of production, and practices of reception, the authors examine NG’s (National Geographic) contribution to the promulgation of images of the world outside the US, with the formation of identity taken as one drawing from images of others. “Cultural products”, observe Lutz and Collins, “have complex production sites; they often code ambiguity; they are rarely accepted at face value but are read in complicated and often unanticipated ways” (p. 11).

Placing NG’s images in specific historical and cultural contexts through which a unique insight into the process where those images are formed, selected and controlled, purveyed and read is acquired, Lutz and Collins operate a tripartite methodological approach: examining practices of production; analyzing a sample of images; and observing the practices through which they are read. Especially interesting is their examination of the production process inside “the great machinery of desire”, taking NG’s photographs not as a “[...] standardized product of an omniscient industry”, but rather “[...] generated through a series of complex, and at times contestatory, production practices” (Lutz and Collins, 1993, p. 48).

Lutz and Collins' research is useful, as they attempt to consider the industrial production processes of pictures. The processes of execution, for instance, are no longer completely caged in a closed and total Rosenblumian system of production ("[...] it is not journalism, it is not an art magazine", as stated by a NG editor, "it is story telling", p. 56). While most of NG's photographers had previously been photojournalists, and with its images packaged and distributed to readers as 'truth found in the field', photography in NG is placed by Lutz and Collins between art photography and photojournalism. At the same time, its system of production is constrained and captured by an environment maintained by advertising photography and thus must often "[...] respond to trends that advertising sets" (Lutz and Collins, 1993, p. 84).

However, their analysis, as Frosh (2003) argues, does give a sense of linearity – as if the process itself begins with the pictures' conception as an idea, which then turns into text and ends with reading. Even though a commercial production process of pictures does encounter certain moments of linearity (e.g., an editor having the final say in the photo selection process), it is, in fact, more of a circular structure. For example, pictures received with 'good reviews' are injected back to the system of production as the seeds for future projects. Moreover, in some cases (e.g., in the agency's pictures service), data regarding the success or failure of pictures as opposed to its competitors is gathered by specific personnel daily and is then analyzed to improve future processes.

What is more, the constraints dictated by the international market and how it affects the daily production process of NG's images is absent from their analysis – how it is, put simply, that a single picture appeals to diverse local audiences.¹² Finally, their analysis of marketing is relatively brief and insufficient as well; it ignores important questions such as the type of NG's clients, the diversity of products and markets, or the entire process of distribution whereby the pictures acquire additional meanings.

Evans' "Pictures on a page" (1997) addresses the practical business of news photography, pointing to the complexities inside the daily routine of photojournalism combined with his own interpretation of 'do's and not do's'. He explains the 'process of the news story' and the importance of catching the 'story telling moment', and also considers the different technical difficulties the photographer faces (e.g., photo-angles and lenses, composition, setting up the scene and the risk of polluting it). Here the work of the art director, graphic designer, and especially the editor is acknowledged, as all are seen accountable, together with the photographer, to the articulation of the news picture from conception to print; collaborate daily at the different sites of production; and are equally capable of injecting the same news photograph with different meanings. Evans (1997) points, for example, to the differences between a simple cropping and a creative one; between the decisive moment, the

news or the visual one; the possibilities of enhancing, reducing, or manipulating the photographic message by, say, juxtaposition in layout or the meaning of captions; and how these might contribute or interfere with the visual message.¹³

Evans provides a magnificent glimpse into the heart of the photojournalism industry, perhaps one not at all possible if it not for the eye of an insider. Nonetheless, his work could easily be seen as sharing a common view (especially from the news milieu) of which reality maintains some universal truth that needs to be found, reported, and documented in the ‘right’ way (why is it, for example, that “[...] the close up is economical and it is newsy” [p. 154]?). In addition, his work is mainly concerned with the photograph as a document and its limitations and less with the actual work organization of news photography. Although such absence seems today to be taken more seriously, when not long ago was photography described as “[...] ingrained in so many processes that a scholar of photography must also be highly informed about industries and institutions that traditionally have had little to do with the study of photography” (Rubinstein and Sluis, 2008, p. 9).

