How our rage is represented: Acts of resistance among women photographers of the global south

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To cite this book chapter: Mitra, S., Creta, S., & McDonald, S. (2021). How our rage is represented: acts of resistance among women photographers of the Global South. In *Insights on peace and conflict reporting* (pp. 89-105). Routledge.

The power to create photographic images to support, substitute or (occasionally) subvert established regimes of representation (Hall, 1997) of places and people embroiled in crises and conflicts has long been concentrated amongst a few media organizations and predominantly male photographers from the Global North (Hadland et al., 2015; Hadland et al., 2016; Gursel, 2016; Ilan, 2018; Hadland & Barnett, 2018a). But the established hierarchies of global 'image operations' (Eder & Klonk, 2017) are being challenged as digital technology and cost-cutting measures within the international media industry create opportunities for a more diverse group of image producers to tell visual stories. Scholarly understanding of this shift when it comes to conflict- and crises-affected contexts have been skewed towards investigating the practices of non-professional image producers (e.g. Kennedy & Patrick, 2014; Eder & Klonk, 2017; Blaagard et al., 2017), but increasing attention on professional photographers is now being paid (Hadland et al., 2015; Hadland et al., 2016; Hadland & Barnett, 2018a). There is also a growing recognition within the international photographic industry that the global community of visual storytellers needs to be more inclusive of professional photographers from traditionally marginalised communities, and that promoting gender equity in this context is imperative (e.g. BJP Online, 2016; National Union of Journalists, 2019). This discussion within the photographic industry of empowering photographers from marginalised groups is in parallel with the growing recognition and academic investigation of the cultural mediation undertaken by local media professionals from the Global South for international media organisations (Mitra & Paterson, 2019; Palmer, 2019). In addition, the lack of the 'female gaze' in photography has come into focus recently in academic research (Hadland & Barnett, 2018b) as well as within the photographic industry (BJP Online, 2017). However, focused academic study of perceptions and practices of female photographers from the Global South has not been conducted to date.

In this chapter, we report findings based on analysis of semi-structured in-depth interviews conducted with 22 female photographers, predominantly from the Global South, regarding the inequities they see as inherent in photographic representations and practices in relation to marginalised communities as well as how they respond to them. The purpose of presenting this analysis is to allow practitioners' perspectives to inform the often-voiced idea that promoting equity, especially gender equity, in who (get to) tell visual stories will make a difference in the ways and means of representing the world, and its conflicts and crises, through photographs.

Theoretical background

Our understanding of the long-established unequal power relationships which connect the photographed, the photographer, photographic representations and the viewer of photographs in and through what we call the established regimes of photographic representations and practices is based upon a body of scholarly work encompassing Critical, Feminist and Post-Colonial perspectives. These scholarly interventions have shed light on iniquitous power dynamics entrenched in representations of, and photographic acts committed while representing and viewing, marginalised peoples and places, especially in contexts of overt, structural, cultural and gender-based violence (Brothers, 1997; Hall, 1997; Boltanski, 1999; Sontag, 2003; Chouliaraki, 2006; Butler, 2009; Zelizer, 2010; Linfield, 2010; Sealy, 2019). Cumulatively, these scholars have made visible the historical, sociological and political-economic forces and factors that constitute 'hegemonic' regimes of photographic representations and practices in relation to the photographic 'others': places and peoples around the world that traditionally have not held the same representational power to visually interpret the world through photographs. While the spoken and unspoken assumptions, stereotypes and biases that flow from these iniquitous power-dynamics within photography are central to our investigation, our focus in this chapter is on understanding both practitioners' perspectives towards photographic representations as well as photographic practices, rather than focusing on photographic images as many previous studies have done. We are particularly inspired by Azoulay's critical interventions (2008; 2015) stressing the importance of understanding acts surrounding the creation of photographs and their political implications. We posit that critical discussions of regimes of visual representation can benefit from a qualitative research focus on the traditionally neglected perspectives of photographers from the Global South and especially women photographers among them. In this, we are also indebted to Nothias's (2020) recent exposition of how moving away from the textual orientation of critical cultural studies and bringing in media practitioners' perspectives can lead to more grounded understanding that allows identification of otherwise invisible potential challenges posed to established regimes of media representations.

