

**UNIVERZA V LJUBLJANI  
FAKULTETA ZA DRUŽBENE VEDE**

**FOTOGRAFIJA IN KONSTRUKCIJA KOLEKTIVNIH IDENTITET:  
PRIKAZOVANJE “DRUGEGA” V SLOVENSKI NOVINARSKI  
FOTOGRAFIJI**

**PHOTOGRAPHY AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF COLLECTIVE  
IDENTITIES: REPRESENTATION OF THE “OTHER” IN SLOVENE  
PHOTOJOURNALISM**

**Ilija Tomanić Trivundža**

**doktorska disertacija**

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**Mentor: red. prof. dr. Hanno Hardt**

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

*When we learn to speak, we learn much more than words.*

John Hartley, Understanding News

*Seeing comes before words. The child looks and recognizes before it can speak. But there is also another sense in which seeing comes before words. It is seeing which establishes our place in the surrounding world; we explain that world with words [...]. The relation between what we see and what we know is never settled.* John Breger, Ways of Seeing

Print journalism is often claimed to be the first draft of history. But very few verbal descriptions of major news events survive the fading of newspaper and magazine pages. Images, on the other hand, often become mnemonic shorthand, icons and metonymies that significantly contribute to the formation and preservation of a collective consciousness and a historical memory of important events.<sup>1</sup> This, however, does not mean that visuals are privileged modality of contemporary news reporting. In spite of the ever growing visualness of everyday life in contemporary Western societies and the near universal acceptance of the popular adage "no pictures - no news" by media outlets, something that has turned into a self-fulfilling prophecy, news reporting and its adjoining and accompanying discourses still strongly privilege text over the image. Visuals in media still function not so much to narrate a story as to support and give validity to journalistic narrative in written or spoken form. Domination of image over text in news reporting is generally a short-lived aberration from the norm and is characteristically used in the reporting of events of exceptional magnitude and social consequence. As clearly indicated by events as diverse as the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, the September 2001 terrorist attacks, or, to offer a more localised example, the 1991 war of Slovene independence, the sudden increase in the use of images is indicative of perceived crisis and the exceptionalness of the event – and declines as events "normalise" or their interpretation crystallises.

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<sup>1</sup> A recent advertising campaign for a leading Slovene daily clearly illustrates this point. Delo, whose status as a newspaper of record has always been based on the quality and exclusiveness of textual news and opinionated articles, based its campaign on a series of posters consisting of uncaptioned press photographs depicting, or rather, standing in for the major events that marked the "50 years of our time". While the central message of the advertising campaign proclaimed that Delo has been "setting the standards for objective and professional treatment of the journalistic word" (my emphasis), even the campaign website (<http://www.delo.si/50>), which as an interactive tool offers virtually unlimited scope for the reproduction of archive textual material, prioritised images over text.

## 1.1 Photography and collective identities – introductory notes

This thesis is essentially about the power of photography, a power that arises out of the ambiguous and dynamic relationship between image, text, audiences, meaning-making and social institutions, which vie with another to secure their position within the network of social, economic and political power relations. It investigates the ways in which photographs are used in the Slovene press to communicate, perpetuate and construct social identification, a sense of collective belonging to the imagined community of nation in the context of news reporting. As such, it brings together investigation of media/journalism and national identity/nationalism with photography, a link that has remained largely unresearched despite the close historical, paradigmatic and epistemological interconnection of the three fields.

Neglect of this link is both surprising and symptomatic of the paradigms under which the critical investigation of journalism, national identity and photography has developed over the past decades. It is surprising, because studies of nationalism and national identity have for at least three decades been pointing out the central role of mass communication in giving rise to the idea of nation as a political community and for the routinised, everyday maintenance of such collective belonging. At the same time, the neglect of the visual is also symptomatic of the ambivalent attitudes towards the visual that have characterised many of the (Western) scholarly debates on modernity and postmodernism. I am referring here to the dialectics of privileging ocularcentrism as a means of acquiring knowledge, and the simultaneous denigration of image and vision, the ambivalence that results in a somewhat paradoxical proclamation (most often condemnation) of the primacy of the image in contemporary society, while simultaneously refusing to make it an object of scientific inquiry. This reluctant stand could be termed "rational bias", as the study of images is generally eschewed in favour of text on the basis of two deep-seated, but seldom reflected presuppositions. The first postulates the rationality of human behaviour in the spheres of politics, economics and communication, the second links images with irrationality and emotions, contrasting it with the alleged rationality of the mind and the written word that permeate popular and institutionalised understanding of the subject.<sup>2</sup> As John Berger pointed out, in Western consciousness, images are not just like women, images are women, and the terrain of rational, positivism-inspired social sciences has

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<sup>2</sup> The second proposition builds on a set of popular, traditional (interrelated) dichotomies, such as those between science and art, knowledge and imagination, truth and appearance, masculinity and femininity etc.



generally not proved to be much more forgiving of their alleged feminine irrationality than the terrain of art history of which Berger speaks in *Ways of seeing*.

But why are images so evocatively used by the media (mostly) for coming to terms with crisis and history? Where is the seductive power of images to supply widely resonating cues for societal self-understanding located? In part, the power of the (photographic) image stems from its ability to offer the illusion of participation, of "bearing witness", "being there", "seeing with one's own eyes". But more importantly, the power of photography lies in its simultaneous descriptive fidelity and symbolic quality, its ability to surpass the descriptive limitations of the language. As this thesis will demonstrate, it is precisely photography's inherent ambiguity, its symbolic potential and metonymic nature that enable the still photographic image to stand in for individually and collectively (re)produced interpretations of the present (as crisis) and past (as memory). In this process, commonly recognisable images come to serve as powerful mnemonic nodes that structure societal narratives of self-understanding and their personal interpretations – of which national identity is but one, albeit central, example.

This study is a contribution to the steadily burgeoning volume of current scholarly endeavour aimed at repositioning the role of visuals within the investigation of mass communication and art. Inspired by recent work produced under the loosely defined heading of "visual culture" and influenced by the overall intellectual project of societal and cultural critique that emerged from (British) cultural studies, traditions of critical communication research and postmodern approaches to theorising photography, this thesis positions visual representations in journalism as a specific form of political communication, embedded within, and hence structured by, the broader cultural domain of national identity.

## 1.2 Preliminary mapping of the field - discourses of crisis

Journalism, national identity and photography share a number of common paradigmatic and epistemological traits, historical and structural transformations, even aspirations. Moreover, they also share the uncertainty of the present moment. In spite of the divergence of their respective histories and institutional positions, recent critical debates on national identity, media/journalism and photography are all permeated with a discourse of crisis, extinction and

death. Photography, for example, has been repeatedly pronounced dead amid waves of collective euphoria and nostalgic lamentations that started in the early 1980s with the introduction of digital(ised) imagery, spread further during the 1990s with the popularisation of computer editing software, and accompanied the proliferation of digital cameras among amateurs at the turn of the millennium. As a rule, these proclamations are linked solely to a narrow understanding of photography's truth status – the notion of the indexical veracity of the photographic image – and consequently overlook the equally apocalyptic developments from the perspectives of media markets and changing professional practices, such as cuts in newsroom budgets, the declining number of paid professional staff, the increased use of stock images in news reporting etc. This in turn has narrowed the debate on photography's possible futures, the “post” and “after” photography, “Photography 2.0”, that has swept through the field for over two decades.

Nation-states have similarly been diagnosed as dead or dying in the course of the post-Wall and post-Westphalian restructuring of the global economic and political order, despite the violent revival of nationalism in the years following the breakup of the Eastern Bloc. Amid rapid economic globalisation, states, nations and national identities are claimed to be under siege, losing ground or melting down, with this climate of uncertainty giving rise to right-wing populism and the revival of ethnic essentialism throughout Europe. The (self-)erosion of state power and autonomy, coupled with the gradual eradication of the public service domain (championed by the New Right in the 1980s and largely continued by the New Left over the past two decades), and the emergence of power arenas above or beyond direct state control (e.g. the European Union (EU) or the International Monetary Fund (IMF)), have significantly contributed to the weakening of traditional identity links between individuals and state, and, by extension, between individuals and the institutionalised political system. Within the political and economic framework of the nationstate and its problematic equation of *ethnos* and *demos*, the crisis of national identity is in fact a crisis of political identity among individuals and institutions.

In turn, the crisis of political identity is linked to media and journalism. It has been persistently argued that changes in media ownership (ownership concentration, conglomeration), their mission (favouring entertainment over information, commercialisation, political conformism), and the nature or style of reporting (tabloidisation, sensationalism) have significantly contributed to the mounting disenchantment with institutionalised politics,

manifested in the rise of political cynicism, apathy, distrust of political elites, decline of participatory citizenship and erosion of the faith in the political system as such. Although the media has long been accused of failing to provide citizens with the information necessary for their full and informed political participation,<sup>3</sup> recent developments suggest not only the erosion of the media's watchdog function but also an end to professional(ised) journalism as such. The closure or destaffing of newspapers in the US and the resurgence and re-entrenchment of the party press in Europe, coupled with increased (attempts to exert) political control over public media, the open political partisanship of commercial TV channels and the popularisation of opinionated blog journalism at a global level indicate a redefinition of the profession's self-proclaimed allegiance to providing relevant information in the form of facts, in favour of opinionated, often unprofessional reporting.

At this point, I do not wish to enter into a debate on the validity or over-bleakness of each individual claim regarding the overarching discourses of crisis and death, as most of these issues will be addressed in subsequent chapters. What I would like to do at this stage is to point to the underlying rationale of their interconnectedness – their common investment in the socio-political project of modernity. By this I mean their individual as well as joint contributions to the modernist project of fulfilling the Enlightenment ideal of people building a new society through the collective exercise of reason and thus (re)uniting the human subject with the world through a process of self-understanding, and, by extension, self-realisation. This process, however, was fundamentally saturated with issues of observation and visualisation. Modernity's forms of knowledge essentially depend on a scopic regime that equates seeing with knowledge. They postulate observation as a primary means of achieving knowledge and understanding of the underlying laws that govern both the physical and social worlds. But this underlying principle is not restricted to the formation of knowledge as scientific endeavour – journalism and mass media share many of the methods, epistemology and prejudices of the positivistic conceptualisation of science (Hartley 1992, 174). Vision is the central medium of journalism and permeates it from the very conceptualisation of professional routines to the popular metaphors used to describe it (e.g. press as *watchdog*). As Hartley vividly observed, journalists are "heroic eyewitness, piercing jungly ignorance with a steady eye of a dispassionate observer" (ibid., 143) in a project of visualisation of truth.

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<sup>3</sup> For example, proposals for radical reforms of the press with the aim of revitalising political participation have been explicitly voiced as such at least since the early 20th century (e.g. Tönnies 1922/1998, Dewey 1927/1998; cf. Splichal 1999).

Journalism establishes visions of social order and as such quickly joined other (19<sup>th</sup> century) agents and institutions of control, contributing to an ongoing articulation of the proper bounds of social behaviour. Of equal if not greater importance to the purpose of this study is journalism's role in "making visible" not only the social reality but also the media's audience to itself, of converting and binding the individualised and dispersed audience members into a larger community that is unattainable through the individual's personal experience. In the West, the development of mass/news media audiences had generally paralleled the gradual establishment of a mass electorate within the framework of the nation-state, establishing the link between communication, the functioning of the political system and the political rights of individuals. Media audiences did not emerge simply as political publics (e.g. Tönnies 1922/1998) or a "class of political spectators" but emerged on the "political stage as actors in a *national drama*" (Chaney 1993, 20; my emphasis). The rise of the media was part of modernity's broader drive for systematic rational control over the environment, and newspapers quickly became instrumental not only to the functioning of the political system, i.e. the modern state with professionalised institutions and elected public representatives, but also for stabilising it in a form of nation-state through periodic, routine communication (Althusser would say *interpellation*) of a political community through a shared language (Tarde 1898/1969) in order to produce a sense of belonging to what Anderson calls the *imagined community*. Communication studies frequently acknowledge that the linkage between democracy and communication has "traditionally been located in the idea of community and its principles of equality, [and] participation" (Hardt 2004, 4). What is generally less emphasised, though, is the fact that this community is conceptualised as a national one. At least in Europe, the modern theory of a sovereign democratic state "presupposes the idea of a 'national community of fate' – a community which rightly governs itself and determines its own future" (Held 1989, 236). The political sovereignty was – and in practice mostly still remains – not so much a universal human right but a nationality right, linked to citizenship of a particular nation state<sup>4</sup>; through the concepts of popular sovereignty and implied equality of membership, the democratic nation-state thus binds together bourgeois aspirations for autonomous power, modernity's search for the rational, the Enlightenment ideal of the individual's dignity and nationalism, as a secular form of collective identification.

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<sup>4</sup> Nationalism's link to modernity thus largely derives from its essentially secular presupposition of the existence of nations "imagined as sovereign communities of fundamentally equal members" which "immediately and dramatically increases the value and significance of each human life." (Greenfeld 2004, 42)

Photography entered the national/rational foundation of political modernity not only as one of its outputs, but more importantly, as a supreme instrument for making truth claims about reality. Photography has been designed as an "ideal Cartesian instrument" which, like "scientific procedures, seems to provide a guaranteed way of overcoming subjectivity and getting at the real truth" (Mitchell 1992, 28), based on the promise of the indexical guarantee of image veracity. As such, it was used to support, control, advance and manage the modernist project advanced by institutions of the (nation-) state long before photographic images found their way into the press. Photography is embedded in the history of state-sponsored construction, subjugation and exploitation of external and internal Others formed along dividing lines of race, ethnicity or social class.<sup>5</sup> Its capacity for visualisation of taxonomies, the cataloguing and archiving of social deviance or normality, and the mapping of both people and places through the creation of positivist knowledge, made it an integral part of colonialist and imperialist projects in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>6</sup> In the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, photography's relationship to the (nation-) state was reconceptualised in the light of its penetration into the field of journalism. This reconceptualisation came at a time when both the written word (due to sensationalism and excessive partisanship in the political press) and the state (due to class and gender-based limitations of political rights, the malfunctioning of capitalism etc.) were undergoing a serious crisis of legitimacy. Photography's entry into news reporting was, as Schiller (1981) notes, an extension of positivism into the arena of journalism, and photographic images seemed to confirm the possibility of attaining impartial knowledge through non-symbolic reflection of an objective world, enabled by the application of proper scientific methods and instruments. In short, this enabled photography to establish itself as a vehicle that provided direct, unmediated access to the truth and hence became one of the primary ways of defining the real. On the one hand, this made photography a prime instrument of progressive politics.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, the documentary reconceptualisation of

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<sup>5</sup> The interconnected history of state, national identity (most often in the form of nationalism) and photography is not limited to the conquest and exploitation of mainly European overseas colonies, but is equally informative in respect of internal Others, such as North American Indians in the United States, ethnic minorities like Bretons in France, or the internal savages of lower (working) classes or social deviances (e.g. crime and mental illness through criminology or eugenics).

<sup>6</sup> For more on the interconnection of state apparatuses and photography, see for example Tagg (1988) on the use of photography for surveillance by the police and the judicial system, Sekula (1986/1992) on regulation of the (deviant) body, Edwards (1994) on co-variation of the scientific and institutional gaze of the imperialist state, and Hight and Sampson (2002) on the linkage between photography and colonialism.