Frosh (2003) provides insight on the production of stock images – “[...] the making of ordinary, mass-produced, photographic images” (p. 1) – within the visual content industry, trying to illustrate their “[...] production of photographic meaning and the meaning of photographic production” (p. 8). Taking a somewhat unorthodox approach in the analysis of stock photography’s production procedures, considering photography both as a consumed product and as form of representation, Frosh focuses on two separate, yet interrelated, objects of analysis: stock photographic production procedures and categories of stock-photography images. Frosh illuminates a number of key terms emerging from the stock industry: success, creativity, meaning, genre, concept, and catalogue. In so doing, he aims to “[...] distinguish ‘moments’ in the circuit of culture without stripping them of their multiple practical and discursive interconnections, putting into play the dual (sociological and semiotic) focus on stock photography’s ‘cultural economy’ and its ‘mode of signification’” (Frosh, 2003, p. 57). In his work, Frosh manages to bridge the gaps in photography theory between the approaches of the ‘sociology of culture’ (photography as forms of representation and signification) and of the political economy of communication (photography as products and commodities), and thereby to render visible the connection between industrial photography, material processes, and practices of cultural production.

However, the data on photographic practices in the visual content industry in Frosh’s exploration were not gleaned from observations (data was based on three sources: Interviews with professionals connected to the stock photography industry; attending the 1998 Photo Expo East conference; and various industry publications). Such lacuna

does, to a certain extent, make sense in this case, as Frosh focused primarily on an amorphous industry, thereby struggling, for example, to gain access (and in many cases was denied one) from some of the larger stock agencies.¹⁴ Still, the lack of such observation data means that he was not able to witness the actual labor that is invested in the very making of stock photography, nor could he analyze the various production sites (e.g., in the field, or in the office, etc.) nor the photographic events themselves, whereby the stock image acquires other layers of meaning and serves also as the “material of labor” (p. 8). Unlike Frosh’s case, I was able to conduct extensive participant observation at different production moments and sites since I was given the privilege of accessing the daily production process of news pictures at the news agency; I was ‘there’ (and there, and there. See Hannerz, 2003). Even though, in many ways, this was very hard to execute logistically, it proved to be extremely useful; while gaining access inside a concrete powerful international organization, I was thus able to support my arguments with substantial evidence from the field and circle the entire international production process of news pictures.

In his book, Frosh also seems, to my view, to be making a slightly problematic distinction between *the distribution and circulation* of stock images (which, to his view, are mostly handled by cultural intermediaries, namely those particular workers in stock agencies and their clients in advertising, marketing, and design) and their *initial production* (which is, for example, the work of photographers who are therefore considered by Frosh as primary-symbol creators. See Frosh, 2003, footnote 8). But while Frosh is rather cautious in making such a distinction (as it is one that is “not always easy to make”, Ibid.), I would like to take this notion even further. Let me spell this out: what I hope to make clear in the following chapters is that the production of commercial news photography is in fact *performed by the entire arsenal of picture professionals* (whether they are involved in the distribution or circulation of pictures, or, as Frosh put it, in their “initial production”, although certainly not just). And they are all serving as key players in the making of news pictures within the boundaries of their particular organizational duties, both at the agency and at the client’s end – photographers, editors, producers, graphic designers, archivists, administrators, etc. To that end, I would argue, production not only performs as a distinct moment in the circuit of culture (Du Gay et al., 1997) like distribution and circulation, but is rather a circuit of culture in itself.

Finally, it is Frosh’s view on how production is in fact ‘privileged’ that I would also like to address here. Production is privileged, suggests Frosh, since it “marks that point at which cultural forms acquire their ostensive fixity with respect to their ultimate audience [...] at which they achieve a ‘closure’ that is produced systematically, at which they are *sealed* much as an envelope is sealed or an object granted a seal of approval” (p. 12).