In particular, the focus that we adopt in this chapter is meant to critically address, through practitioners' perspectives, the core idea often expressed that a more gender-equitable and geo-culturally diverse group of photographers can make a difference in how we see the world, in general and in times of crisis in particular, through photographs. Beyond academia, this belief is also voiced periodically in photographic industry publications (BJP, 2017), by representative bodies of media practitioners (NUJ, 2019), and often by the representatives of the non-profit organisations which are working towards supporting photographers from under-represented communities and photographers identifying as female or non-binary (BJP Online, 2016). "When we are documenting our world through a homogenous lens… we are teaching our audience to see and understand the world through a westernised and masculine perspective," states Daniella Zalcman, the founder of one such initiative, Women Photograph (Abel-Hirsch, 2019).

While defensible (Hadland & Barnett, 2018b: 2013), articulations such as these, currently lack evidence based on practitioners' perspectives to support them. Based on the small number of such studies conducted, it is not *conclusive* that photographers from the Global South always depict their countries and communities differently from westernised perspectives (Mitra, 2019: 11-12). When it

comes to the gender of photographers, as Hadland and Barnett (2018b: 2013) state, 'the question of whether women 'see' differently from men has not been demonstrated decisively' (see also Campbell & Critcher, 2017: 1543). Campbell and Critcher (2017), in an investigation of correlations between women photographers' gender and their images, found that female photographers can play a role in bringing to fore under-represented topics in visual narratives of conflicts. However, they also found that the 'effect of gender was simultaneously denied and affirmed' (2017: 1549) by the seven female photographers they interviewed when it came to describing their photographic practices.

In this chapter, we extend the scope of investigating how the gender identity of photographers may play a role in photography to an understanding based on intersectionality that takes into account socio-economic and geo-cultural identities of female photographers as well (Brah & Phoenix, 2004; Yuval-Davies, 2006). Our departure point in exploring the perspectives of women photographers is based on recognising differences in lived experiences of women photographers in societies around the world and their embodied practices as women in their profession (Orgeret, 2016: 111-112; Palmer & Melki, 2018), rather than suggestive of any innate difference between women and men (Hadland & Barnett, 2018b: 2014).

It is our aim to fill the existing gap in analysis based on the perspectives of women photographers, especially those from the Global South, by identifying

Research Goal 1: commonalities in women photographers' articulations of what they view as established regimes of photographic representations and practices regarding the places and people with whom they have socio-economic and geo-cultural ties.

Research Goal 2: commonalities in how women photographers narrate their professional actions in response to what they view as established regimes of photographic representations and practices.

Method

Our methodological approach in this study is to rely on identifying common themes within the cognitive-normative perspectives of women photographers as well as within their self-narration of their professional practice (*Cf.* Hanitzsch & Vos, 2017). Most recent studies on professional photographers have been conducted with participants of the annual World Press Photo competition (Campbell & Critcher, 2017; Hadland & Barnett, 2018a; 2018b). Purposive sampling based on existing databases, as done in these studies, makes identifying potential participants and data gathering practicable and we adopted this approach in our study as well. However, given the scope of our study, we sought to interview photographers who took part or are taking part in international mentorship programmes run by Native Agency and Women Photograph, two non-profit initiatives which respectively seek to support professional photographers from under-represented communities (see nativeagency.org), and those who identify as female or non-binary (see

womenphotograph.com). These initiatives were chosen because they are global, rather than regional[1], in scope.

Invitations were sent to the photographers who took part in these mentorship programmes and interviews were conducted between March and May, 2020 by the authors based in Dublin, Ireland via the online platform Zoom with 22 women photographers who agreed to take part in the study. The audio-recordings made during these interviews with prior consent were then transcribed. Due to ethical considerations, the identities of, and identifiable information about, the photographers who participated in the study are confidential. However, the women photographers who were interviewed (21 in English, one in French) hailed from 18 different countries spread around the world. Two of the three photographers who were resident in countries in the Global North did not mention having personal ties to countries or communities in the Global South. Their responses however were important in allowing understanding of shared perspectives among women photographers across geo-cultural boundaries. The breakdown by region is in Table 1.

Region	**Number of Participants**
South America & Caribbean	3
North America & Europe	3*
Middle East & North Africa	3
Sub-Saharan Africa	4
South & South-East Asia	9
Total	**22**
* One photographer also had close ties to a country in the South and South-East Asian region.	