<sup>7</sup> E.g. the Soviet avant-garde and German working-class press of the 1920s or the reformist projects of J. Reese or L. W. Hine in the US a decade earlier.

photography<sup>8</sup> made it a prime vehicle for closing down the openness and disputability of social reality.

The historical specificity of documentary mode is above all predicated in the new structure of address – a rhetoric of recruitment [...] of *subjects* as citizens, called to witness, called to reality and coherence, precisely at the time when the established regimes of sense and sociality were profoundly threatened by a crisis that was never solely political or economic. (Tagg 2008, 125)

What Tagg reminds us of is that documentary photography (and by extension its subgenre of press photography) became an integral part or strategy in the governance of the modern, interventionist state by implicating the individual in the politics of administration through the act of "dramatisation of witness", calling him or her to duty as a civic subject. To look at documentary images of social and economic crisis was "to bear witness to the truth of citizenship and to renew again the ethical contract between the citizen and the State as the form of our collective participation in that truth." (ibid., 126) Press photography's popularisation and institutionalisation built precisely on the perpetuation of this idea of witnessing. Thus, for example, the ethical justification of gazing at the pain of others was justified precisely on the grounds that the viewer was not an apolitical individual from a dispersed media audience but precisely the opposite – a (concerned) citizen of a modern (nation-) state. Similarly, the power of press photography emanated from its perceived power to mobilise or sway public opinion, to influence the opinions and attitudes of audience, interpellated into eyewitnessing political subjects. By the late 1970s, audiences, journalists, political elites and the military were firmly convinced that photographs could change the course of foreign policy decisions, outrage entire nations or even end wars.

The current crisis in photography, and photojournalism in particular, derives from the powerful social responsibility with which the medium was entrusted, the responsibility to produce and safeguard both modern objectivity (on a collective level) and subjectivity (on an individual level). It is not so much a crisis of the medium as such as a crisis of the underlying rationale that determined its currency and informed its social uses. In short, it is essentially a crisis of dissolution of the modernistic project and its Enlightenment ideals and has to be *imagined* in the context of its adjoining fields – journalism/media and national identity/state.

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<sup>8</sup> See e.g. Solomon-Godeau (1991, 169-183) for an account of the emergence of documentary style.

It also points to the fact that any response to the crisis in this particular field will fall short unless it incorporates changes within the adjoining fields.<sup>9</sup>

### 1.3 Research design – an outline

This thesis investigates the role press photography plays in the process of mediated communication of collective identities. As such, it is necessarily positioned within the contours of the overlapping fields of investigation sketched out in the introductory note above. Its primary focus is on the field of (press) photography and related issues of visual communication and representation, while national identity and media/journalism serve as an analytical framework for the investigation. How is nation "imagined" and "talked about" through the use of press photographs? What is communicated to audience/citizens through images in the press? What discursive resources and strategies are used in the process? How does the visual coverage relate to the verbal accounts of the news within which press images are embedded?

As the main research questions indicate, the study is focused on representational aspects of press photography and does not explore the production and reception side of the communication process. What it offers is a detailed qualitative analysis of the communicative value of press photographs within the analytical framework of national identity. The dissertation focuses on the analysis of visual articulation of *privileged discursive elements* of Slovene national identity and their structuring of news reporting of domestic and international events. *Privileged discursive elements* are articulation points of national identity provided by an array of nation-state institutions that form the basis of and delineate a framework within which national belongings are enacted by individuals. They range from canonised interpretations of history and culture (that enter public knowledge through education, publishing, museums, popular culture, selection of state holidays etc.) to myths and symbols that saturate the discourse of political parties or state representatives. The analysis traces the presence or absence of these privileged discursive elements as visual and textual news *frames*. Although generally overlooked by framing research, photographs are very salient articulators of news frames and by extension very effective in promoting particular problem definitions,

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<sup>9</sup> Fred Ritchin's "interactive cure" for photography, outlined in his recent book *After photography* (2008), is an illustrative example of this line of reasoning and its shortcomings.

causal interpretations, moral evaluations and/or treatment recommendations for the reported issue.

I have applied my exploratory qualitative research of visual framing to two events that generated extensive public debate on Slovene national identity, either by stabilising or challenging the established constellation of its privileged discursive elements. The two events – the 2003 referendum on whether Slovenia should join the EU and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), and the 2006 eviction of the Strojans, a Roma family– were chosen to correspond to the two dimensions of the identity formation process – articulation of self in relation to external and internal Others. The EU/NATO referendum was selected due to its prominence and relevance for national identity – the pre-referendum public debate(s) served as a wide-ranging public re-evaluation of Slovenia’s project of political, social and economic independence and discourse elites decidedly and zealously participated in the hegemonic struggle to secure the opinion consensus – which depended heavily on the ability to clearly define Slovenia’s external Others. In the case of internal Others, other groups (people from former Yugoslav republics, immigrants, Izbrisani (Erased)<sup>10</sup> etc.) and events might have been chosen, but the eviction of the Strojans family was selected because of intense (event-focused) media coverage and because the negotiation process for the resettlement of the Strojans called into question some of the fundamental idea(l)s and symbols in which Slovene national identity was traditionally grounded. I analysed coverage of the two events in two daily newspapers (Delo and Dnevnik) and two weekly magazines (Mladina, Mag) to take account of a broad spectrum of political orientation, different ownership structures and above all, professional routines and availability of sources. I also analysed the three months leading up to the EU/NATO referendum to determine the textual and visual framing of the pre-referendum debates and their referencing of privileged discursive elements of national identity, while, in the case of the Strojans story, the sample included material from the start of the affair in October 2006 to its partial resolution in January 2007. The two events were not analysed in isolation but as part of the “flow” of daily news – thus other sections of newspapers and magazines were scrutinised in order to reveal direct and indirect articulations of national boundary in its daily, “banal” form.

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<sup>10</sup> Izbrisani or Erased are former Yugoslav citizens who were “erased” from Slovenia’s registry of permanent residence holders in 1992 after they failed or refused to apply for Slovene citizenship by December 26th 1991. The “erasure” stripped about 18.300 people (nearly one percent of population) of all their social rights, making them defacto foreigners residing illegally in Slovenia.



The structure of the thesis was to a large extent defined by (problems with) existing research in the three interconnected fields of investigation outlined above. Photography and national identity in particular lack a coherent, overarching set of theoretical dispositions on the objects of their study and are usually subsumed within other disciplines and fields of investigation, such as sociology or social psychology in the case of national identity, and media studies or art history for photography. This lack of strong consensus about theory, methods, techniques and pertinent research questions is particularly evident in the rapidly expanding body of literature on the two subjects. In the case of national identity, the bulk of contemporary academic output consists of a myriad of case studies that contribute fairly little to the gradual accumulation of a coherent set of theoretical dispositions, while writings on photography very often remain entrenched within the domain of (evaluative) criticism. The two fields are also marked by a deep-seated theoretical divide between two epistemologically and ideologically opposing camps that could be termed "naturalists" and "culturalists".<sup>11</sup> Consequently, the thesis places a lot of attention on finding precise definitions of the basic concepts in an attempt to bridge both the gaps in the existing research and the exclusivism of the bipolarised theoretical imaginary. Chapter 2 thus presents the outline of the two theoretical strands and an attempt to think photographic theory beyond existing models and divisions – through what are termed privileged discursive elements of photographic theory. Building on the proposed model, Chapter 3 investigates how these privileged discursive elements are articulated within a specific photographic discourse – photojournalism. The definition it offers is based on the profession's practical and ethical standards and highlights photojournalism's inherent dialectics of factual and symbolic communication. Chapter 4 continues with investigation of press photography through a discussion of its envisaged effects. It examines the efficacy of news photographs as framing devices and situates photography within the fractured paradigm of framing research. Chapter 5 moves the discussion onto the terrain of national identity in order to identify the analytical categories – privileged discursive elements of Slovene national identity that will function as potential news frames in the subsequent analysis. Finally, Chapter 6 and 7 present the results of the qualitative study of visual framing of reporting pre-referendum debates on membership of the EU and NATO and the eviction of the Stojan

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<sup>11</sup> The fault line between *primordialists* and *modernists* within the studies of nationalism and national identity basically corresponds to the one between *essentialists/formalists* and *antiessentialists/postmodernists* within writings on photography. The latter are both ideological critiques of former positions which attempt to demystify the inbornness or naturalness of the phenomena in question by pointing to their social constructedness and the (ideological) role of social institutions in the process of this construction. Compare for example Eric Hobsbawm's concept of invented traditions of national identity (1983/1992) with John Tagg's (1988) analysis of the role 19th-century state apparatuses played in securing the dominant understanding of photography as proof, to name but two famous texts from the "culturalist" traditions.

family. Coupled with findings from my previous research, the results are critically evaluated in Chapter 8, providing their necessary (re)contextualisation in order to support the central argument of the thesis – that national identity acts as a powerful underlying criterion that implicitly guides the selection and framing of published images of both national and international events (in terms of types of published photographs, their presence/absence and placement) on the pages of Slovene print media.

## 2 THEORISING PHOTOGRAPHY

*Photography is a major force in explaining man to man.* Edward Steichen (in Time)

*A photograph is a secret about a secret. The more it tells you the less you know.* Diane Arbus, Five Photographs (in ArtForum)

*Nothing, perhaps, is harder to write about intelligently than photography. This is true for several reasons, some of which have to do with the equivocal status of the photographic object itself and some of which are related to the unstated assumptions controlling the discursive fields of photographic history and criticism.* Linda Nochlin, introduction to A. Salomon-Godeau: Photography at the Dock

Ever since its inception,<sup>12</sup> photography has proved to be notoriously difficult to define and grasp theoretically. Systematic attempts to conceptualise the medium have been few and far between, scattered on the fringes of various disciplines not always sympathetic to the photographic image or its mechanical reproducibility. The project of forming a coherent body of photographic theory initiated during the late 1970s and early 1980s by a circle of leftist authors nearly came to a halt in the decade following the fall of the Berlin Wall and the somewhat fashionable demise of grand narratives within the social sciences. Thus paradoxically, the theory of photography experienced a crisis before it was even fully formed.<sup>13</sup> As photography appeared to have lost its emancipatory potential, many authors abandoned the contested territory of photographic theory in favour of a less problematic area of photographic history, giving a bitter aftertaste to the victory over the essentialist/formalist understanding of the medium that the antiessentialist/postmodernist "contributions towards photography theory" have achieved.

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<sup>12</sup> As Batchen 1999 warns us, it is much more appropriate to talk about photography's inception or conception than simply of its discovery, since the photographic process was extensively "imagined" in the decades before the actual "invention", i.e. the overcoming of the practical obstacles of fixing images made by light.

<sup>13</sup> See Batchen 1999, 2-7 or Kelsey and Stimson 2008, vii-xxxi for particularly informative accounts on the present crisis of theorising photography.

The overall theoretical underdevelopment of the field can be attributed to at least four factors. In part, photography's theoretical deficit is a direct consequence of its location on the cusp of three different fields of scholarly inquiry – natural science, social science and humanities (Price and Wells 2000, 24). Consequently we are faced with three divergent and (at least in the case of social science and humanities) competing discourses – technology (photography as optics, chemistry etc.), signification (photography as practices of representation and meaning production), and aesthetics (photography as art). Furthermore, many of the discussions on the "nature" of the medium were in fact not theoretical works but fall into the domain of normative, evaluative and opinionated criticism. Even a number of the most influential texts on photography – such as Roland Barthes' *Camera lucida* (1981) and Susan Sontag's *On photography* (1977) – fall into what Burgin (1982) criticised as the discourse of connoisseurship, which permeates most historical accounts of the medium.<sup>14</sup> Thirdly, while the proliferation of antiessentialist/postmodernist writing on photography during the 1970s and the 1980s did secure the foundations for a non-technical and critical social understanding of photography, the development of independent, autonomous theory of the medium in fact turned out not to be one of its primary concerns. As John Tagg somewhat radically formulated: "Photography [...] is a flickering across a field of institutional spaces and it is this field [of institutional spaces] we must study, *not photography as such*" (1988, 63; my emphasis). Finally, photography's elusiveness to classification, which led Barthes (1981, 4) to claim that the medium is essentially unclassifiable<sup>15</sup>, derives from the medium's dual, contradictory nature. Every photograph is a dialectical object, at the same time a transparent and culturally coded entity, and both major paradigms structuring the writings on photography (*essentialist/formalist* and *antiessentialist/postmodern*), have fundamentally failed in their explanatory missions because they failed to account for the medium's inherent dialectical character.

This chapter opens with an outline of the two major theoretical strands of photographic theory, which are then evaluated in the light of the proclaimed explanatory crisis of

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<sup>14</sup> Sontag's writing (1977) is particularly illustrative of Burgin's call to distinguish between theory and criticism – although opening up a number of crucial issues on the "nature" of the medium (influence of context, ethics), her essays provide little argumentation (and no references) for positions advocated by the author and appear as a flow of opinionated judgements and inferences on a bewildering number of issues.

<sup>15</sup> "From the first step, that of classification (we must surely classify, verify by samples, if we want to constitute a corpus), Photography evades us. The various distributions we impose upon it are in fact either empirical (Professionals / Amateurs), or rhetorical (Landscapes / Objects / Portraits / Nudes), or else aesthetic (Realism / Pictorialism), in any case external to the object, without relation to its essence [...]. We might say that Photography is unclassifiable." (Barthes 1981, 4)

contemporary photographic theory. The final part of the chapter is an attempt to conceptualise photographic theory beyond existing models and divisions through what are termed *privileged discursive elements of photographic theory*, which will serve as guidelines for the definition of photojournalism in the subsequent chapter.

## 2.1 Notes on the theory of photography – two traditions

*Formalism/essentialism* focuses on the relationship of the photographic image to reality and consequently builds its claims on the existence of intrinsic and universal properties of photographs. The essentialist approach is by no means a monolithic tradition and an inclusive classification would make bedfellows out of authors as disparate as Elizabeth Eastlake, Oliver Wendell Holmes, André Bazin, John Szarkowski, Roland Barthes and Steven Shore.<sup>16</sup> What separates the early contributors to the tradition from their 20<sup>th</sup>-century successors is what I will call a gradual epistemological trajectory, a shift of focus of inquiry from the *camera* to the *image* itself. Early 19<sup>th</sup>-century reflections drew on the inherent realism of the medium, on its indexical characteristics. The essence of photographs, this "a mirror with a memory", whose primary value was conceived as offering a verifiable proof of objects, derived from the understanding that images were created by direct physical connection with the Real. They were written by light, by Nature itself. The power of the images obtained through the optical, mechanical and chemical functioning of the apparatus resided in their detailed and accurate reproduction of material reality. What is photography but facts, wrote Eastlake,<sup>17</sup> designating it as mere purveyor of "cheap, prompt and correct" factual knowledge with no artistic merits (Eastlake 1857/1980, 65, cf. Holmes 1859/1980).

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<sup>16</sup> Barthes is perhaps the most "controversial" member of this classification. While his work in general provided an important cornerstone of cultural critique, his treatment of photography in *Camera obscura* – particularly his desperate and at times overstretched search for the essence of photography – positions him within the margins of essentialist tradition.