As a result, the audience of consumers must therefore receive and act upon these forms, however it is free to resist, interpret, or alter them. Such fixity, continues Frosh, is not a natural outcome, but rather the result of sanctioned practices (culturally, socially, economically, and legally) granting key players at particular sites “the authority and power to seal cultural products” (p. 12). Now, as much as such fixity will indeed reveal itself in what follows, what I also hope to make clear later on is that the audience of consumers in fact *plays a pivotal role in the very making processes* of ‘professional’ news pictures at key moments and sites. But also that consuming practices are strongly felt in ‘production’ – how, for example, picture professionals are putting their ‘visual consuming baggage’ to work, which also affects their decision making (editors, see Chapter 3) and ways of execution (photographers, see Chapter 2). So, Frosh is absolutely right to consider the inevitable connection between production and consumption in his theoretical introduction and research limitations (where he describes the lack of image reception analysis, for instance, as being the book’s principal limitation). But his argument over the *privileged complexity of cultural production*, however cautious it may be so as not to be making a clear production/consumption divide (nor to point in any way to the supremacy of production), suggests in fact that, to his view, such a distinction does exist. What I hope to demonstrate later is that production is not simply influenced by reception, as it is, to an extent, taken by Frosh, but rather the latter is serving as a significant producing force and one that propels the making of news pictures from within.

Focusing an anthropological eye, Gürsel (2016) explores the networks through which international news images move, addressing news images as formative fictions, as “[...] constructed representations that reflect current events yet simultaneously shape ways of imagining the world and political possibilities within it”. News images, says Gürsel (2016), are complex cultural products, circulating as “[...] representations of reality” that are also “aesthetic representations and commodities” (p. 11).

Examined during a two-year fieldwork in “key nodal points” (p. 3) of production, distribution, and circulation in New York and Paris, data on the labor invested in the brokering of international news images was gathered by Gürsel from several sites: the newsroom of a large corporate visual content provider; the Paris headquarters of AFP (the French international news agency); the editorial offices of two mainstream US news-magazines; and several key photography events such as Barnstorm, Visa Pour l’Image, and a few events organized by World Press Photo. These sites are then discussed in an attempt to explain how news images are produced and what else is produced in the production of news images.

Gürsel’s work provides valuable insight on the production of news images – “the processes by which international news images are constructed as cultural texts” (2016, p. 12) – as she explores the daily routine

of various pictures' departments and the moments of brokering of news images. Such is the case, for example, when Gürsel sees *futurepast images* as images containing 'moments' from the past, yet ones chosen to be relevant for the future in terms of their saleability. As news pictures also have to be sold and thus require specific characteristics in their moments of execution in order to become available for future sales, Gürsel also points to the circularity of the production process of news images, for

[...] the tremendous challenge facing image-brokers as they make decisions today is accurately imagining themselves into the future and making sure that what the world will want to see tomorrow has been anticipated and captured visually today [...] Image brokers need to ensure not only that they have covered the here and now, but that they will also have covered the *futurepast*.

(p. 22, italics in origin)

Gürsel's analysis does not involve audience reception and has very little textual/semiotic analysis to support her arguments. A book on news images' professionals and their daily routine would have certainly benefited from substantial visual analysis given the inevitable connection between work and text (Gürsel does regret this in her research limitations). Such contribution, for example, would certainly have supported how "framing mechanisms are always at work" in the coverage of war or of atrocities (p. 7), which Gürsel was hoping to render visible, and demonstrate the various ways through which news images are complex cultural products serving both as representations of reality and as commodities. At the same time, there was certainly a place to consider the different roles played by the audience of consumers – if not following their reception practices, then at least discuss in-depth the visual consuming practices that are in play in the daily brokering processes and decision-making routines of news images. In other words, image brokers make decisions about what audiences see (p. 11), but the ways audiences see also affect the decision-making processes of image brokers (Gürsel does, for instance, mention how the "future" will look like, that is "based on news images that have already circulated and created expectations", as the ways "formative fictions structure future frames" [2016, p. 123]. And later that "it is complicated to delineate the lines between media production and reception" [p. 124]. Yet these matters deserve more attention and could perhaps have been better explored with the support of some visual evidence).