Table 1: Regional locations the interviewees self-identified as having close ties with

In keeping with previous studies which acknowledge the fluidity of genres in professional photographic practice and allows for self-definition of their professional practice by participants themselves (Hadland et al., 2015; Hadland et al., 2016; Hadland & Barnett, 2018a), we asked each participant to identify as a photojournalist or photographer. Only 10 of the 22 participants saw themselves neatly fitting into either of the two categories. The remaining 12 saw their roles as slightly broader or more specific, or offered other descriptors for how they self-identified professionally. The responses are summarised in Table 2.

Self-chosen professional descriptor	**Number of Participants**
Photojournalist	4*
Photographer	6
Documentary Photographer	8
Photographer more into visual arts	1
Visual storyteller	1
Storyteller	1
Narrative Journalist	1
Total	**22**
* One identified as a photojournalist as well as a documentary photographer, another as both a journalist and photojournalist	

[1] *Cf.* Arab Documentary Photography Programme (see arabdocphotography.org) or Invisible Photographers Asia (see invisiblephotographer.asia)

Table 2: Self-identified professional roles of interviewees

Our analytical approach in understanding the perceptions of these photographers is 'critical-realist' (Clarke et al., 2015) i.e. we recognise the subjectivity we bring as researchers to the investigation and interpretation of empirical data. Our subjectivity was also present through the pre-formulated questions asked during the interviews that were related to the research goals mentioned above. However, the questions were open-ended and intentionally broad, allowing participants to interpret the queries in their own way. For the purposes of research goal 1, the participants were asked if they think whether the place and people they said they have close ties with, have been misrepresented in global photographic images. In response, the photographers chose to speak of their belonging in terms of countries, geographical regions stretching across nation-states, physical location (e.g. rural/urban) within a country, socio-economic class as well as ethnic group. For the purposes of research goal 2, the photographers were asked if they aim to and are able to change or challenge how the place and people they have ties with have been represented. As follow-up, they were invited to give examples of any such attempts made by them.

During our reflexive analysis of the responses to these questions in the interview transcripts (Braun & Clarke, 2019), we maintained the quality of our interpretation by 'staying close' to the interview data (Clarke et al., 2015: 246) at all stages to identify the themes we describe below.

Photographers' perspectives on regimes of photographic representations and practices

Each of the 22 photographers responded in the affirmative when asked if in their view the people and places they had close ties to were misrepresented in photographs in the international media. Two overarching themes emerged from these responses, as described below.

Lack of respect

A common theme that emerged regarding perceptions of established regimes of photographic *practices*, was the lack of respect shown for non-Caucasian human bodies, particularly when it came to images of death resulting from crises and conflicts in the Global South. In speaking of the images used in international media of the conflict in her country versus photographs of those who lost their lives during the Covid-19 crisis in Italy, one photographer said,

> [E]verybody has been so fixat[ed] in capturing the dead bodies of that war. I think we've seen many of those images already and… for example in…the coverage in Italy, we know hundreds of people are dying every day. I have not seen a dead person's body… you can make those kinds of stories and that kind of coverage with preserving human dignity and people's privacy as well.

A photographer from the region said that Sub-Saharan Africans in general

> don't get offered the same courtesy as other continents in terms of reporting of deaths. You can see how black bodies are treated in the mass media. How our rage is represented.

She gave an example of visual reportage of the Ebola crisis in African countries by a current affairs magazine of international standing.

> I'm sure if this was in America… they would show that this person is dead but they wouldn't show us the body. This is a man who's dying…. The person was not covered. Their face was not covered. There was no dignity in the coverage. And this was masqueraded as a beautiful image. And they say it's a powerful image, and based on the parameters that are set with photojournalism, people have gotten away with so much of that.

The sense of non-Caucasian people being depicted with less respect than deserved was shared widely by photographers from elsewhere and extended to contexts beyond death as well. A photographer from the South and South-East Asian region spoke of how:

> [I]n a reputed magazine they are showing summer in European countries and summer in my country. They are showing a boy with a bucket, they are searching for water. And you will see in the European country, there they are sunbathing.

This sense of a selective focus on negative aspects of life experienced by non-Caucasian peoples was central to the second theme that emerged in the photographers' responses.