<sup>17</sup> "What are her unerring records in the service of mechanics, engineering, geology, and natural history, but facts of the most sterling and stubborn kind? What are her studies of the various stages of insanity— pictures of life unsurpassable in pathetic truth – but facts as well as lessons of the deepest physiological interest? What are her representations of the bed of the ocean, and the surface of the moon--of the launch of the Marlborough, and of the contents of the Great Exhibition – of Charles Kean's now destroyed scenery of the "Winter's Tale," and of Prince Albert's now slaughtered prize ox – but the facts which are neither the province of art nor of description, but of that new form of communication between man and man--neither letter, message, nor picture – which now happily fills up the space between them?" (Eastlake 1857/1980, 65)

The gradual replacement of this early 19<sup>th</sup>-century essentialism with 20<sup>th</sup>-century concepts of *formalism* was a result of photography's pictorial and textual<sup>18</sup> struggle to become acknowledged as a form of art. In the process, the understanding of the essence of the medium shifted from the workings of the camera to prioritising the work of the camera operator and consequently, the image itself. The active and creative role of the camera operator, which was seen as a necessary precursor to photography's artistic claims<sup>19</sup>, implied that the meaning of a given photograph no longer lay in depicted objects but in the photographic print itself, induced into the image by its author. This confining of creativity to the production phase – the capturing of the image – also had far-reaching consequences for the legal status of the medium.<sup>20</sup> Formalism's conceptualisation of the photographer as an artist was that of an autonomous subject<sup>21</sup>, in what Burgin (1982, 3) aptly describes as an "uneasy and contradictory amalgam of Romantic, Realist and Modernist aesthetic theories." Bolton provides an informative summation of the principles of *formalist* tradition which is worth quoting at length here:

The accepted version of photographic practice, forged for posterity in the 1950s and 1960s, is a limited construction based in the formalist values of late modernism. Historians and curators during that time worked quite deliberately to *narrow* photography. They emphasized the autonomy of the image and set about to define the "norms" of the medium, the intrinsic technological and visual properties of the photograph. They selected a common set of characteristics from a diverse set of images and brought scores of conflicting photographers and photographs under the jurisdiction of universal history. The social and political issues raised by industrial application and plebeian function were ignored – it was instead given to art photography to provide a unsullied articulation of photography's common characteristics. (1992, x, original emphasis)

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<sup>18</sup> It should be noted that a lot of practising photographers were also involved in the textual articulation of photography's role, meaning, nature of the medium and its role in society.

<sup>19</sup> Recent work has shown that the emphasis on the creativity of the camera operator as a basis for the medium's artistic potential predates the much publicised photographic end textual endeavours of authors like Stieglitz and did not arise only in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries but were already present in Talbot's work (see Kelsey 2008).

<sup>20</sup> Farley describes how a US constitutional ruling from 1884 established the concept of authorship in photography in the "pre-shutter activities" of the camera operator, "by locating the author in the posing, selecting and arranging of costumes and accessories, in the arranging of light and shadows, and in the suggesting and evoking of expressions. In these acts, the Court argued that it found the imprint of the author." (2004, 390-91) By recognising (and limiting) the creativity of the photographer to "pre-shutter activity", the court was able both to lay the foundations for copyright claims and also preserve the status of photographs as legal records – as unmediated recordings of objective apparatus, "an incorruptible evidence of the scene it transcribed". (Ibid.)

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Debeljak 1998.

Bolton outlines three areas of interest for the *formalist* approach to photography – the *selection of appropriate forms* of photographic expression and creation, *defining the nature of the medium* by delineating the "intrinsic" properties of a photograph, and the *rendering of a universal history* of photography. Among these three projects, the latter one proved to be the most prominent and continues to structure much of the historical approach to the medium, irrespective of the demise of the former two. *Formalism* fitted the history of photography into a narrative of progressive development of styles and technology towards the modernistic self-awareness of the medium,<sup>22</sup> based on decontextualisation and expert judgement of their aesthetic values and merits. As Phillips notes with respect to the seminal work of photographic history – Beaumont Newhall's *Photography*:

"Drawing on the earlier, overwhelmingly technical histories of photography [...] Newhall outlined photography's history primarily as a succession of technical innovations [...] that were to be assessed above all for their aesthetic consequences. (1992, 19)

These aesthetic 'consequences' in turn presupposed the existence of a "self-enclosed, self-referential field of purely aesthetic factors, untouched by the influence of any larger social or historical forces." (ibid.) Consequently, traditional, formalism-inspired photographic history "offers us a myth of origin that emphasizes homogeneity and continuity and ignores disruptions and change" (Bolton 1992, x). As a result, the privileged photographic practice (art photography) was framed as an apolitical enterprise. A similar move towards the understanding of photographic images as natural, outside or above ideology, was supported by works that aimed to outline the essential characteristics of the medium, such as John Szarkowski's *The Photographer's Eye* (1966). One could argue that the main shortcoming of these works is not so much the analysis they provide<sup>23</sup> as in the questions they fail to address. For example, when describing the "essentials" of photography, Szarkowski is well aware of the narrative poverty of the image, noting how photographs could not tell stories on their own

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<sup>22</sup> Such understanding is in line with Clement Greenberg's interpretation of modernism as a "continual search for each art form's fundamental, irreducible essence," Batchen (1999, 13), outlined in his 1961 essay *Modernist painting*.

<sup>23</sup> With some critical reservations, Szarkowski's five essentials, which he terms *the thing itself, detail, frame, time and vantage point*, could be incorporated into the postmodern critique of the medium, though they would admittedly acquire a different level of prominence.

(1966/2003, 9), but he – unlike postmodernists – fails to pursue the trail of photographic narration outside of the image to text (and context) that inevitably supplements the narration of photographic images.

Over the last four decades, major theoretical advances in the understanding of the medium have originated from what came to be called *postmodern*<sup>24</sup> tradition. A substantial part of this work focused on what came to be termed the "contest of meaning" – an ideological critique of the cooptation (seen as subordination) of photography by the capitalist production system and institutions of the bourgeois culture and state. This critique of dominant ideologies is based on exposing and underlining cultural interference in the supposedly transparent, indexical characteristics of photographs, constituting them not as "messages without a code" (Barthes) but as context-defined coded messages, inseparably interlaced and inscribed with the power of social institutions.

As *postmodernism's* re-politisation of photography gradually became the dominant way of thinking about the medium, works openly advocating an essentialist approach to photography became few and far between, and its stronghold, photographic history, is now increasingly besieged by cultural histories of the medium. Even the two prominent works that still tried to pin down the essence of photography, Barthes' *Camera lucida* (1981) and Shore's *The Nature of Photographs* (2007), could not escape the insights of "cultural" critique. Barthes makes at least two sidesteps from the essentialist route. First of all, his discussion of the essence of photography is, however painfully he tries to defy it, tied not to the image as such but essentially to the viewer, the interpreter of the image. In a similar manner, careful reading of Barthes' much-quoted distinction between the *studium* and *punctum* of photography reveals that we are not dealing with essential or objective characteristics of photography but, again, with personal (hence socially influenced) interpretations.<sup>25</sup> Shore, on the other hand, is more consciously aware that he cannot escape the "culturalist" critique. Although he still attempts to outline the universal visual characteristics of photographic images that would transcend the boundaries of language, Shore does acknowledge the social/economical/political origin of

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<sup>24</sup> It should be noted that within writings on photography, "postmodernism" is used as an umbrella term whose meaning might differ from the implications of postmodern thought in other areas of social sciences. As Bolton points out, "these writers exemplify a *politicised* postmodernism. They share within postmodernism an awareness of social critique, of the historicity of form, and of the political context of creation." (1992, xiii)

<sup>25</sup> *Punctum* is by no means universal – it is not evoked by the same object or characteristics of the picture, nor is it a necessary property of every image.



images and the overarching importance of the context of viewing. Writing on the perception of photographs, he divides it into three levels – physical, depictive and mental. While the first two levels deal with the universal characteristics of the medium, Shore acknowledges that it is the socially influenced mental level of perception that decisively determines the meaning-making process.<sup>26</sup>

A central characteristic that distinguishes *postmodernist* treatment of photography from its *formalist* 'predecessor' is a shift from the "questions of form and style (the rhetoric of art) to questions of function and use (the practice of politics)" (Batchen 1999, 12). Influenced by the intellectual traditions of Marxism, semiology, lacanian psychoanalysis, feminism and the overall intellectual project of cultural critique that arose out of developing (British) cultural studies, photographic *postmodernist* writing locates photographic imagery "within broader poststructuralist concerns to understand the meaning-production process" (Price and Wells 2000, 24), incorporating the critique of photography into a more general critique of modern cultural and social structure. According to Bolton, authors within *postmodernist tradition*:

"look *beyond the glossy narratives of photographic history* and discover a medium transformed, even deformed, by the twists and turns of technology, history, and ideology. Photography's complexity is revealed through a judicious consideration of *context* [...]" (1992, xi, my emphasis)

Bolton's brief summary of the postmodern approach highlights two important concerns – history and context – that this dissertation will build upon. It draws on Tagg's argument that since photography as such has no universal identity, its history has no unity (1988, 36; 118) and can consequently only be presented as a history of various photographic uses and cultural practices (e.g. Solomon-Godeau 1991, Green-Lewis 1996). Apart from *uses*, the postmodernist approach places crucial emphasis on the notion of *context*, for photographic representations are not seen as neutral<sup>27</sup> but always attached to a "cacophony of competing discourses that gives any individual photography its meanings and social values" (Batchen 1999, 9). *Context* is used to describe institutional constraints and cultural practices that

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<sup>26</sup> By acknowledging the primacy of the mental level in elaborating, refining and embellishing the perceptions of the depictive and physical levels of photography, his work (unlike that of Szarkowski) draws attention to the limitations of the essentialist project on which he embarks.

<sup>27</sup> "Like a state, the camera is never neutral", writes Tagg in *Evidence, Truth, and Order* (1988, 63).

structure the production of images on a more macro level, as well as the location of images within media texts and their consumption/interpretation on a more micro level. This characteristic understanding of the influence of the macro-level context can be exemplified by the following passage by John Tagg:

Photography as such has no identity. Its status as a technology varies with the power relations which invest it. Its nature as a practice depends on the institutions and agents which define it and set it to work. Its function as a mode of cultural production is tied to definite conditions of existence, and its products are meaningful and legible only within particular currencies they have. Its history has no unity. It is a flickering across a field of institutional spaces. It is this field we must study, not photography as such." (1988, 63)

In this influential formulation,<sup>28</sup> Tagg declares photography as devoid of any inherent identity and therefore subjected to relations of power outside of the medium. As such, photographic practice is defined by institutional practices (of which it is a mere 'flickering'), serving at the same time as a sort of conveyor belt through which these institutions deliver their ideology, and a lever through which they utilise and secure their power. Commenting on the autonomy of the medium, Solomon-Godeau claims that photography is always a 'hired gun' (quoted in Batchen 1999, 12). This position is implicitly or explicitly shared and reiterated in the writings of other most prominent (Anglo-American) exponents of the postmodern approach to theorising photography, such as Victor Burgin, Allan Sekula, Alan Trachtenberg, Abigail Solomon-Godeau, Rosalind Krauss, Martha Rosler, Douglas Crimp and Richard Bolton. It originates in a shared Marxist-informed understanding of cultural production as a signifying system, embedded in a totality of social relations which form the conditions for their production and consumption.

Photographs are thus not seen as transparent windows onto the world but its *representations*. As Tagg notes: "Photograph is not a magical emanation but the material product of a material apparatus set to work in specific contexts, by specific forces, for more or less defined purposes." (1988, 3) Therefore photographic practices can be treated as discursive formations. They contribute to the articulation of meanings about the world and to the production of social

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<sup>28</sup> Which in fact appears in several of his essays – e.g. 1988, 63; cf. 1988, 118.

subjects through the codes and conventions these subjects utilise in the process of signification/communication.

The issue of codification points not only to a certain arbitrariness in photographic representations as such,<sup>29</sup> but also to the origin of these codes outside of images and image-making technologies. As Ecco (1982) notes, there exists a plurality of codes that pre-exist a given photograph and interact with it in a complex manner. The meaning of a photograph therefore cannot be determined, as *formalists* presume, from the intention of camera operator or the content of the image itself, but emerges from a complex process of active decoding<sup>30</sup> by viewers and is, as such, influenced by a number of contextual factors. As Burgin emphasises, the meaning of a certain photograph cannot be attributed solely to the content of the image because an image can "act as *catalyst* – exciting mental activity which exceeds that which the photograph itself provides." (1982, 9)

Conceptualising the viewing (of photographs) as decoding also implies a crucial connection between photography and language: "It is not merely that a photograph, like a language, must be decoded, but that the omnipresence of language itself additionally complicates its decoding." (Green-Lewis 1996, 22). In the micro context of viewing, photography is always invaded by language, most often in the form of written text accompanying the image. As Price notes on this relationship: "[The] language of description is deeply implicated in how a viewer looks at photographs. Description may be title, caption, text. The more detailed the description, the more precisely the viewer's observation is directed" (1994, 1; cf. Hall 1981, Fiske 1982 or Barthes 1981). Burgin extends this argument further, noting that "even an uncaptioned 'art' photograph, framed and isolated on a gallery wall, is invaded by language in the very moment it is looked at in memory, in associations, snatches of words and images continually intermingle and exchange one for another" (1982, 192).

Based on the outlined premises, *postmodernists* claim that the meaning of photographs is determined by their use to the point that no single meaning is absolute. Meaning, argues Hall, "is not straightforward or transparent, and does not survive intact the passage through

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<sup>29</sup> As for example in Eco's assertion that "[w]e know that sensory phenomena are transcribed, in the photographic emulsion, in such a way that even if there is a causal link with the real phenomena, the graphic images can be considered as wholly arbitrary with respect to these phenomena." (1982, 3)

<sup>30</sup> The extent to which "reading" of photographs is learned or naturalised is a matter of ongoing disputes (see e.g. Mitchell 1986 and 2005 or Messaris 1994 and 1997).

representation. It is a slippery customer, changing and shifting with context, usage and historical circumstances" (1997, 9). However, this emphasis on interpretational fluidity and relativity does not imply complete arbitrariness in photographic interpretations. Firstly, the content itself limits the number of divergent uses to which a photograph can be subjected to. And secondly, it depends on the subject's position within the web of (unequal) power relations that structure social communication and consequently limit the access to channels and modes of communication and the means of production.

In general, two important strands can be discerned within the *postmodernist* approach to photography. A significant number of its influential works focus on (re)writing particularised histories of photographic practices not as *histories of photography* but as *histories of power relations* and the struggles among opposing social groups *in relation to photography* within what could be called 'a general cultural context'. A number of texts thus trace the defining role of the photographic practices of "state organs", such as police and the judicial system (Tagg 1988), professional groups and cultural institutions (museums Crimp 1992; Phillips 1992, journalists and documentary photographers Solomon-Godeau 1991; Rosler 1992/2006; Trachtenberg 1985, Schwartz 1992), and various other branches of society's "ideological apparatuses" such as science (criminology Sekula 1992; anthropology Edwards 1994; historiography Trachtenberg 1990) or family (Hirsch 1999)<sup>31</sup> onto a broader social understanding of the nature and purposes of the medium, such as notions of "naive realism", the superiority of art photography, the evidential nature of photography etc.