Gürsel's photo-production analysis is too often insufficient and perhaps not as thick as promised: While focusing mainly on moments within the daily routine in the offices of various pictures departments (with an unfortunately highly general view on their actual daily production infrastructures and routines), her work ignores almost entirely

the photographers' work routine in the field who play a key role in the overall process of news image production – those highly significant image brokers who also “move images or restrict their movement” (p. 2). Or, as pointed by one of GVI's editors, “the photographer is the first editor. We're the second editor”, p. 111). And while her analysis of image brokers seems to be focusing solely on the daily work of photo editors in general (for example, in the chapter focusing on GVI she describes how she “observed the workings of the newsroom” while moving “between the desks of the main editors” [p. 116]), she often ignores the varying picture labor particularities and contributions of specific editors serving in various positions, but also other significant picture professionals as part of the networks through which news images move (e.g., administrators, graphic designers, technical teams, etc.).

Gürsel also fails to tackle one of the most extraordinary ‘qualities’ of those news images that are produced by international news organizations acting as “mediators for views of the world” (p. 2). Namely, that they require an international appeal and yet at the same time they are tailored to specific local demands. Such extraordinary requirements are highly significant in the making of international news photos and affect their overall production, circulation, distribution, and selling operations, yet these are hardly dealt with in Gürsel's analysis. With such absence, her idea of international news images seems insufficient: Indeed, she describes photojournalism as a “form of worldmaking” (p. 26) and briefly discusses the concept of “world news” (e.g., in pp. 160–162, 166, 170 in her analysis of *Newsworld*). But what exactly those *international*, or *world*, news images are and the ways these are different from other news images in their processes of production, circulation, and ways of brokering are important dilemmas to consider when international news services (or sections) are in question, which is missing in her work.

News Production Ethnographies and International News Production

The academic interest in ethnographic methods in media in the 1970s saw similar approaches emerge in the study of news production. Thus, the “first wave” of news production ethnography paved the way in the 1970s and 1980s with a few highly influential studies (Epstein, 1973; Tuchman, 1978; Gans, 1979; Schlesinger, 1987; Fishman, 1980 – to name a few; see Cottle, 2000a).

In the last few decades, however, news production has changed dramatically: Digital technology has led to fast-paced production routines, and the news ecology is now differentiated and fast-changing (Cottle, 2000b); fewer, more powerful news conglomerates emerged, focusing their efforts on multimedia news businesses (Murdock, 1990; Thussu, 1998); journalists are required to produce news packages

under strict formats; and students in journalism schools acquire skills of ‘one-man/woman bands’, where they learn how to identify news stories, write news scripts and shoot, edit, and compile video news segments on their own, since journalists are now required to be multiskilled (Bromley, 1997). These new(s) times, therefore, “demand a ‘second-wave’ of ethnographic studies that deliberately set out to theoretically map and empirically explore the rapidly changing field of news production and today’s differentiated ecology of news provision” (Cottle, 2000a, p. 21).

News production ethnography has again drawn attention in recent years (Cottle, 2000a, 2003. See, e.g., Hannerz, 2004; Boczkowski, 2010; Ryfe, 2012; Boyer, 2013; Usher, 2014). Cottle (2007) suggested that such methods in the study of news production

help to reveal the constraints, contingencies and complexities ‘at work’ and, in so doing, provide the means for a more adequate theorization of the operations of the news media and the production of the discourses ‘at play’ within news media representations.