Perpetuating partial truths as universal

The other overarching theme spoke to the established regimes of *representation* as the photographers highlighted how photographic images of their countries or communities were based on a handful of selective and repetitive visual frames in lieu of visual narratives that offered multi-faceted perspectives. By and large, the photographers held the view that when it came to countries in the Global South, these selective frames were reserved for negative images of the place or people. Describing how her country is depicted, a photographer from Sub-Saharan Africa, said 'a lot of international photographers come…to show poverty, to show the dead, the conflicts'. Another photographer from a different country in the same region said, '[w]here there is blood, that's what they want'. The accumulated representational power of such negative visual frames to become universal was underscored by several. A photographer from the South and South-East Asian region mentioned,

> I'm not saying that we don't have any flaws as a country, of course we do, but what happened was that… the positives were totally neglected and that just became a

> pattern…that just became a narrative. So now a lot of the audience in the West, they don't really know what [my country] is.

Another photographer from the South American and Caribbean region mentioned how stereotypes perpetuated in international images were also often reflected in the major newspapers in her own country. Similarly, a photographer from the South and South-East Asian region spoke of how a Western reporter she worked with on a story had a 'very, very, very narrow…completely western perspective… It was just a very narrow-minded perspective without really…asking the right questions… and they were not willing to challenge it.' And she thought that some of her own colleagues who

> come down to work on stories over here and very specifically put out a very different impersonation of the country. And that really frustrates me a lot because it's not just the [foreign] editors, it's also your colleagues who have that visual narrative in their head.

Like her, some others also acknowledged that 'narrow minded perspectives' extended beyond 'foreign' photographers to photographers within particular national contexts who still were deemed to be outsiders to the community being depicted. A photographer from the South and South-East Asian region spoke of how ethnic minorities have been largely erased from images by photographers of her country. Another photographer from a Sub-Saharan African country said that images published in the national media of an impoverished neighbourhood she had close ties to in her home city, were most often of 'gangsters, people using drugs, children on the street, kids involved in gang activity, or just really poor'.

In sum, almost all the photographers shared the awareness that selective visual storytelling that relied on, and reified, long-established stereotypes was problematic because the repeated usage of these types of photographic representations accumulated over time to ultimately lay claim to a certain universal truth about these countries and communities. For most photographers, this awareness was linked to motivations to break away from these established regimes of representations which are detailed below.

Challenging and changing established regimes of photographic representations and practices

When asked if and how they attempt to challenge or change what they view to be misrepresentations of the communities they belong to, one photographer said she didn't feel comfortable claiming that she was shattering stereotypes through her photographic images. She saw the task as one of systemic dismantling that she hadn't personally taken steps towards to date. However, all the other 21 photographers shared the view that their own photographic practice was wholly or partly an attempt to shift what they considered 'narrow', 'Western', 'overly done' and 'one-sided' narratives about their

communities. These reactions were articulated in gender terms by many of the photographers by specifically referring to the regimes of representations they viewed as problematic as being perpetuated by 'white men in the industry', 'older white men', or 'male white photographers'. Some also chose to specifically criticise the photographs and photographic practices of famous western Caucasian male photographers when it came to representing their countries or communities. The sense of historical gender and racial injustices inherent in who gets to produce visual narratives was palpable among the photographers interviewed, with specific reference to the dominance of the 'white man's gaze' in the 'whole continuum of the history of photojournalism'. But the photographers also referred to this inequity as a contemporary problem that the international photographic industry had 'a long way to go' yet, to solve.

While acknowledging the power concentrated mostly among privileged male outsiders, a majority of the photographers however mentioned that they enjoyed different accesses as insiders to the communities they photographed. Being of a place meant they were less reliant on intermittent access to people and places. Most saw their continued presence in a locale as allowing them time and space for more thoughtful practice and the ability to tell different stories. Such belonging also meant superior knowledge of the place, understanding of the culture and speaking the language, allowing unique insights according to some. A number of the photographers also spoke of their differing access in the field which stemmed from their gender identity. Particularly, they spoke of having greater access to women's lived experiences and thus the ability to take their pictures to tell their stories. One photographer said that because of her gender, 'people trust me with kids, people trust me with vulnerable women's stories'. Another said she was able to transcend insider/outsider dynamics when working as a photographer in communities which she does not belong to because she doesn't appear as a 'scary person' or a 'threat' to the people she photographs.