The second, perhaps less influential strand within the *postmodernist* approach focuses on the critique of photography as a form of artistic expression. As such, it is more closely bound to the intellectual debates concerning the social consequences of aesthetic practice and the uneasy location and limitations of free agency within the Marxism-based theory of society. In a way, it could be described as an intellectual project to "save" the possibility and effectiveness of the photographic artist's subversive social critique and their contribution to 'progressive' social change. Examples range from Krauss (1985) or Sontag (1977) to Burgin (1982).

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<sup>31</sup> See also Tagg 1988, 60-65, cf. Boerdam and Martinius 1980 or Spence and Holland 1991.

My theoretical grounding originates within the postmodern project of theorising photography, particularly the strand that investigates photography through histories of power relations curtailing and defining the practice of photography and its various institutional(ised) forms. My allegiance to this intellectual project – with all due qualifications to be explained in the following section – fundamentally structures the thesis and focuses my exploration of the subject matter. This is most explicitly evident in the methodological approach to the analysis of the visual material, which moves analysis beyond the representational level (encoding/decoding) to scrutinise the immediate (textual) and broader (cultural) context in its exploration of signification.

## 2.2 Crisis of a non-existent theory of photography

Contemporary writings on photography are marked by a discourse of crisis. As I have already indicated in the introduction, this crisis is not limited to the field of photography but should be interpreted within the interconnected web of photography's relations with the media industry, journalism, national identity, the (nation-) state and its underlying political and economic system. This section, however, will focus predominantly on the photographic aspects of this interrelated crisis of trust within the project of modernity and its agents, since it is designed as a necessary qualification of the dominant theoretical paradigm.

In recent years, the *postmodernist* approach to photography has come under question through a series of divergent and interconnected developments (see section 1.1), which posed severe challenges to and exposed the limitations of the *postmodernist* project of the "contest of meaning". Noting how "the broad-based intellectual shift referred to as the '*October* moment' had taken a historical cast," Kelsey and Stimson ask: "Is photography still principally about a *contest* of meaning? Is there urgency in contesting – as opposed to, say describing or analyzing, or even *affirming* or *upholding* – the meaning of photography?" (2008, viii, original emphasis)

For a number of authors, the current crisis of photographic theory is essentially about the political defeat of photographic practice.

"Photography is no longer attached to a political culture of resistance to counterhegemony in which artistic resources and extra-artistic forces cohabit freely. Consequently the ruling political defeat of photography is about something bigger than photography's feeling of inadequacy in the face of the intrusive and implosive power of mass culture. It is, rather, about the defeat of the classical oppositionist modernist and realist culture that had so overwhelmingly shaped the identity of photography's historical transformation of its apparatus from the 1920s to the late 1980s." (Roberts 2008, 166)

What Roberts claims is that the demise of the political function of photography is but a part of a broader political, historical and cultural crisis. It is not that the postmodern approach to photography (what Kelsey and Stimson termed the "*October* moment") has been rendered obsolete, but that, due to the changed social conditions, photographic culture no longer has the organizing capacity for practice and theory it once possessed. Thus it is "photography as a *culture* and [as] a set of critical horizons and vigorous social and institutional agreements, [that] is in a state of disarray" (Roberts 2008, 165). Similarly, Fontcuberta claims that the crisis of photography is essentially not about losing its "ideological bearing" (Marxist-inspired critique) or the medium's essential characteristics (transition to digital technology), but instead has to do with "an evolution taking place in the whole framework that provided photography with its cultural, instrumental and historical context" (2002, 11).

The proclaimed crisis of the *postmodernist* project has reopened the basic ontological question of what exactly photography is as a phenomenon. As Batchen succinctly summarises:

[R]ecent approaches to photography all hinge on photography's historical and ontological identity, a matter that both postmodernists and formalists think they have somehow resolved. In a sense, the entire laborious argument between them reduces down to a single, deceptively simple question: Is photography to be identified with (its own) nature or with the culture that surrounds it? Both postmodernists and formalists presume to know what photography is (and what it is not). Their argument is about the *location* of photography's identity, about its boundaries and limits, rather than about identity per se. (1999, 17, original emphasis)

Thus the reopening of the ontological question about the medium not only brings to the fore the nature vs. culture debate that marks photography's theoretical split, but also the unproductiveness of such an exclusivist binary for the understanding of a medium that is inherently split between the apparent transparency of the image and its convoluted contextual play of signification. In an attempt to overcome this conceptual crisis of photography, several authors have argued for a rapprochement of the two theoretical camps in order to reconstruct the meaning-making and meaningfulness of photography for contemporary social communication. Thus, in *Burning with Desire*, for example, Batchen (1999) argues in favour of the Derridaian overcoming of the "logocentrism" of photographic theory by surpassing strict dichotomies of *essentialist* and *postmodernist* tradition and the hierarchical ranking of such divisions. He suggests a return to the dual understanding of photography that was characteristic at the time of its inception, especially in the years before and shortly after its invention. From a slightly different perspective, Baker also argues against "the rhetoric of oppositional thinking" and consequent "tearing of photography between oppositional extremes" (2005, 124), suggesting an expansion of photography's field. Price and Wells similarly argue in favour of partially bridging the gap between the two traditions when they emphasize the need to "think about the tension between the referential characteristics of the photograph and the contexts of usage and interpretation" (2000, 34). They propose incorporating the indexical<sup>32</sup> nature of photography "as a key characteristic of photography" into the analysis of photographs "produced and used in specific, but deferring contexts" (ibid). Kelsey and Stimson (2008) call this realignment<sup>33</sup> a recognition of "photography's double indexicality":

"The meaning of photography for most of its history has stemmed primarily from its double indexicality, that is, its peculiar pointing both outward to the world before the camera and inward to the photographer behind it." (2008, xi)

Such a move would imply more than just a revision of methodological tools for interpretation of the images. It would require a review of the power relations involved in communication

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<sup>32</sup> The notion of the indexical nature of photography has two interpretations. On the one hand, photography as index is understood as a trace of light reflected from certain material objects placed before the camera, providing an argument for the direct (physical) connection of the image to reality, consequently serving as proof of its existence. On the other hand, the notion of index provided grounds for the understanding of photographs as devoid of its internal meaning (being nothing more than traces of objects). In the passage above, I am referring to the first notion of photography's indexicality.

<sup>33</sup> In their opinion, appeals for a partial merger between the two traditions mark yet another epistemological turn in the study of photography. (Kelsey and Stimson 2008, xi)

with/through photography, transforming images into more than passive, empty vessels or mere levers for the transfer of institutional power (see Batchen 1999). According to Price and Wells it would furthermore imply a broadening of the perspective by taking into account "communication theory in broad terms", in addition to "focusing on photographs as a particular type of visual sign, produced and used in specific, but deferring contexts" (2000, 34). The bitter taste of this remedy is that it partially implies the abandonment of the project to gradually buildup a separate body of photographic theory, or at least its subservience to other fields of investigation. And as Kelsey and Stimson rightly point out, for the majority of currently active scholars in the field<sup>34</sup> it would also imply "a re-evaluation of their scholarly formation" (2008, xi; cf. Bryson et. al 1994, xvi-xx).

The somewhat tentatively proposed answer to the challenges posed to the *postmodernism* of photographic theory by the "liquid modernity" (Bauman 2000) of late capitalist and post-industrialist societies is thus to take into account photography's dual nature, both its 'referential' and 'reflective' character. If, however, what lies ahead is to a certain extent theoretical *terra incognita*, it is by no means *terra mystica*. We should avoid over-mystifying this crisis and its consequences for the development of the field, since the more complex understanding of photography proposed above is, historically speaking, not a novelty. As recent studies suggest (e.g. Batchen 1999, Kelsey 2008), 19<sup>th</sup>-century photographers were very much aware of the inherent contradictions and the double nature of the photographic medium.<sup>35</sup> Batchen, for example, traces this ontological uncertainty about the medium through the writings of photography's "founding fathers"<sup>36</sup>, in which the nature and essence of photography are continually represented "by a way of sustained paradox" (1999, 66). Are photographic images *copies* of nature or *representations* of nature? Does the camera simply enable nature to 'imprint' itself or does it actively contribute to the making of images? The answers of early thinkers on the medium are wavering and indecisive. As Batchen (1999, 63) observed: "Is nature painted by photography or being induced to paint itself? Is she produced

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<sup>34</sup> One could also add that this theoretical and epistemological uncertainty, the crisis of conceptual models and ever shifting perspectives on the medium, pose great challenges to emerging students and scholars, who must make their way past the Scylla and Charybdis of a discredited and insufficient paradigm in the hope of reaching some firm, still uncharted ground ahead.

<sup>35</sup> The work of 19th-century photographers has traditionally been seen as an unproblematised amalgam of positivism and photographic realism (see e.g. Holmes 1859/1980 or Eastlake 1857/1980).

<sup>36</sup> It is worth noting that in tracing the origin and nature of photography, Batchen not only refers to the work of the official 'inventors' of photography (Daguerre and Talbot) but primarily to the work of what he calls *proto-photographers*, authors who experimented with the idea of fixing light-produced images before the official unveiling of the process in 1839.



by or a producer of photography? This question haunts almost all descriptions of photography produced by the three men most readily identified with its invention – Niépce, Daguerre and Talbot." Consider, for example, the following passage from Daguerre, which is generally accepted as an expression of photography's "unproblematic realism":

"In conclusion, the DAGUERROTYPE is not merely an instrument *which serves to draw Nature*; on the contrary it is a chemical and physical process which *gives her the power to reproduce herself*." (Daguerre, 1839/1980 13, my emphasis)

A close reading reveals that, in the final analysis, Daguerre is reluctant to reduce photography to mere "imprints of nature" (ibid., 13), to *nature reproducing* itself, but also acknowledges the mediating role of the apparatus (its function is *drawing*, not copying).<sup>37</sup> Like Niépce<sup>38</sup> and Daguerre, Talbot similarly sees the photographic process as both mediated and unmediated when he describes it as "photogenic drawing" and as "Nature painted by herself". In *Pencil of Nature* (1989/1844-46), he defines photography as a process that renders the scene "with utmost truth and fidelity" and as a creative process in which the camera operator recognises a certain scene as worth depicting. As Kelsey (2008) notes, in order to be photographed, for Talbot the scene must be recognised as *picturesque*<sup>39</sup>, which makes the "imprint of Nature" culturally defined, at least in terms of motif selection and composition of the photograph.<sup>40</sup> In his "convoluted formulations", notes Batchen, "nature is simultaneously active and passive, just as photography itself is simultaneously natural and cultural." (1999, 68)

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<sup>37</sup> Batchen gives another illustrative example, in which Daguerre describes photography as "the spontaneous reproduction of the *images of nature received in the camera obscura*" and as "the spontaneous reproduction of the *images of nature reflected by means of camera obscura*." (1999, 63, my emphasis)

<sup>38</sup> Much like his associate Daguerre, Niépce could not bring himself to unambiguously define the relationship between nature and photography. His inability to "satisfactorily" name his invention leads Batchen to conclude that "to his mind, the nature of photography itself could only be properly represented by a way of sustained paradox". (1999, 64)

<sup>39</sup> The notion of "picturesque" was, at the time that photography was invented, a highly popular social construct, a pre-photographic notion of what makes a good picture. In the words of one of its most fervent exponents, it is "a particular kind of beauty which is agreeable in picture" (Gilpin quoted in Batchen 1999, 72) and therefore cultural (hence ideological) interpretation of nature (related to divinity) and man's position in the world (as a part of nature and as an observer of nature) is their (particularly nature's) proper visual representation. See Batchen (1999, ch. 3), cf. Cray (1990). See also Kelsey (2008) for an informative overview of Talbot's understanding of picture-making in relation to the notions of picturesque.

<sup>40</sup> Similarly, Batchen (1999, 68) locates Talbot's awareness of the dual character of the medium in his constant change of the verbs (renders, imitates, draws, effected, impressed, fix itself) he uses to describe the process. According to Kelsey's analysis of Talbot's understanding of serendipity (a mix of intentional endeavour and chance) and the artistic role of photographer (intervening into a scene), Talbot seems to have prioritised the "cultural" side of photography (Kelsey 2008).

While these early meditations on the nature of the medium may not directly provide us with any concrete theoretical concepts or methodological tools for grappling with the present-day crisis in photography, they serve as potent reminders and starting-points for conceptualising the medium as an inherently split, paradoxical, dialectic subject. Indeed, I would argue that the inability to adequately define photography results from an unwillingness to embark on a project of *inclusive* classification of photography as a dialectic subject. At present, it still appears easier even for works designed to provide authoritative insight into the medium and which boast about being the "definitive reference for students and practitioners of photography" to simply proclaim that "defining photography is impossible".<sup>41</sup> If the crisis of photographic theory is indeed – as was suggested above by Kelsey and Stimson, Roberts and Fontcuberta – a facet or a consequence of changing contemporary social conditions and "photographic culture", then questions regarding photography's identities, conceptual forms and political economies – as I have already indicated in the introduction to this thesis – cannot be resolved within the parameters of photographic theory alone. As Batchen claims:

What we don't know yet is how these questions should be answered. It is fairly easy to say that we are now at the moment that sees itself as being after postmodernism but that has yet to attract the burden of a proper name for motivation of an enabling politics. The invention of such politics, and with it a "historicity" appropriate for the times in which we live, therefore remains the most pressing [...]. (2008, 87-88)

While this renewed quest for a metanarrative that could provide a counterbalance to the ideological hegemony of a metanarrative that proclaims the end of all metanarratives (accompanied by occasionally somewhat messianic overtones) is not specific to photography, there are some specific steps that the theorising of photography should take within its own perimeter. One of them is the constructive revision of "the photographic activity of postmodernism" that focused on the deconstruction and denaturalisation of photographic objectivity and that had "demonstrated once and for all that images were results of ideological constructions and that the image wars are parts of the wider scope of social struggles" (Ribalta 2008, 181). This would require a renegotiation of the central object of *postmodernist* critique. As Ribalta put it: "We need a critique that does not recall modernist notions of photography as

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<sup>41</sup> The above quotations, for example, come from the advertising blurbs of *The Focal Encyclopedia of Photography* (Peres et. al., 2007) and *The Concise Focal Encyclopedia of Photography* (Peres et. al., 2008).

a universal language but new, complex and meaningful renegotiations of realism and universalism" (2008: 181). Stiegler also argues in favour of such *meaningful renegotiation of realism* when he insists that it is precisely realism that is "photography's special legacy, from which the medium has not been able to free itself, and it continues to determine our image of photography" (2008, 194; cf. Ribalta 2008, Kelsey and Stimson 2008, Price and Wells 2000). Stiegler makes an important point when he claims that photography represents *a (societal) will to see reality*, a materialisation of certain conceptions of reality in the visual form of images. Despite *postmodernist* disenchantment, photographs continue to be visual reflections of reality:

"[T]hey are realism mediated by the medium and concentrated in images – *even if this reality is a radically constructed one*, at times consisting of nothing more than visual material generated and manipulated by a computer. Even then, photography is an abbreviation of a specific concept of reality, which indeed can be, and at times has been, grasped as a radical construction." (2008, 194, my emphasis)

If photographs are to continue to secure those truths we inhabit and regard as our reality, a certain *qualified* concept of photographic realism is required. As I shall argue in more detail in the subsequent chapter, its theoretical articulation should take into account three basic characteristics of the medium: (1) its inherent dialectics understood as productive, not as destructive antagonism,<sup>42</sup> (2) the essentiality of its referential nature while incorporating the shift of emphasis from the authority of image to that of its maker, and (3) its embeddedness in socio-economical contexts of production and consumption. The implications of these propositions will be clearly visible in the analyses of the EU/NATO referendum and the eviction of the Strojjan family in Chapter 7.