(Cottle 2007, p. 2)

Willig (2013) pointed to how newsroom ethnographies have enabled researchers to go “straight to the heart of news organizations” and reveal the daily routines of journalists (p. 373). And in their edited collection about the making of online news, Paterson and Domingo (2008) declared that ethnographic methodologies are the only ones that come close to describing in detail the culture and practice of media production and the mind-sets of media producers.

However, in order for innovative news ethnographies to be of substantial contribution to news production’s field of inquiry, suggests Willig (2013), the focus of attention requires shifting from the rather predominant, and highly popular, theoretical framework of organizational studies of the first generation of newsroom studies to a more complex analytical framework – one that also addresses questions of power, politics, economy, and culture, since ethnographic methods in the study of news are “[...] less sensitive to macro level structural forces which also guide everyday journalism” (p. 381). What is more, a more holistic study of news production ethnography was said to require the consideration of both the news ‘text’ and its production ‘contexts’ as interpenetrating and mutually constitutive, allowing the examination of the cultural practices of news workers (Cottle, 2003). This shift in approach can thus help to bridge the theoretical divide between political economy and organizational and cultural studies in the exploration of news production. Finally, there is also a need to explore distinct forms of news, so as to focus, for example, on the ways “[...] news producers visualize their ‘imagined audience’ and inscribe this into their news selections and inflections and characteristic forms of news presentations [...]” (p. 19).

From a microlevel and construction perspective to the study of international news production, research was focused on the ways different social institutions influence the form, content, and volume of foreign news (Hjarvard, 2002). However, since the mid-1980s, which signaled the emergence of new power structures in international politics, international news scholarship had shifted to different fields of inquiry; news media in the global era were thus seen as “[...] not only part of a distinct political geography (typically within the national political framework)”, but that also “play a role in creating and rearticulating boundaries of the spaces in which social communities are organized” (Hjarvard, 2002, p. 95). The new paradigm in international news studies had, for example, generated substantial work on what is known as the processes of the domestication of foreign news, namely the ways that different events are “[...] composed and presented in a manner that suits home viewers by making the stories more relevant to them” (Cohen, 2013, p. xx. See also Gurevitch, Levy and Roeh, 1991; Cohen, Levy, Roeh and Gurevitch, 1996; Clausen, 2003, 2004; Alasuutari, Qadir and Creutz 2013; Curran, Esser, Hallin, Hayashi and Lee 2017).

International news agencies – the wholesale providers of news, the “agents of globalization” (Boyd-Barrett and Rantanen, 1998, p. 1) – have been playing an important part in the international news flow arena. Yet ever since their establishment, and although they were acknowledged by many as being prominent, these extraordinary organizations have only been studied by very few, mainly during the 1970s and the early 1980s (see, e.g., Boyd-Barrett, 1980; Fenby, 1986). They drew academic attention back in the 1990s due to the collapse of communism and the institutional changes and reorganizations that took place within and between the agencies. It was also the result of the emergence of global television news and of vast technological changes, especially the internet, satellites, and digital technologies (Boyd-Barrett and Thussu, 1992; Boyd-Barrett and Rantanen, 1998; Volkmer, 1999; Boyd-Barrett, 2000; Thussu, 2000; Rantanen, 2002; Paterson and Sreberny, 2004).

Unfortunately, most of the scholarship on international news agencies to this day is focused mainly on the agencies’ organizational structures and the changes that they have undergone over the years, and has very little relationship to their systems of production and manufacturing (see Paterson, 2006, 2011; Paterson and Domingo, 2008; Gürsel, 2012, 2016; Silberstein-Loeb, 2014; Ilan, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2017, for some of the few and more recent works on the news agencies’ production processes).

The extensive analysis in what follows is an international news production ethnography that covers both the macro- and micro-structures and operations of a distinct *process*, namely the international making and selling of news pictures. In doing so, I hope it contributes to the second wave of news production ethnography and provides fresh insight to the study of international news production – from the inside out.