These different accesses were integral to how the photographers described acting as professionals to challenge and change established regimes of representations. Their self-described professional actions could be understood as acts of resistance that sought to establish an alternative visual narrative of their regions, countries, communities and compatriots. Three themes emerged from the descriptions of these acts of resistance.

Restoring dignity

Many of the photographers spoke about how they consciously focus on treating and portraying people as valuable. They spoke both of treating people with 'respect' while photographing them as well as capturing their innate human 'dignity' in photographs.

In this context, a photographer from a conflict-ridden country said that her practice centers around 'letting people show themselves in their best version, instead of their worst.' A photographer from a Sub-Saharan African country said that a big motivation behind her work is to break down stereotypes, to show 'people of colour' as 'valuable people to society'. At the same time, she described how, 'photography can also be quite a violent and intrusive act, especially in private

moments or where violence has already occurred to these people' and that her aim is for the people she photographs 'to feel dignity. I want them to look at themselves and… feel good when they do look at these images'.

While the photographers' perceptions in this respect were based on a sense of belonging to the community they photographed, which meant that in their everyday photographic practices they related their professional role with personal responsibility, we must note here that some of the photographers also described their struggle to break free from the very same communities, because of imposed gender roles and gender-related biases. This added another layer of complexity to the task they chose to set themselves. A photographer who identified herself as of a minority group within a South-East Asian country mentioned,

> I've faced criticism within my own community, not even from the majority, as well as my own community culturally as well, it's not very common to have like a (minority group) woman photographer, going around, traveling and covering stories and just working independently as a freelancer…

Another photographer from the Middle East and North Africa region mentioned that when it came to how women photographers were viewed in her own community,

> They are not going to expect you to be a photographer. They are going to expect you to be a mother. Raise the baby at the end of the day … but I have a role to educate and I'm going to take that.

Sentiments such as these were echoed time and again by the photographers we interviewed. However, in spite of the complexity and in some cases ambivalence, the sense of responsibility to maintain and restore dignity of photographic subjects from within their own communities was strong amongst almost all interviewed photographers. Their sense of responsibility was further strengthened by their continued presence in the community as opposed to 'parachute' photographers. One photographer told a story of a well-known foreign photographer who visited a refugee camp in her country and took photos of a young woman at a vulnerable moment in a way that the photographer found disrespectful. She mentioned that the renowned photographer must have secured consent to take those photographs but spoke of the many social norms that were nonetheless transgressed by his act of photographing, which she wouldn't, and couldn't

> because I am coming back to them again and again. In my mind, I know that they are my people and that I have to go back to them and answer [to] them [about] what I have done to them.

Reinstating ignored partial truths

A second theme that emerged from the photographers' responses centred around challenging the established regimes which reify partial truths through selectively shedding light on other, less-exposed partial truths about their countries and communities. Often, these acts of reinstatement of partial truths were articulated by photographers as an intentional focus on private and personal spheres in their photography. One photographer spoke of looking for 'the nuances of everyday life that people won't necessarily take note of', in her images. For some, the intention behind the focus on the personal and the private was to show that where they are from is a place like any other, in spite of the unrest or social ills that may be present. One photographer said that,

> there used to be a lot of foreign photojournalists or documentary photographers that came to [my country] to portray the crisis or violence and all that. But what they did was reinforce stereotypes of [my country]. So my work is trying to undo what they did with those stereotypes and show [us] as we are, like people who go to birthdays or funerals or going away parties. It's a place where there are celebrations, and also there is sadness. But it's not just one thing, it's not just misery, it's more than that. It's people… wanting to have a normal life.

In the articulations by the photographers about changing visual narratives, a shared sense emerged of seeking to replace the over-exposed selective narrative frames with *more* and *different* narrative frames, while not claiming universal truth for them. As a photographer from the South America and Caribbean region said, photos from her country depicted

> mostly misery and people shown in a very undignified way and also a lot of violence, which is true, but I think that when you make a work that talks about [a country] as a generality, you should also include the other things.

For one of these photographers, her act of challenging established representational regimes extended beyond visual frames to modes of photographic storytelling. Describing how her country has been always depicted by outsider photographers as a place full of vibrant colours, she said that she's drawn to shooting photographs in black and white, in conscious contrast to those ubiquitous images.