## 2.3 Photography's privileged discursive elements

Ever since its inception, photography has been notoriously hard to define and has been declared a medium that "eludes classification" (Barthes 1980, 14). As I have argued above, this failure has as much to do with the elusive nature of the medium itself as it does with an

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<sup>42</sup> Such "productive antagonism" could be compared to Mouffe's (2005) notion of agonism.

unwillingness to accept its inherent ambivalence, its internal contradictions and paradoxes as central and productive to any theoretical endeavour. This section is an attempt to provide a way of "thinking photography" that would incorporate the critique of photographic postmodernism outlined above. Thus I intend to approach the ontological uncertainty about the nature of photography not by offering an alternative, schematic or chronological account of the subject, but through a series of interconnected concepts and elements that inform the discursive formation of photographic theory. Photographic theory can in fact be seen as an ongoing struggle for the (re)definition and (re)interpretation of a fairly stable pool of concepts and elements which includes:

- Temporal and spatial dislocation
- Indexicality and iconicity
- Medium-specific means of expression
- Text
- Context
- Mystical power, mystification of power.

I see these concepts and elements as *privileged discursive elements* around which social groups, individuals and institutions compete in the hegemonic struggle for definition of photography's identity. The concept of *privileged discursive elements* can be a particularly insightful way of investigating photographic theory for a number of interrelated reasons. First, *privileged discursive elements* can be used to chart what Foucault (1972) would term *discursive formations*, an organised totality of dispersed statements on the medium that delimit the possibilities of our understanding of the subject. They make it possible to "think photography" outside a postmodernist focus on the critique of a particular discourse (formalism) and without succumbing to the pitfalls of reductionism (e.g. seeing photography solely as art photography). On the one hand, they can be applied to the myriad of photographic practices without necessarily prioritising one over the other. On the other hand, they simultaneously enable the analysis, critique and comparison of various (sub)discourses that are formed around diverse photographic practices through investigation of the ways in which privileged discursive elements are divergently articulated within these (sub)discourses. Such an account of photography draws on findings and concepts from the field of discourse studies (e.g. Laclau and Mouffe 1985, Fairclough 1995, Phillips and Jørgensen 2002, Van Dijk 2008).

As a locus around which discourses on photography are formed, privileged discursive elements both structure and limit the general discourse on photography as well as particular photographic (sub)discourses. Depending on the investments of particular competing social groups, individuals and institutions, privileged discursive elements can become *nodal points* in Laclau and Mouffe's understanding of the term as crystallisers of meaning, defining the hierarchy of elements within the discourse.<sup>43</sup> However, I see the particular value of *privileged discursive elements* precisely in the fact that they need not become *nodal points* but offer the possibility of investigating photography at the level of what Laclau and Mouffe would call *elements*, polysemic 'signs' whose meanings have not yet been fixed. Due to the fragmentary and contradictory state of photographic theory, privileged discursive elements are *floating signifiers* not only between various competing discourses (and as such chart what Fairclough (1995) termed "order of discourse") but to a certain extent also within a given discourse itself (e.g. text-image relationship within the postmodernist critique of photography).

In the proposed approach to the "decades-old polemics, bits, pieces and fragments of previous formulations and aesthetic conventions [that] litter photography's theoretical landscape" (Beshty 2008, my insertion), *privileged discursive elements* will be used in three ways or steps. First, they will be used to chart the "nature" of photographic representations as such (Chapter 2). The second step will outline how they are articulated within a specific photographic discourse – press photography (Chapter 3). Finally, they will be addressed again in the third step as the basis for the definition of methods and elements of image analysis (Chapters 6 and 7). Due to the interconnected nature of these three steps, certain segments of this overview of *privileged discursive elements* may appear somewhat schematic, as an effort has been made to avoid unnecessary duplication of content.

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<sup>43</sup> Put differently, when an element becomes a *nodal point*, it serves as a position around which other elements (and their interrelations) are realigned and their meaning rearticulated. For example, within the postmodernist approach, *context* as a privileged discursive element acquires the status of a nodal point that exercises "a totalizing effect" on other discursive elements, hierarchically rearranging relations between other elements and consequently reinterpreting their meaning and influence. Laclau and Mouffe's concept further implies that the primacy of a given nodal point is always temporary (it has to be continuously reaffirmed) and most often, the discourse is organised around "a complex constellation of multiple and shifting nodal points." (Smith 1998, 98)

### 2.3.1 Temporal and spatial dislocation

One of the central characteristics of photography (as well as of the determinants of its dialectics) is their temporal and spatial dislocation<sup>44</sup> of the objects depicted. Every photograph is a dislocation of a particular fragment of time and space, its transformation into an image. However, this image is always also a material object<sup>45</sup> and it is precisely this "objectiveness", the materiality of this seemingly transparent object, that facilitates the dislocation of time and space fragments. Photography can thus be seen not only as *writing with light* but essentially as *writing of* and *with time*. Not only is it marked by timing (making a photograph in one particular moment and not at some other point in time), but the image itself is produced in/by a fraction of time (commonly referred to as shutter speed) during which film emulsion or the CCD/CMOS sensor surface is exposed to the incoming light.

As Siegfried Kracauer noted, each photograph is directly associated with "the moment in time at which it came into existence" (1993/1927, 428) and seems, as John Szarkowsky remarked, to describe "only that period of time in which it was made", the present. (1966/2003, 101) However, the present of image-making and the present of image-viewing are not the same. John Berger stressed that photography "removes an appearance from the flow of appearances" (1980, 55) and preserves it unchanged, "isolating it from the supersession of further moments" (1982, 89).<sup>46</sup> Since a photograph arrests the flow of time, its depiction (content) is consequently imbued with another message – the shock of discontinuity (1982, 86). It is precisely this shock of discontinuity that had led Barthes (1980) to conclude that photography testifies not so much to the appearance of a given object but to the presence of the depicted object in time. A photograph therefore serves as a link/mediator between past, present and future – it presumes "time itself as a progressive linear movement from past to future. The present, during which we look at the photographic image, is but a starting-point, a hallucinatory hovering that imbricates *both* past and future" (Batchen 1999, 93, original emphasis).

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<sup>44</sup> The dislocation of time and space is one of the few undisputed characteristics of photography, although it can sometimes be acknowledged under different terms. Kelsey, for example, refers to the two dislocations as *crop* and *click*: "The crop delivers a photograph as a representation of a fragment of continuous space. The click delivers the photograph as a representation of a fragment of continuous time." (2008, 17)

<sup>45</sup> Thus materiality applies to classical photography (prints, slides etc.) as well as digital photography – as Shore notes, even a photograph on a computer screen is static, bounded and flat.

<sup>46</sup> Similarly, Metz notes that "in all photographs, we have this same act of cutting off a piece of space and time, of keeping it unchanged while the world around continues to change." (1985, 85)

In relation to space, photograph is always a fragment, "a cut inside the referent" (Metz 1985, 84). This cut is determined by the boundaries of photography as a material object, it is contained within the frame which – as will be explained in more detail below – also structures the relations between depicted objects (see e.g. Szarkowski 1966/2003 or Shore 2007). Or as Metz phrased it: "It is the abducted part-space, the place of presence and fullness – although undermined and haunted by the feeling of its exterior, of its borderlines" (1985, 87). As a bordered object, the petrified image always refers both to the visible content of the frame and to the invisible beyond. Thus photography is necessarily a vehicle of interruption and denaturalization of appearances that draws attention to temporal and spatial relations in its process of representation. It gives us what Barthes has called a new space and time category - spatial immediacy and temporal anteriority, "the photograph being an illogical conjunction between the there-now and there-then" (1981, 44).

### 2.3.2 Iconicity and indexicality

Notions of iconicity and indexicality are central not only to a theoretical understanding of photography but inform much of the popular, commonsense conceptions of the medium. In terms of C.S. Peirce's tripartite classification of signs, photographs represent an uneasy amalgam of indexicality and iconicity. I have already emphasised<sup>47</sup> that the inventors of photography were well aware of the double nature of photographic sign (as Peirce later was himself), but much of the subsequent debate on the nature of the medium and popular understanding of imaging technology tried to confine photography more or less exclusively to no more than one of Peirce's categories. Early accounts of photographs as mirrors of reality in the notion of Peircian *icon* (which were the staple of 19<sup>th</sup>-century texts on photography) have been superseded by an understanding of photographs as conventional signs (or *symbolos* in Peircean trichotomy, the view was particularly popular in post-war semiotics<sup>48</sup>) and finally by an approach that prioritises the *indexical* nature of the medium ( which, for example, took strong hold in the fields of mass communication, cultural studies and visual culture).<sup>49</sup> While an iconic understanding of photography continued to underline many of the popular perceptions on the nature of the medium, *indexicality*<sup>50</sup> in particular proved to be an influential

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<sup>47</sup> See Batchen 1999 for an exhaustive treatment of this subject.

<sup>48</sup> As exemplified in the early works of Eco.

<sup>49</sup> For a schematic overview of these shifts, see Dubois 1983 and Sonesson's (1989) critical assessment .

<sup>50</sup> Peirce defined indexicality as a "physical connection" between signs and the objects they represent, as "indications, or indices; which show something about things, on account of their being physically connected with them" (1894/1998, 5). As he put it: "An Index is a sign which refers to the Object that it denotes by virtue of

concept in theorising the nature of mechanically produced visual images of film and photography and "has, since the 1980s, reached quasi-pop-culture status in art history and visual studies" (Brunet 2008, 34).

Photographs are more than just images, writes one of the leading exponents of this concept, they are traces, "material vestige[s] of the subject", "something directly stencilled off the real, like a footprint or a death mask" (Sontag 1977, 154). Similarly, Barthes writes that "[t]he photograph is literally an emanation of the referent. From a real body, which was there, proceed radiations which ultimately touch me, who am here; the duration of the transmission is insignificant" (1980, 80). Bazin's reference to photography as a death mask (1960, 7), Berger's to trace "that belongs to the subject" (1980, 54), Arnheim's assertion that "the physical objects themselves print their image by means of the optical and chemical action of light" (1974, 155; cf. Talbot 1839/1844-46), or Krauss' metaphor of photographs as "footprints in sand, or marks that have been left in dust" (1985/1977, 203), each in their own way prioritise the physical connection of the photographic image to depicted objects. Indexicality is precisely what led Barthes (1980) to emphasise that photographs are not so much guarantees of appearance (the way an object or a scene looked like) but of the object's existence, of its presence in time ("that-has-been"). As Geimer summarises this line of reasoning: "[S]omething was there, had its existence fixed in the form of a mark, and subsequently disappeared. What matters is this brief moment of contact and the visible evidence that it leaves behind on the impressionable ground" (2007, 10).

To a large degree, such straightforward understanding of indexicality has been problematised on the same grounds as commonsense notions of iconicity, for implying the neutrality of the image-making apparatus and overlooking cultural conventions imbued in the process of image-making. Thus, Burgin, for example, denounces the reproductionist notion of photography's "direct causal and apparently unmediated relationship with its referent", since every photograph necessarily "abstracts from, and mediates, the actual" through the inevitable

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being really affected by that Object [...] In so far as the Index is affected by the Object, it necessarily has some Quality in common with the Object, and it is in respect to these that it refers to the Object. [...] and it is not the mere resemblance of its Object, even in these respects which makes it a sign, but it is the actual modification of it by the Object" (1903/1998, 291). Contemporary authors tend to distinguish photography from other visual media and representational techniques precisely through the virtue of photography's physical (existential) connection to the object(s) it depicts.



act of arbitrary intervention by the photographer in the image-making process (1982, 61)<sup>51</sup>. In similar vein, Eco denounces the indexicality of photography by arguing that "sensory phenomena are *transcribed*, in the photographic emulsion, in such a way that even if there is a causal link with the real phenomena, the graphic images can be considered as wholly arbitrary with respect to these phenomena" (1982, 33).<sup>52</sup> However, critiques such as Burgin's "selective control" and Eco's "transcription" do not do away with the notion of indexicality as such, since the notion of mediation does not dismiss the essentially referential nature of photography. As Vaughan stresses, "[t]he point of photography is not that it mimics definitively the experience of seeing an object, but that *relation to that object is necessary* rather than a contingent one" (1999, 192, my emphasis)<sup>53</sup>. Indexicality is thus not to be understood in terms of "correspondence" to an object but in terms of being object-based. The object is thus a necessary precondition to a photograph: unlike, for example, in painting, where an image can be based purely on the imagination, there are, as Mary Price has put it, "no unicorns in photograph[y]" (1997, 6). Consequently, as Worth (1996/1975) notes, photographs cannot negate, but always function to reify and affirm (cf. Solomon-Godeau 1991). "[T]hey cannot represent, portray, symbolize, say, mean, or indicate things equivalent to what verbal utterances of the type "This is not a ..." or "It is not the case that ..." can do" (Worth 1996/1975, 173). Regardless of their level of abstraction, photographs are always object-based and as such necessarily confirm the existence of an object, they always refer to something that *is*, rather than to something that it *is not*.

"A photograph that doesn't correspond (in the accepted way) to reality is not a lie, because we tacitly "know" that the medium has no conventionalized procedure

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<sup>51</sup> As he put it: "The relationship between a photographic image and its referent is one of reproduction only to the extent that Christopher Wren's death mask reproduces Christopher Wren." (Burgin 1982, 61)

<sup>52</sup> On the same grounds of conventionality, he also denounces the iconicity of photography, claiming that "an iconic sign *reproduces* the conditions of perception, but only *some* of them" (1982, 32, original emphasis) and somewhat radically concluding that all iconic (and thus pictorial) signs are consequentially as conventional as linguistic ones. Though Eco's early formulations have been influential within writing on photography, Sonesson shows how his classification of visual signs (including photography) notoriously changes in his later writing: "The different versions of Eco's critique of iconicity are too numerous ever to be fully discussed, but we can distinguish three essential periods: at the first stage, Eco (1968; 1970; 1972) is basically concerned with showing that iconic signs (the basic example being pictures) are similar to linguistic signs in being conventional and analysable into features; at the second stage (1976; 1978; 1984a, b), he abandons the idea of feature analysis but wants to dislocate the required similarity sideways, into some kind of proportionality. In the final stage, however (1997; 1998; 1999), he seems to give up almost everything he has so far believed in, and, while retaining a tiny part for convention, basically goes to the other extreme, making all icons into mirrors affording a direct view onto reality." (Sonesson 2001, 2)

<sup>53</sup> In a similar manner, Barthes (1981) and Scott (1999) emphasise that the subject of photography is not an optionally real thing but a necessarily real thing.

for stating lies. The only way a photograph can be understood not to correspond to reality is when we change something in a hidden, secret, and hence tricky, manner."<sup>54</sup> (Worth 1996/1975, 176)

Moreover, postmodernist critiques of indexicality miss an important point that puzzled the inventors and early practitioners of the medium – photography's dual nature (see Batchen 1999a). As signifying systems, photographs are both indexical and iconical. We could in fact claim that on the level of signification and meaning-making, photography "functions" as a medium of communication not because of a more or less direct physical connection to the depicted object, but because it is an iconic form of representation, because, to varying degrees, the image does look like the depicted object. In the process of meaning-making, indexicality is in fact of secondary importance to iconicity. "Index is evacuated of content, it is a hollowed-out sign" that "stops short of meaning" (Doane 2008, 5, 12). Indexicality as such does not describe but merely indicates that something *is* (or in the case of photography, *was*) there, but it is not essential for a viewer to make meaning of the depicted image. Put bluntly – viewers can (and commonly do) make meaning of photographs without prior knowledge of the process of their making, relying solely on the notion of "likeness" (i.e. iconicity), just as they make meaning of other forms of visual representations, such as illustrations or cartoons: "The photograph can only be a trace once it is seen to be a likeness" (Sonesson 1989, 74). The idea of trace is thus a part of the secondary process of evaluation of the depicted content. As Sonesson put it, indexicality "in photographs really is a question of second thoughts and peculiar circumstances" (1989, 81). Knowing and understanding the process by which a photograph is formed becomes a "guarantee" of the depicted and a criterion for evaluation of images with questionable iconicity, i.e. those that arouse doubts and disbelief about the existence of the depicted. Knowing the photographic process thus also implies awareness of possible manipulations. Bertelsen (2008, 175) thus observes that attempts to expose (potentially) faked photographs might be iconoclastic but never *ichnoclastic*, they argue against the iconicity (content), not against the indexicality (image-making technology) of these photographic images (cf. Perlmutter and Smith Dahmen 2008).