Producing Pictures, Making News, and How this Book Works

News pictures are produced, categorized, packaged, marketed, and distributed in complex ways that render them natural, authentic, a reflection of things as they truly are. These extraordinary pictures, essentially aimed at daily consumption, acquire their prestigious value as the visual signs of daily ‘unordinary’ news events way back in their processes of production whereby they have been circulated at critical stages, particular moments, and sites – from the moment of their conception and up to their ‘final’ form (see, e.g., Frosh, 2003, 2013). They have been approved by a large, often invisible, number of ‘professionals’ (i.e., pictures laborers at the international news agency, at the client’s end, or sometimes simply initiated by the ‘end’ users themselves, serving as prodnewssers. See e.g., the discussion on produsage in Bruns, 2008) in the process of their making. Those ‘professionals’, performing as key nodal points in the worldwide circulation of news pictures, take part in a larger cultural industry and play a significant role in a greater culture of production, one that is intermeshed with a demanding economic structure.

News pictures are unique cultural products. They have a significant role in the formation of cultural identity, in symbolizing social status, delivering certain symbols and myths, and legitimizing social forces (Kellner, 1995). At the same time, however, they are mostly circulated by news organizations (local and/or international) so as to increase their profits. And they also serve as the by-product of powerful cultural industries, propelling those organizations, but that are also pressed by economic and cultural forces putting the industries and the organizational bodies in motion (Hesmondhalgh, 2013).

What comes next is the extensive analysis of news pictures’ international process of production that illustrates a full circle: It connects at various moments and sites between culture and economy, between production and consumption, between photography and news, and runs through the vertical and horizontal levels, and on the macro- and micro-formations, of production. To that end, for example, the laborers whose work is mostly explored in this book play significant roles in this extraordinary production routine. But they also ‘bring’ their circles of identity to work, whereby tension results in the crossing between identities at times (e.g., an Israeli photographer working for an international news agency while covering stories mostly related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict). What is more, this extraordinary circular process of production is constantly in motion, with no beginning, middle, or end points in time, as I hope to make clear in the following chapters.¹⁵ It is governed by ‘professional’ conventions of photography and news, just as much as these are coerced to its daily demands – a chaotic

routine constantly shifting between various battling dimensions of operations. It is, in other words, a production process of culture, reflecting the different cultures of its production (Negus, 1997).

In a way, what this book aims to achieve is shifting the gaze inside the contemporary industrial 'dark rooms' of news pictures: Instead of settling with their documenting powers that we so often take for granted, crowning them as one of the most reliable truth forms of representation as we know it (as news and as photographs), this is an attempt to make way to those hidden moments where news pictures are produced and acquire other additional meanings – a journey inside the regime of truth (Foucault, 1980). This regime expresses dominant practices of news and photography alike, pointing to the complex ways news pictures are produced by news organizations and to the ways those news organizations render a larger cultural industry in a constant complex relationship with parallel industries. This regime propels the cultural industries in a cultural economy, whereby news pictures are circulated under dominant systems of discourse. It is a regime of signification (Lash, 1988).

The next two chapters cover the ways in which the agency's pictures are made and are sold: Chapter 2 deals with the process at its 'local' stages through the daily work routines of the pictures' department at the agency's bureau in Jerusalem. Chapter 3 traces the process through all of the possible 'international' stages through which a news picture might travel – the agency's global pictures desk, the magazine desk and the keyword team, the global graphics desk and the administration (all located in Singapore), and sales. Finally, as the entire process comes full circle, it looks at what an agency news picture faces when it is sold to a client – *The Guardian* – and is then picked again as data for analysis by the agency's international desk.

Chapter 4 summarizes the main themes of the book, with an interpretive analysis of four events as they were covered by the agency's Israeli photographer: the firing of Israeli cannons from an IDF artillery base near Kibbutz Nahal Oz; the scene after the attack of a suicide bomber near the city of Tulkarem; the funeral of an Israeli officer in the city of Haifa; and carrot picking near the Israeli border close to the city of Gaza. In addition, it includes a semiotic analysis of four particular pictures that were selected by the photographer from the great arsenal of pictures taken at these events and sent to the local bureau in Jerusalem (all but the picture of the Israeli cannons, which was sent directly to the agency's global pictures desk in Singapore), and of the front page of *The Herald Tribune*, where one of the pictures was published.