Refusal

Four photographers specifically spoke about their resistance as refusing to produce certain types of images asked of them, specifically images which in their view would be a misrepresentation, an over-represented narrative, a visual story that perpetuated negative stereotypes, or victimized those who would be photographed. In their articulations regarding these acts of refusal, the photographers' identity as women and identification with women as photographic subjects, were strongly linked. One photographer spoke about a request from a foreign media outlet for photos of women who had been raped during a conflict.

> I said no. I refused, I sa[id] no, we can do something else. We told about the rapes, but we can make images of these women in their associations, where we can do, for example, the work which can cheer up these women. We can do something else. Women who are doing well in business is something else entirely, to overcome their pain. But no, they wanted only portraits of the raped women. I sa[id] if you want me to do that, I suggest this. If you don't want to, I can't do it. So we did not agree on this point there. We separated like that. I don't know what they did, but in any case, we didn't get along.

In two other instances, the photographers spoke about choosing to not exploit the insider access they had. A photographer spoke of a certain story on sex work in her country that she thought has been shot in the same way by foreign photographers for the past 20 years. She said,

> I had greater access [than outsider photographers] to do the same thing but I didn't because I am waiting to have a vision in a different way. So that the representation, [and] my pattern of history-telling, will evolve and change.

More weight is added to understanding this act of refusal as a powerful act of resistance in itself through an observation by a photographer from the North American and European region, who enjoys superior international mobility compared to most others interviewed for this study. She said that she had been increasingly questioning whether she should travel to other countries for her photographic work, or whether a local photographer is better placed to do the job.

> This is why I recently haven't been really working on these representations of other people, especially from other cultures because I've felt like, well there is always the danger of misrepresentation…. And maybe partly this thing has led me to make more artistic work, that I'm able to take the full responsibility of, that this is my truth, instead of portraying other people and claiming that this is the truth about them.

In sum, while 21 of the 22 photographers felt they were actively resisting established regimes of photographic representations and practices, the ways in which their acts of resistance take place were, according to them, not uniform. In this context, we should also note that some photographers mentioned that their very presence within the international and national photographic industries were in themselves, acts of resistance.

Discussion

In their understanding of their different, and in some ways privileged, accesses to certain spaces because of belonging to a community and/or being a woman, the views of the photographers who

took part in this study showed remarkable similarities to views on accesses while working in the field expressed by insider and/or women photographers and media workers elsewhere (*Cf.* Baroni, 2015; Orgeret, 2016; Campbell & Critcher, 2017; Palmer & Melki, 2018; Mitra, 2019; Palmer, 2019). The perceptions of the photographers regarding established regimes of photographic representations and practices towards marginalised people and places, also echoed issues discussed in previous scholarly works regarding selective visual framing and stereotypical 'negative' representations of marginalised peoples in photographs in ways that rob them of agency and human dignity, reducing them to universal symbols of suffering or misery (e.g. Boltanski, 1999; Sontag, 2003; Chouliaraki, 2006; Zelizer, 2010). While noting the confirmation based on practitioners' perspectives of previous critical discussions, it is more important to draw attention to the broader implications of the current findings.

Intersectional self-reflexivity

Firstly, what we believe to be noteworthy are the degree and depth of critical reflexivity towards photographic representations and practice among the photographers we spoke to. As recently noted by Nothias (2020), the "textual orientation" (p. 248) of scholarly studies on representational regimes means that often the reflexivity that media practitioners bring to their practice is overlooked in scholarly discussions. In his study on foreign correspondents working in Kenya and South Africa, Nothias found their perceptions and practices marked by what he termed "postcolonial reflexivity" (2020). Borrowing his term, and extending its scope, we posit that in our study with female photographers from the Global South, we found their professional perceptions and practices to be marked by *intersectional reflexivity* – awareness about and reaction against hegemonic regimes of representation based on both geopolitical and gender-based inequities.

This reflexive awareness among the photographers not only extended to the practices of those the photographers considered 'foreign', and photographers from within national contexts considered 'outsiders', but also to their *own* photographic practice. This intersectional *self*-reflexivity included recognising and embracing their own inability to present the whole truth through photographs, but was most prominent when it came to acknowledging and embracing the human element at the centre of the practice of photography.

Responsibility and resistance

Beyond documenting their intersectional self-reflexivity, identifying how the women photographers diagnose, but also seek to remedy, the problems inherent in established regimes of photographic representation and practice, as we have done above, in our view is the most important contribution of this current chapter.