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<sup>54</sup> But even in that case, for Worth it would not be the image that would lie but its maker/presenter. As he argues further: "If I superimpose a picture of the honest senator who swears he didn't know the gangster upon a scene of the gangster having dinner with his cronies, so that it appears that the senator is toasting the gangster, I have produced not a lie but a fake. The attributions one might make from such a photograph would be empirically false, but the picture would in all respects correspond to what it would look like if the senator had been there. If I paint a picture of one woman (Mrs. A) and present it to a viewer as a picture of another (Mrs. B), it is not the picture that lies, but the picture presenter." (Worth 1975/1996, 176)

This brings me back to the post-postmodern turn in thinking photography – to acknowledging the fact that photographs are "doubly natural signs" (Mitchel 1987, 60) and the need to move the focus of theoretical attention from the "inherent characteristics of medium itself" to "medium's uses", to specific social practices and relations of trust that accompany these practices and qualify the statuses of producers and viewers. Consequently this means accepting Sonensson's claim that "the photograph is essentially an *indexical icon*, and not the reverse, that is, that it is first and foremost iconical, like any picture" (1989, 80), but against the background of particular contexts and uses of photography which determine the relationship between the two, such as for example the institutionalised emphasis on indexicality in press photography.

### 2.3.3 Medium-specific means of expression

One of the key points of articulation in discourses on photography has been the notion of the medium's specific means of articulating messages. Ever since photographers embarked on the crusade for recognition of photography as (an autonomous) field of aesthetic endeavour, concepts such as "photographic language", "pictorial means of expression", "medium specificity" and "visual syntax" have been essential parts of this struggle.<sup>55</sup> Within photographic theory, the concepts of medium-specificity and its particular means of expression have often been at the centre of the essentialism vs. postmodernism debate, in which the latter side fiercely rejected any claims that a set of universal characteristics for the photographic medium (its nature) could ultimately predetermine the interpretation of a given image. This line of thinking also went against many of the developments in social and visual semiotics which have, over the past four decades, defined a series of categories, elements and indicators for the analysis of visual images that have been most widely used in the analysis of advertising.

In a recent attempt to break the deadlock between essentialist arguments about the nature of photography (and hence the universality of its meaning) and relativist postmodernist critique

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<sup>55</sup> It should be noted that the battle for the recognition of film as a legitimate form of art was waged using the same argument of »autonomous«, medium-specific means of expression. Cultural critics or artists such as Ricotto Canudo (1978/1911;1978/1922), Louis Delluc (1978), Germaine Dilac (1978), Leon Mussinac (1978), Elie Faure (1978/1934) and Hugo Münsterbeg (1978/1916) all saw the artistic potential of film in its development of an authentic means of expression and would thus become, as Canudo put it, "a magical instrument of new lyricism". Similarly, much of the work of early Soviet film-makers was aimed directly at developing this sort of cinematic means of expression, *montage* being a paramount form. (cf. Eisentein 1969; Vertov 1985; Pudovkin 2006)

(in which meaning is attributed to context, discursive and social practices), Stephen Shore (2007) breaks down the meaning-making process in photography to three interconnected levels – physical (the characteristics of photographic prints), depictive (the structure of the content) and mental (the framework for the mental image we construct of a picture). This division enables him to separate the common qualities of photographic images (the physical level) and the universal photographic means of expression (the depictive level) from the overriding influence of context, social practices and language. Shore argues that the viewer's perception of an image at one level is influenced by the characteristics of the former level(s). This implies that our making sense of the content of the image is to a certain extent predetermined by the physical characteristics of a photograph<sup>56</sup>, but, even more importantly, that the mental images a photograph evokes in the viewer's mind are to a large extent determined by the formal characteristics of the image, such as for example its frame or its focus.

Unlike painting, photography is an analytical, deductive activity where the photographer tries to impose (compose) order on a particular scene by using the basic photographic elements of *vantage point*, *frame*, *focus* and *time of exposure*. According to Shore, it is precisely these basic elements that “determine how the world in front of the camera is transformed into a photograph” and “form the visual grammar that elucidates the photograph's meaning” (2007, 8).

1. *Vantage point*: Photographic images are representations of reality materialised through the apparatus of the camera. One of the distortions that the camera inflicts on reality is to render the scene according to the rules of monocular vision and perspective, thus creating relationships between the images that did not exist before the photograph was taken. And as Shore emphasises, any change in vantage point would result in a change in these relationships. One such choice/change is placing the camera at a certain vertical angle in relation to the subject and its surroundings, which is commonly taken to be an indicator of power relations

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<sup>56</sup>. The basic physical characteristics of the photographic image, according to Shore, are flatness, boundedness and stillness, and they apply equally to traditional prints and digital images on computer screens. »The physical qualities of the print determine some of the visual qualities of the image. The flatness of photographic paper [or a computer screen] establishes the plane of the picture. The staticness of the image determines the experience of time in a photograph.« (Shore 2007, 16, *my insertion*)

between the viewer and the subject: low angles imply a powerful subject while high angles normally signify a powerful viewer.<sup>57</sup>

2. *Frame*: Framing is the central act of photographing, writes John Szarkowsky (2003/1966), it implies selection, an act of purposeful elimination and inclusion for the purpose of drawing the viewer's attention. "Just as monocular vision creates juxtapositions of lines and shapes within the image, edges create relationships between these lines and shapes and the frame" (Shore 2007, 56). The act of framing creates the photograph "as a representation of a fragment of continuous space" (Kelsey 2008, 17, cf. Krauss 1979) and has often (as early as in Talbot's *Pencil of Nature*) been regarded as evidence of a particular (i.e. superior and/or artistic) way of seeing. The camera lens produces an "optical compression that "leads to a complete redefinition of spatial relations" (Arnheim, 1954/1995, 8). The frame elucidates meaning by isolating subjects from their surroundings and thus forming new relations between them (Shore 2007, cf. Sontag 1977). According to Shore, frames can be passive or active, i.e. implying that the world continues beyond the edges of the picture (cropped elements), or present the image as a self-contained whole which does not appear to be part of a larger world. Furthermore, the frame serves as an indicator of the viewer's position/relationship towards the depicted scene and is treated as an identification cue (the closer the frame, the closer the implied relationship between viewer and subject ). The typology of frames and the concept of *proxemics* (Hall 1990/1966) will be further addressed below.

3. *Focus*: If framing is an act of directing attention to a certain scene, focusing is a further narrowing of the viewer's attention to elements selected by the photographer, who "creates a hierarchy in the depictive space by defining a single plane of focus. This plane [...] gives emphasis to part of the picture and helps to distil a photograph's subject from its content" (Shore 2007, 82). Focus or depth of field thus determines the apparent transparency of the photographic image and can delimit/restrict the wandering of the viewer's gaze. "Focus is the bridge between the mental and the depictive level," writes Shore. "Focus of the lens, focus of the eye, focus of attention, focus of the mind" (2007, 98).

4. *Time*: Photographs are "timely" – they are always shorter or longer exposures taken across a particular span of time. Photography can thus be seen as an art of fragmenting time,

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<sup>57</sup> Vertical angle as an indicator of power is a standard feature in the semiotic analysis of visual images (e.g. Lacey 1998) and can be traced to real-life perception (Messaris 1994, 1997) such as children looking up to figures of authority such as their parents.

of extracting static images from the continuous flow of time. What is significant is that these “discrete parcels of time” (Szarkowsky) can produce meanings that are not characteristic for the uninterrupted events/time, but exist primarily in photographic images. One of the most publicised such accounts is Henri Cartier-Bresson’s notion of the decisive moment, a fragment of time when “the significance of an event as well as the precise organization of forms which gives that event its proper expression” (1999/1952) are recognised before a scene dissolves (back) into meaning or aesthetic disorder.

The outlined elements represent the basic medium-specific means photographers have at their disposal to produce the mental organisation of an image. Their inclusion does not presuppose that they can produce universal, definite interpretations of depicted images, but imply that interpretation of the image (Shore’s mental level) is in part structured by decisions such as where to take the photograph from (vantage point), what exactly to include in the image (frame), when/for how long to release the shutter (time), and what to emphasise through plane of focus or depth of field (focus). It should also be noted that some of these codes, such as frames, angles or points of view, do possess a certain universality in their triggering of meaning, since they are not completely arbitrary but originate in or correspond to “real-world cognitive skills”, to everyday perceptual experience and viewing habits through which “all human beings [...] construct a coherent sense of their immediate environment” (Messaris 1994, 15).

#### **2.3.4 Text**

Another essential characteristic of the photographic medium is the dialectic relationship between image and text. If, on the one hand, photographs are considered to be worth a thousand words, their decoding, which goes beyond superficial recognition and impressions, is at the same time in desperate need of (a thousand) words. The popular phrase is often used to evoke the power of press photography, particularly in relation to photojournalistic depictions of human suffering and loss. Such references can be seen as somewhat ironic, as press photography is one of the social uses of photography that is by far the most dependent on accompanying text, either in the form of captions or accompanying articles, headlines and page titles, if a reader is to make sense of the depicted event beyond superficial impressions such as e.g. “two men shaking hands” or “advancing soldiers”. This *power over* and *thirst for* words is a universal characteristic of the photographic medium which does appear to have

difficulty with assertion, with making statements without the aid of words. Writing on the subject, Gombrich notes that:

“The visual image is supreme in its capacity for arousal [...] Its use for expressive purposes is problematic, and [...] used unaided it altogether lacks the possibility of matching the statement function of language. [...] The sentence from the primer 'The cat sits on the mat' is certainly not abstract, but although the primer may show a picture of a cat sitting on a mat, a moment's reflection will show that the picture is not the equivalent of the statement. We cannot express pictorially whether we mean 'the' cat (an individual) or 'a cat' (a member of a class); moreover, although the sentence may be one possible description of the picture, there are an infinite number of other true descriptive statements you could make such as 'There is a cat seen from behind', or for that matter 'There is no elephant on the mat'. (1982, 138-140)<sup>58</sup>

Gombrich's position is somewhat extreme; as was shown in previous sections, the rhetoric of photographs starts off with a basic indexical assertion of “that has been” (Barthes 1981); moreover, there are basic pictorial and compositional elements that a photographer can use to imply (encode) preferred or intended meaning/reading into the image itself. But at the same time, this is not enough to reject the position implied in Gombrich's writing altogether. For although research has shown that visual codes are effective in defining what is depicted, almost any usage of (non-conventional) visuals without text is still likely to produce significant differences in the inferences viewers make about the exact meaning of these representations. Advertising photography in general, and stock photography in particular, are highly illustrative examples of the arbitrariness of the image, as the same photographs can be and are used to promote different products, services or companies.

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<sup>58</sup> Gombrich offers another illustrative example: »Mosaic found at the entrance of a house in Pompeii shows a dog on a chain with the inscription Cave Canem (Beware of the Dog). It is not hard to see the link between such a picture and its arousal function. We are to react to the picture as we might to a real dog that barks at us. Thus the picture effectively reinforces the caption that warns the potential intruder of the risk he is running. Would the image alone perform this function of communication? It would, if we came to it with a knowledge of social customs and conventions. Why, if not as a communication to those who may be unable to read, should there be this picture at the entrance hall? But if we could forget what we know and imagine a member of an alien culture coming on such an image, we could think of many other possible interpretations of the mosaic. Could not the man have wanted to advertise a dog he wished to sell? Was he perhaps a veterinarian? Or could the mosaic have functioned as a sign for a public house called 'The Black Dog'? The purpose of this exercise is to remind ourselves how much we take for granted when we look at a picture for its message. It always depends on our prior knowledge of possibilities.« (ibid.)

“All photographs are ambiguous,” writes Berger, but he adds that often this “ambiguity is not obvious, for as soon as photographs are used with words, they produce together an effect of certainty, even dogmatic assertion” (Berger 1982, 90-91). The postmodernist critique of photography has long stressed the arbitrariness of the photographic message and its reliance on the context of meaning production, stressing the overriding power of the primary contextual element – text (see for example Scott 1999). Thus Price would assert: “describing is necessary for photographs. Call it captioning, call it titling, call it describing, the act of specifying in words what the viewer might be led both to understand and to see is necessary to the photograph as it is to the painting. Or call it criticism. It is the act of describing that enables the act of seeing” (Price 1997, 5).

Such views were strongly influenced by Barthes’ seminal work on advertising (1977) but, even before him, many authors were troubled by the relationship between images and text and stressed the overpowering potential of the latter. Mark Twain, for example, observed how textual information changed people’s interpretation and reactions to the portrait of Beatrice Cenci from a gentle portrait to a document of tragedy<sup>59</sup> (Mitchell 1987, 40), and Walter Benjamin saw captions as the only way to save photography from its narrative poverty and lack of revolutionary potential (1931/1977), a view he shared with Brecht (ibid.)<sup>60</sup> Barthes also believed that text exerts a strong influence over images and assigned two functions to text in relation to images, those of *anchorage* and *relay*. Anchorage, the more common of the two, serves to fix the “floating chain” of signifieds of inherently polysemic images (1977, 38-39)<sup>61</sup> by directing “the reader through the signifieds of the image, causing him to avoid some and to receive others” and hence guiding him towards a message (ideology) chosen in advance

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<sup>59</sup> “A good label is usually worth, for information, a ton of significant attitude and expression in a historical picture» writes Twain: »In Rome, people with fine sympathetic natures stand up and weep in front of the celebrated 'Beatrice Cenci the Day Before Her Execution.' It shows what a label can do. If they did not know the picture, they would inspect it unmoved, and say 'Young Girl with Hay Fever; Young Girl with Her Head in a Bag'« (Twain in Mitchell, *Iconology* 1986, 40). Similarly, Lejeune (1989, 110) notes in regard to the paramount importance of labelling artefacts in contemporary museums: “Everything depends on the label. In a museum, people almost spend more time reading the labels than they do looking at the paintings. We measure out our admiration, we adjust our gaze, depending upon the author or the subject. This allows you to take on an attitude, play a particular role.»