In the final chapter, I conclude with a discussion on the main organizations who are dominating today's international photojournalism industry. In my discussion I focus primarily on the challenges that these powerful organizations are facing in the era of the internet, which has generated new rivals in a global market that was already bubbling with

old rivalries. Finally, I also suggest several paths for future inquiry in the still overwhelmingly under-researched field of photojournalism production.

Notes

- 1 On August 6, 2006 Hajj was accused of doctoring a picture of an Israeli F-16 dropping a defensive flare to seem as if it was firing several missiles at the city of Nabatiyeh in Lebanon (as it was suggested in the caption. See Shuckleford, 2006; Lappin, 2006).
- 2 Frosh (2013) describes a similar challenge, to an extent, for stock photographers and agencies so as to make every stock image one that “[...] cries out for attention”, but that, at the same time, “[...] threatens to become ‘noise’, distracting the viewer from neighboring images” (p. 144).
- 3 My observations at *The Guardian* were deliberately stopped by the paper’s head of photography at the time, who decided to end our relationship in a sudden move and refused to answer my requests (more on this in this chapter. The paper’s pictures operations are discussed in depth in Chapter 3).
- 4 One of the pictures was left on the ‘editing room’s floor’ in a decision taken by the agency’s local chief photographer in Jerusalem at the time of my observations. A semiotic analysis of one picture as it was published on the front page of *The Herald Tribune* was also conducted.
- 5 I was given free access to all the documents related to the agency’s pictures service from when it was established and up to year 2000.
- 6 Burns (1977) describes a similar incident – a case of “corporate paranoia” (p. xv. although the phrase seemed to him as too simple of a definition) – in his work on the organizational practices of the BBC.
- 7 Murdock and Golding criticized Adorno for not considering the “[...] concrete activities of the people who actually make the products the culture industry sells” (cited in Mosco, 2009, p. 96).
- 8 And later in UNESCO’s ‘culture industries’ (see UNESCO, 1982; Negus, 1997).
- 9 A textual analysis could, for example, reveal certain similarities between stylistic conventions. The semiotic analysis of the picture taken in the first event in Chapter 4, for example, could easily challenge Rosenblum’s distinction (e.g., between *space sensibility*, described as one of the key features in fine arts photography, as opposed to *place sensibility* that is often found in news and advertising. See Rosenblum, 1978b).
- 10 See, e.g., her description of news pictures style and their reception in page 14. In fact, she implies of such absence in work on production herself when she mentions that “[...] an analysis of production done in isolation cannot take into account the social limitations that are generated by the distribution system”. Or, that “[...] an analysis which seeks to understand the look of an object by focusing exclusively on market or audience demands, is also an incomplete analysis” (Rosenblum, 1978a, p. 121).
- 11 See also Frosh’s criticism (2003, pp. 50–54).
- 12 “We’re not in the business of offending people” said one from the captioning department while describing the process of verification (p. 81). But how it is that such careful conceptualization is embedded within the daily process itself is an important question to consider, particularly when processes of production are maintained by international institutions such as NG, and one which unfortunately is absent from their analysis.

- 13 Indeed, some of these matters were already addressed under Barthes' connotation procedures, but above all see his contribution to the relationship between the text and the press photo (Barthes, 1977).
- 14 What he describes under the limitations of his project as the result of "[...] secrecy, verging on paranoia, of many in the industry itself" (p. 23).
- 15 Although, as I will demonstrate later on, there are certainly various linear micro-structures in the 'timeline' of production at particular moments and sites (e.g., a chief photographer having the final say on assignments given to his photographers).

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