We found that the photographers' sense of belonging interacted with their intersectional reflexivity towards photographic practice in ways that give rise to acts of resistance in and through their own professional work. The photographers' resistance also stemmed from understanding the importance of their very *presence*: as women, within an industry traditionally dominated by Caucasian males, in

certain marginalised places, among certain marginalised peoples, with the (reclaimed) power to visually interpret and mediate the representations of the people and the place they consider themselves to be part of, for the benefit of wider audiences. Azoulay emphasized that "the citizen of photography enjoys the right to see because she has a responsibility toward what she sees" (Azoulay 2008:144). In our case, we found that the photographers were aware that their *right* to show who they photographed came with the *responsibility* to show the people in ways that put respect towards individuals and communities at the forefront of their photographic representations and practice.

The photographic practices of most of these women photographers were marked by a sense of mobilisation against those forms of power that seek to define their own existence and that of 'their' people within global imagery. These acts of resistance, we argue, may be seen as identification among a majority of the photographers interviewed, with an ongoing, evolving, and as yet perhaps amorphous, critical and political project that they are both part of and giving shape to. Azoulay's formulation of photography as a civil act that necessarily requires a relationship (Azoulay, 2008) between the photographer and the photographed, with the twin potential arising out of that relationship to either reinforce or resist established regimes of representation (Azoulay, 2015), can help us make sense of this amorphous project of resistance. Almost all the women photographers we interviewed may be understood as having made a conscious choice: recognising the possibility of, and in some cases shaping, resistance to iniquitous power dynamics through active rehabilitation of connections between themselves and the people they photograph, as well as between photographic images and their viewers.

Conclusion

We believe that the findings related to the intersectional reflexivity among the interviewees, and the project of photographic resistance we found them to be giving shape to, provide some empirical basis to the often-voiced core idea that photographers from the Global South, especially women, can make a difference in how marginalised peoples and places, particularly those embroiled in conflicts and crises, have been and are depicted in photographs.

But any such optimism must be cautious. Whether or not the intersectional reflexivity or the acts of resistance described above are widespread enough to constitute a substantial challenge to established regimes of photographic representations and practices is beyond the remit of the current study to ascertain fully, given its limitations of being based on a purposive sample and its reliance on self-narration by practitioners of their own photographic practices.

Especially, we would like to note that it was clear from the responses of most of the interviewees that the ability to take on the responsibility to resist established regimes of representation were predicated on having reached a point in their career where they had acquired the ability to negotiate their terms with employers to an extent. For a majority of them, this was a result of pre-existing or acquired economic capital as well as substantial cultural and social capital (Bourdieu, 1986) within their professional field that they had built up in the course of their career. In plain terms, financial

considerations were not, or no longer, primary for many of the photographers interviewed and access to prestigious publications, platforms and channels to showcase their photography was more or less established for most. Efforts to support equitable redistribution of representational power for women photographers, especially those from the Global South, may in the future need to focus on doing away with the need to acquire such capital *first* to be able to resist established regimes of photographic representations and practices at an international level.

In addition, we also offer that the project of resistance described above should be understood as deeply personal. Firstly, for the photographers it entailed creating, reinstating and maintaining a civil contract between *themselves* and their photographic subjects and secondly the photographers' extension of this civil contract to audiences around the world through their images, may mirror to an extent their own need to gain acceptance into and take part in the global "citizenry of photography" (Azoulay, 2008: 166).

At the same time, the cumulative effect of these individual, perhaps even isolated, acts of resistance by women photographers that we captured in this study cannot be discounted wholly either. The fact remains that if a project of resistance taking shape even among a select few photographers is to flourish, then it will need to be actively supported. Future initiatives to make the global community of photography more inclusive will need to recognise, foster and amplify these acts. The mentorship programmes to support photographers of under-represented groups from whose cohorts we drew our sample of photographers, could prove crucial to granting them such acceptance. Thus, it will be important to take these initiatives into scholarly purview in the future to further investigate their ability to empower photographers from marginalised communities through transferring economic, social and cultural capital to them.

Beyond academia, as members of the viewing public, we will also need to share future responsibility. We will need to play our part within the citizenry of photography by being aware, and raising awareness about, *who* gets to produce the photographic representations of conflicts and crises that we consume, and by recognising and debating the ethical and political questions embedded within the photographic acts which surround the production of these images.

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