<sup>60</sup> Practitioners of the medium were also often aware of the defining power of language over images (for example Dorothea Lange spoke of the “tripod of meaning”, consisting of image, caption and text) or at best saw the two as complementary forms of narration and expression (e.g. Agee’s and Evans’ (1989/1939) *Let us Now Praise Famous Men where Evans* describes the relationship of images and text as “coequal”) and often sought to limit or control the use of text that accompanied their images.

<sup>61</sup> What Barthes argues is that photographs either do not contain information in themselves or, on the other hand, contain too much contradictory information. In both cases, a textual message is needed to fix the meaning of a photographic message (image).



(1977, 40). With relay, text [...] and image stand in a complementary relationship. The words, as well as the images, are fragments of a more general syntagm, and the unity of the message is realised at a higher level, namely, at the level of the story, the anecdote, the diegesis (1977, 41). In both cases, language acts as a means of control over image(s), either by assigning meaning and interpretation or by evoking meanings that are not to be found in the image itself. It is often regarded as an impediment on “photographic seeing”, a sort of “intervention through the side door, as a bystanding consciousness presiding over the image” (Scott 1999, 52). Although acknowledging that intervention through text may be the photographer’s emancipating tool and not only a means for social institutions to conduct oppressive discourses, Scott nevertheless asserts the separateness of visual and textual messages:

A caption never coincides with the image, never exists in the same time; it either precedes the image [...] or succeeds it, acts in reaction. Consequently, meaning is displaced, removed from the image: the image is either only a part of a metaphor or an instigator of a presiding voice which, in return, endows it with a justification. (1999, 53)

Analyses such as Scott’s exploration of various strategies for the narrativisation of images through text nevertheless often neglect one important dimension of the interrelation between image and text – aesthetics: “Text correlates with photography not only through its semantics but also through graphic characteristics such as form, outline, size and boldness” (Stigneev, 1995, 58). For the overall effect of the message, it is not unimportant to note how the semantic meanings of text are fused with the picture’s graphic theme, for text is, after all, also essentially a visual mode of communication.

Analytically, one can speak of three levels at which photographic images are “invaded” by language through text. First, text can be a part of the image, incorporated in the depicted scene, such as various inscriptions, store signs, advertising billboards, demonstrators’ placards etc. Such text can have an *orientational* function, enabling easier identification of the place and time of the depicted scene (e.g. store signs). Additionally, text in the depicted scene (e.g. slogans of placards held by demonstrators) can have an *interpretational* function, helping the viewer produce an interpretation (or understanding) of the depicted scene that would not be possible through the purely visual parts of the image. Moreover, text in the image can serve as

a *commentary* of the depicted scene, as a means of evoking irony or social critique. The juxtaposition of subjects with advertising billboards and slogans has long been an efficient strategy for embedding a commentary into the photographic image (see Scott 2004 for her discussion of word-based and wordless irony in photographs).

On the second level, text is located either outside of the image in the form of captions, titles or newspaper articles, or on the image itself, as in the case of advertising copy. Thirdly, postmodern critics emphasise that language invades even "untextualised" images (such as an uncaptioned photograph on a gallery wall) during the stage in which viewers interpret the image through the memories, associations, knowledge etc. (e.g. Chaplin 1994, 88) that he or she bring into the act of interpretation. The underlying rationale of such critiques is that "texts interpose themselves between man and image: they hide the world from man instead of making it transparent to him" (Flusser 2000, 3). This line of thinking implies that images are always subjugated to language, which cannot adequately (and neutrally) describe the seen image but necessarily induces textual interpretation of the visual. Furthermore, authors stress that "words and pictures are not merely different kind of creatures, but opposite kinds" (Mitchell 1987, 47), a relationship in which images are seen as natural<sup>62</sup>, while words are perceived as human intervention into otherwise natural depiction.

The renderings described above of the dialectical relation between image and text are based on the notion of the informational poverty (or abundance) of photographic images. As Barthes (1977) put it, photographs display either too little or too much (contradictory) information, so they need a verbal part of the message to fix the fleeting meaning of the image. This position does not specifically negate the autonomous expressive means of the photographic medium, but emphasises their limited role in the construction of meaning. It stresses the overriding power of photographic index, of image as "pure indication, pure assurance of existence", which empties the photographic index of content: "Index is never enough. It stops short of meaning, presenting only its rubric of possibility, and for that reason it is eminently exploitable" (Doane 2008, 12).

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<sup>62</sup> As Mitchell put it, in the relation between text and images, the image is a sign that »pretends not to be a sign«, masquerading as »natural immediacy and presence«. However, this perceived naturalness of image is nothing but ideological mystification of the apparatus and photographic medium as such (1987, 43).

### 2.3.5 Context

Photographs are signifying surfaces whose meanings emerge in an act of interpretation which is determined by formal characteristics and the structure of the image, the context of its placement and the viewer him/herself (his/her intentions for observing the image and the cultural and social history he/she brings into this act of interpretation). The history of writings on photography can be seen as a shifting spotlight on these three locations of meaning. As I have shown in the introductory part of this chapter, contemporary theorizing on the medium focuses on the overriding power of context over the other two determinants: just as the significance of words depends on their surroundings, photography acquires different meaning and cultural status according to the context in which it is shown.<sup>63</sup> Or, as one of the exponents put it, “photography is always encountered in specific viewing situations they are inseparable from contextual determinations” (Solomon-Godeau 1991, xxix). Although the paramount importance of the context of display/viewing is almost uniformly echoed throughout contemporary texts on photography (e.g. Sontag 1977, Tagg 1988, Price 1997 etc.), it should be noted that the exact influence of context itself has received fairly little detailed analytical and systematic scholarly attention. Instead of being confirmed through the findings of systematic research, the overriding role of the context is normally verified through anecdotal evidence and much publicised cases such as the Chinese government’s use of Jeff Widener’s famous photograph of a demonstrator standing in front of a row of advancing tanks to “prove” the human face of the Tiananmen intervention or identification photographs of the Khmer Rouge executions from Tuol Sleng prison being transformed into portrait/art photography two decades later when exhibited at New York’s Museum of Modern Art. One of the more systematic accounts is offered by Wendy Grossman’s (2003) study on the reframing of Man Ray’s *Noire et Blanche*. Consequently, the notion of context is highly fluid and ranges from micro locations to text and institutional and structural power relations that govern cultural production within a given society, implying that “what is perceived is not simply the result of what the photographer has mobilised and presented to the viewer, but involves the viewer’s knowledge of photography and visual imagery and the attitude of the viewer toward the subject.” (E. Hall 1995/1987, 117)

Acknowledging the power of context in the process of interpretation does not simply mean recognising that viewers bring a certain baggage of experience into the act of meaning-making

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<sup>63</sup> »The photograph is an incomplete utterance, a message that depends on some external matrix of conditions and presuppositions for its readability« (Sekula 1982, 85).

(e.g. E. Hall 1990/1966, S. Hall 1997 etc.), but also that no area of cultural production is free from the play of power relations. This, however, should not suggest that “photography is a transparent reflection of the power outside itself” but rather “to insist that a photograph's compelling weight was [...] always discursive. (Tagg, 1992: 143) The extreme postmodernist position which proclaims that “photographs do not carry meanings in themselves” (Tagg 1992, 129) needs to be adequately qualified. As Price warns:

If use determines the meaning of photographs, as I believe it does, no single meaning is absolute. The discovery that differing descriptions and uses are possible *ought not*, however, *to encourage arbitrary interpretations*. The range of uses for a single photograph is limited by its visible content. [...] Use is limited by the image even as the image lends itself to varying uses. (Price 1997, 1, my emphasis)

I will, however, argue that Price's argument needs to be complemented with the idea that the meaning of photographs is to a certain extent determined by interpretation cues elucidated through the formal structure of the image (e.g. Shore 2007). In relation to interpretation, context can also be seen as a reattachment of a discontinued moment depicted in photography to the flow of time: as Berger notes, when we “find a photograph meaningful, we are lending it a [a context of] past and a future” (Berger & Mohr 1982, 89; my insertion).

### **2.3.6 Mystical power, mystification of power**

Photographs were conceived as an epitome of Western rational thought and scientific methods of appropriating (subjugating) the world, and have acquired their social status as a means of (visual) record, of facts. However, both popular and theoretical discourses on photography have, since photography's inception, been permeated with ideas of spirituality, mystique and the supernatural. Photographic images have been attributed certain powers beyond their mere ability to depict an object or scene: they have come to be seen as seductive, dangerous, suggestive or enlightening, insinuating the presence or emanation of mythical, magical or divine forces.

This investment of photographic images with “supernatural” powers and the emphasising of the non-rational component of their communication is a strand of a general human attitude towards visual images. As Freedberg (1989) put it:

People are sexually aroused by pictures and sculptures; they break pictures and sculptures; they mutilate them, kiss them; they are calmed by them, stirred by them and incited to revolt. They give thanks by means of them, expect to be elevated by them and are moved to the highest levels of empathy and fear. They have always responded in these ways; they still do. They do so in societies we call primitive and in modern societies; in East and West, in Africa, America, Asia and Europe. (1989, 1)

By stressing the persistence of such responses to images, Freedberg is not suggesting that there are no significant differences between cultures, historical eras or the development stages of art in their relation to visual imagery, but simply that investing images with “special” properties is, as Mitchell put it, “a deep and abiding feature of human responses to representation” (2005, 8).

Why do they [people] behave as if pictures were alive, as if works of art had minds of their own, as if images have the power to influence human beings, demanding things from us, persuading, seducing and leading us astray? Even more puzzling, why is it that the very people who express these attitudes and engage in this behaviour will, when questioned, assure us that they know very well that pictures are not alive, that works of art do not have minds of their own, and that images are really quite powerless to do anything without the cooperation of their beholders. (2005, 7, my insertion)

Mitchell notes that people universally maintain a “double consciousness” when it comes to visual representations, “vacillating between magical beliefs and sceptical doubts, naive animism and hard-headed materialism, mystical and critical attitudes” (ibid.). Camera-made still and moving images have been at the locus of Western culture’s contemporary “investments” of images with “surplus value”, of its consumption *of* and increasingly *through* images. As will be shown below, photographs epitomise Mitchell’s “double consciousness”

both at the level of medium<sup>64</sup> and on the level of concrete social practices, such as in the case of personal or press photography. On the one hand, the indexical nature of the medium (subject of photograph as “necessarily real”)<sup>65</sup> and its automatic transcription of objects grounded in the laws of physics and optics stand as guarantees of the “factualness” of photographs, of their neutral, non-interpretative nature. On the other hand, even outside of the realm of the cultural industries of advertising and entertainment, people’s attitudes towards “visual facts” and “documents” are not purely “factual”, but routinely reveal an ascribed surplus value: “[S]ome trace of the magic remains: for example, in our reluctance to tear up or throw away the photograph of a loved one, especially of someone dead or far away” (Sontag 1977, 161)<sup>66</sup>. Such magical attitudes towards photography derive from the very fact that visual representation “turn[s] an event or a person into something that can be possessed” (Sontag 1977, 81), which can evoke the tacit, ages-old belief that pictorial representations of bodies “somehow have the status of living bodies” (Freedberg 1989, 12) and lead into some form of idolatrous attitude and behaviour.<sup>67</sup> Although writers on photography tend to link this “surplus value” of photographs specifically to the nature of photographic representation – the temporal and spatial discontinuity of the iconical index (i.e. the arresting of a moment from the flow of time and objectifying it through the aid of image-making apparatus),<sup>68</sup> Freedberg’s study

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<sup>64</sup> The notions and attitudes of mystique that accompany photography originate in part from the very nature of photographic representation, its temporal and spatial discontinuity already described above: arresting a moment from the flow of time and objectifying it. There are two consequences of this transformation. First, as a number of writers from Barthes to Burgin have emphasised, the viewing of photographs operates according to the basic mechanism of fetishism. “The photograph, like the fetish, is the result of a look, which has, instantaneously and forever isolated, ‘frozen’, a fragment of the spatio-temporal continuum,” (Burgin 1982, 190) and in order for a photograph to work, the viewer has to temporarily suspend the awareness that he/she is looking at the photograph, not through it. This is what Barthes had in mind when he wrote of the paradox that the photographic image as such has no materiality, that “a photograph is always invisible, it is not it that we see” (1981, 6). The separation of material base and image through the subjugation of this act is needed to fulfil the illusion of direct perception, of temporarily replacing our eyes with the polished glass of the camera lens, and it is precisely this “separation of knowledge from belief” on which photographic representation is based that is “characteristic of fetishism.” (Burgin 1982, 190)

<sup>65</sup> “You can’t take a picture of something that is not in front of the camera. You can slant the angle wrong, you can light it wrong, you can lie in what you set before the camera, but the camera itself does not lie, you can fiddle with the picture afterwards, you can develop it. But we implicitly know that *there had to be something in front of that camera* and so we tend to believe it since we tend to believe our eyes.” (Goldberg 1999).

<sup>66</sup> Mitchell (2005, 31) offers an even more telling example – the unwillingness of students who sneer at the idea of magical properties of photographs to cut out the eyes from a photograph of their loved ones. One could of course add the opposite example, the pleasure and sense of revenge in mutilating photographs as an act of revenge.

<sup>67</sup> For Sontag and a number of contemporary authors such as Baudrillard (1995), the main power (or danger) of images is not that people mistake images for real things but that “reality has come to seem more and more like what we are shown by cameras. It is common now for people to insist about their experience of a violent event in which they were caught up – a plane crash, a shoot-out, a terrorist bombing – that ‘it seemed like a movie.’” (Sontag 1977, 161)

<sup>68</sup> Thus Flusser, for example, writes in the very opening of his *Towards Philosophy of Photography*: “Such space-time as reconstructed from [photographic] images is proper to magic, where everything repeats itself. [...]”

shows that such beliefs apply to visual representations in general, regardless of the manner of their making or the degree of mimetic realism, ranging from classical paintings or sculptures to icons, wax figures and photographs.

Contrary to popular opinion, belief in the magical aspects of visual imagery (either positive/fophilic or negative/iconoclastic) is still very much alive in contemporary societies. “Far from being defanged in the modern era, images are one of the last bastions of magical thinking,” writes Mitchell. “Modern urban cultures may not have many cults or saints but they do have an ample supply of magical images – fetishes, idols and totems of every description, brought to life in the mass media and in a variety of subcultures” (2005, 128). Examples of supposedly archaic superstitions about images still abound and, though the “worshipping” side of the coin may not be as salient as it was decades ago, the iconoclastic charges against offensive images (both in terms of zealousness and volume) have all but withered away.<sup>69</sup> Mitchell (2005) identifies three distinct forms of the surplus of images, three types of attitudes attached to over/underestimation of their power: *idolatry*, *fetishism* and *totemism*. Idolatry has the greatest surplus of overestimation of the power of image, as the representation is taken to be the very object it represents (e.g. treating images of gods as if they are gods themselves), is related to practices of worship and the iconic properties of signs in Peircean terminology and belongs to the Lacanian register of the imaginary. “Fetishism comes in a close second to idolatry as an image of surplus, associated with greed, acquisitiveness, perverse desire, materialism and a magical attitude toward objects” (2005, 97-8). The power of fetish derives from it being a part of the object (often a body part) and, as such, it is consigned to the realm of materiality and private “consumption”. Fetish is revered as an obsession (often explicitly sexual), it is related to the indexical properties of signs and the Lacanian register of the real. By contrast, totem is characterised by regulation of collective behaviour and hence connected to practices of communal festivals or sacrifices; it is linked to Peircian symbols and Lacanian

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The world of magic is structurally different from the world of historical linearity [...] images have magical meaning.» (2000, 2)

<sup>69</sup> Recent iconoclastic practices should not be confined to examples such as the outrage over the infamous publishing of Mohammed cartoons in Jyllands-Posten in 2005. Recent iconoclastic practices range from attacks on paintings in galleries (e.g. Freedberg 1989, also Mitchell 2005), the ritual burning or hanging of puppets of politicians at demonstrations, the vandalising of statues (e.g. the statue of Kardelj in Ljubljana, to offer but one Slovene example), or the official removal of monuments associated with former regimes (ranging from Estonia’s relocation of the monument of the liberators of Tallinn in 2007 to Germany’s removal of DDR’s Palast der Republik in 2006-08), to »idols of wrong religions« (the blowing-up of Buddhist monuments in Afghanistan, the attacks on the World Trade Centre – see Mitchell 2005, Chapter 1), and public outcries against offensive (or intrusive) advertising.

symbolic. (2005, 195) However, this tripartite division is not to be understood as a typology of different characteristics of images but as three different relations to visual representations:

[O]ne and the same object (a golden calf, for instance) could function as a totem, fetish or idol depending on the social practices and narratives that surround it. Thus, when the calf is seen as a miraculous image of God, it is an idol; when it is seen as a self-consciously produced image of the tribe or nation [...] it is a totem; when its materiality is stressed, and it is seen as a molten conglomerate of private “part-objects,” the earrings and gold jewellery that the Israelites brought from Egypt, it becomes a collective fetish.” (2005, 189)

When it comes to photography, even the most rational scientific discourse<sup>70</sup> cannot make do without a shadow of mystique or a hint of the supernatural. Consider for example Barthes’ influential descriptions of photography’s “resistance to meaning”, of being “a message without code” from *Image/Music/Text* or his later insistence in *Camera lucida* on how the *punctum of an image* triumphs over its *studium*. As Mitchell notes, “every image theorist seems to find some residue or “surplus value” that goes beyond communication, signification, and persuasion” (2005, 9). The central characteristic of this “surplus value” of photographic image is the popular belief that images possess some sort of inherent, almost bewitching power over the beholder. This special power is generally interpreted as a power over the rationality of the human mind.

The power of images is the power of emotional appeal,<sup>71</sup> it lies in their capacity to move and mobilise the viewer by eliciting emotional responses to depicted content such as desire, fear or disgust, to name but a few. Moreover, this subjugation of rationality is achieved through what has since the time of the ancient Greek philosophers been regarded as “the noblest of senses”,<sup>72</sup> man’s finest instrument of perception. Western suspicion of images has over the course of two-and-a-half millennia, been organised around two recurring leitmotifs, two interconnected strands used to evaluate the power of images: *iconoclasm* and *aniconism*. Aniconism equates the higher thought and development of individuals and society with

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<sup>70</sup> Everyday discourse on photography is equally full of descriptions and metaphors that allude to the magical/supernatural, such as the epiphany of the image in traditional darkroom developing or Polaroid prints.

<sup>71</sup> Or, as Jeff Adams phrased it, the currency of photography is »emotion, not emulsion«.

<sup>72</sup> Heraclitus, for example, claimed that »of all the senses, sight and hearing are, however, the most reliable (fragment 55), and of these two, the sight is superior (fragment 101a).« (1987, 182)



abstinence from the use of images, devaluating the senses in favour of the intellect<sup>73</sup> (Freedberg 1989, 61). One of the outcomes of Western aniconism has been (de)evaluation of images as feminine: the spectatorship of images has been constructed around the opposition between men and women in which women are images, objects of the male look/gaze. “*Men act and women appear*. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at,” concludes Berger (1972, 47, original emphasis) as he traces the continuation of this power imbalance, which Mulvey (1975) famously termed the “male gaze”, into modern-day advertising (cf. Williamson 1978; Goffmann 1976). This, however, is only one part of the aniconistic attitude towards images – as Mitchell points out, it is not only that production of imagery is focused on “images *of* women” but that “images are women” (2005, 35), ascribed with characteristics of irrationality, naïveté, delusion, immorality, mysteriousness, danger etc. Such accounts of the status and power of images result from the interconnected attitudes of fear and contempt:

“The contempt springs from the assurance that images are powerless, mute, inferior kinds of signs; the fear stems from the recognition that these signs, and the “others” who believe in them, may be in the process of *taking* power, appropriating a voice.” (Mitchell 1987, 151, original emphasis)

Photographs are, as Sekula put it, “incomplete utterances”, and consequently their power cannot derive solely from their transparent immediacy, riddled with the potential to evoke emotions and desires, but also from their elusiveness in terms of definite meaning: images are powerful and magic because of their silence, because of “their dumb insistence on repeating the same message” (Mitchell 2005, 27), which transforms them into glossy surfaces for the projection of ideas.

Writings on photography abound with insinuations of the magical or supernatural characteristics of photographic images and, in concluding this section, I would like to point out several such illustrative examples. One of the central links between photography and the domain of the mystical is related to the temporal and spatial discontinuity inherent in the

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<sup>73</sup> This has been a staple of Western philosophy at least since Plato. In his study of recent approaches in (de)evaluation of sight, however, Jay (1993) warns against linking Plato too closely to the celebration of ocularcentrism. As he points out, his references to superiority of sight refer to »only that of the inner eye of the mind; in fact, Plato often expressed severe reservations about the reliability of the two eyes of normal perception«. (1993, 27)

photographic image, which was conceived very early as the separation of form from matter (Holmes 1859/1980) and which connects the photographic image to death and transcendence. For Barthes (1981), photographs testify to the inevitability of death and serve as a form of resurrection, for Sontag (1977) and Bazin (1960) they are death masks, for Kracauer (1993/1927) their function is to banish the recollection of death, to free society from its fear of death. However, photographs do not serve simply as instruments or replacements of memory that connect present and future with past– they are constitutive of idolatrous, fetishist and totemist practices.

Fetishism appears, first of all, through the conception that photographs are windows to the world, that they offer unmediated access to knowing the world which is based on the subjugation of knowledge of the medium's operation. This attitude permeates a series of institutional uses of photography, primarily those that rely on the notion of images as proof or insight – the police and the judicial system, science, journalism (but also those of advertising and promotion). Fetishism is thus linked to the notion of truth, and Szarkovsky (2003/1966) is right to point out that photography found its truth in fragmented nature. Photographers thus often operate on the premise that (true) reality is somehow hidden, and that their role is to reveal it by capturing the isolated, partial fragments of space and time has been a recurring theme in the marketing of photographic products.

Idolatry, on the other hand, is more often related to unstructured social uses of photography. Its clearest expression is the idea that the photographic image can in some way capture the essence of a person, his soul.<sup>74</sup> As I have indicated above, such attitudes are not characteristic solely of photography<sup>75</sup>, but have gained new currency through the ease with which surrogate possession of a person can be achieved in the form of the photographic image (e.g. Bryson

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<sup>74</sup> Minor White offers an illustrative example of this belief when he claims that »no matter how slow the film, *spirit* always stands still long enough for the photographer it has chosen.« (1969, my emphasis)

<sup>75</sup> For example, Saint Augustine writes of the tyrant Dyonisius, who, »because he was deformed, did not wish to have children like himself. In sleeping with his wife he used to place a beautiful picture in front of her, so that that by desiring its beauty and in some manner taking it in, she might effectively transmit it to the offspring she conceived« (quoted in Freedberg 1989, 2). A similar account of the efficacy of images is presented in a 17<sup>th</sup>-century encyclopaedia, where Mancini writes that »lascivious things are to be placed in private rooms, and the father of the family is to keep them covered, and only uncover them when he goes there with his wife, or an intimate who is not too fastidious. [...] Because once seen they serve to arouse one and to make beautiful, healthy and charming children...not because imagination imprints on the foetus but because each parent, through seeing the picture, imprints in their seed a similar constitution which has been seen in the object or figure. [...] They must nevertheless not be seen by children and old maids, nor by strangers and fastidious people« (in Freedberg 1989, 3), also implying that one should not have in one's bedroom images of people of whom one could not »possess the original«.

1994; Freedberg 1989).<sup>76</sup> Photographic idolatry, however, is not simply some primal or primitive notion of the efficacy of images or extravagant dictatorial regimes and their self-adorning personality cults, but also saturate rather elitist discourses such as art criticism, where portraits are routinely evaluated by the standard of how well a certain image captures the spirit/soul/essence of the subject.<sup>77</sup> As a slogan in a recent Nikon advertisement asked, “Do people reveal more of themselves to Nikon?”

Totemistic uses of photography can be found both in institutionalised public forms, where certain photographs or practices serve as articulation points for the formation of collective (e.g. national) memory and identification (e.g. canonised photographs of a nation’s history or a standard selection of “great works” in books on the history of photography), and in the more private sphere of the family. According to Bourdieu (1990), family photography exists as a practice in the ritual documenting of the family through a series of predictable events such as various “rites of passage”, ceremonies and habits. “Family photography is thus understood as a ritual of the domestic cult in which family is both subject and object,” (1990, 19), and which serves the totemistic function of organising the collective life of smaller or larger social units.<sup>78</sup>

The six topics outlined above represent what I have termed *privileged discursive elements* of photographic theory – thematically grouped pools of ideas, suppositions and concerns that enable us to “think photography” beyond the polarised conceptions of the formalist/essentialist vs. postmodernist/anti-essentialist traditions. On the one hand, these privileged discursive elements delimit professional, scientific and everyday discourses on photography and structure and inform its various social uses. On the other hand, they provide us with basic elements for visual analysis, as will be evident in Chapters 6 and 7. In Chapter 3, the *privileged discursive elements* will be used to map the field (and subsequently provide a working definition) of a specific professional practice – photojournalism. As will be demonstrated in the process, the theoretical and practical articulations of *privileged discursive*

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<sup>76</sup> Thus Balzac is reported to have believed that »everybody in its natural state was made up of a series of ghostly images, superimposed in layers to infinity, wrapped in infinitesimal films. Every time a photograph was taken, one of those layers was stripped away. Eventually, after an infinite number of photographs, the thing might cease to be, robbed as it was of its constituent layers of visibility.” (Nadar in Sontag 1977, 158; see also Krauss 1978)

<sup>77</sup> The idolatry of personal photography (e.g. reluctance to dispose of or damage photographs of loved ones) has already been noted above.

<sup>78</sup> This regulatory function of family photography has been much discussed, see e.g. Haldrup and Larsen 2003.

*elements* are often contradictory, and analysis based on *privileged discursive elements* can account for these inconsistencies and contradictions.

### 3 DEFINING PHOTOJOURNALISM

*The twentieth century belongs to the photojournalists. [...] The camera, in the hands of well-educated and well informed photographers, provides us with images of unprecedented power and indisputable information about the world in which we live.* Howard Chapnick, Truth needs no ally: inside photojournalism

*If no theoretical distinction has been made between the photograph as scientific evidence and the photograph as means of communication, this has been not so much an oversight as a proposal.* John Berger, Another way of telling

*In any case, if there's any crisis of photojournalism, it is related to editing and publishing, not to pictures and photographers.* John G. Morris, Get the Picture: A Personal History of Photojournalism

Despite its omnipresence in our everyday lives, defining photojournalism can prove to be an elusive task. Most often, it is simply understood as the visual equivalent of journalism, a practice of visual recording whose mission is to deliver realistic, eyewitness accounts of people and events to mass media audiences. As such, photojournalism's mission is linked to one of the central normative presuppositions and preconditions of liberal democracy – supplying information to citizens, thus enabling them to form (and express) informed opinions, make conscious political choices and meaningfully participate in control over what Dewey described as the “consequences of social transactions that extend beyond those immediately engaged in producing them” and by which they are “indirectly and seriously affected for good or for evil” to the extent that they require regulation (1927/1998, 292; see also Splichal 1999).

Yet precise and extensive definition of the practice, its routines and principles, is hard to come across, even in the growing body of literature on the subject. In part, this has to do with the fact that photojournalism is a professional practice that is formed through “doing” rather than through “thinking”. This discourse of “practice” is perpetuated on several levels and starts

with press photographers themselves, who frequently speak of taking photographs instinctively, unconsciously and automatically, and who are often reluctant to (critically) reflect on their work beyond the technical and practical details of the making of the image, dismissing it as unnecessary intellectualism.<sup>79</sup> In a similar manner, photojournalism educational programmes tend to eschew photographic and (critical) media theory in favour of practical, skills-oriented courses. Most of the available literature on press photography is concentrated around the two narrowly defined genres of *how to do photojournalism* textbooks<sup>80</sup>, which focus mostly on techniques for shooting and editing photographs, and *best practice* anthologies or histories of the genre that canonise a scarce selection of (predominantly Western) photographers or photographs, through which they mythologise photojournalism's mission as one of "revealing human suffering, opening the viewer's eyes to the conditions of the downtrodden, and provoking movements for social reform" (Griffin 2004, 400), thereby constructing an image of the profession that is sharply at odds with the "routine workings of the picture press" (Ibid.). The final reason for this evasiveness is the fact that the field is in constant flux, that it is a social practice whose "terms and conditions", social role and ascribed status are continuously challenged by technological changes concerning image production, reproduction and distribution, changes within media industries, politics and public sphere(s) (such as commercialisation, instrumentalization<sup>81</sup> and conglomeration of the media, growing public distrust of increasingly arrogant governance by power elites, or the depolitisation of citizenship coupled with the emergence of alternative forms of political participation), and trends in visual culture (visual styles, influences from popular culture). Definition of photojournalism is a hegemonic consensus that needs to be actively maintained through symbolic struggles for possession of the right to interpret reality, a consensus that is currently fond of proclaiming the (impending) death of photojournalism.

The present chapter will investigate the most salient current debates on the nature and future of photojournalism – issues concerning photojournalistic ethics and treatment of its breaches.

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<sup>79</sup> See for example Wright 2004; Lutz and Collins (1993) trace this reluctant attitude towards reflective verbalising on images, not only among photographers but also among (National Geographic) photo editors, who for example had a hard time defining the qualities of their central working category – "a great photograph", explaining their selections in terms of gut feeling and "you know one when you see one" arguments.

<sup>80</sup> It should be noted that most of the globally available literature on "practising" photojournalism originates from the United States and bears the strong imprint of American conceptions of journalism and news values. For an introductory list of canonised US textbooks, see Schwartz 1992.

<sup>81</sup> The term as it is used here is taken from Hallin and Mancini and implies (ab)use of media in order to achieve strategic political goals. As they put it, *instrumentalisation* is "control of the media by outside actors – parties, politicians, social groups or movements, or economic actors seeking political influence – who use them to intervene in the world of politics." (2004, 37)

Seen as symbolic struggles to secure a specific interpretation of reality (profession), the arguments will form a first step towards building a definition of the practice. In the second step (Chapter 4), a more inclusive definition of the practice will be built through adoption of the many inconsistencies and contradictions that the ethical approach to photojournalism eschews. It will build on the six topics or privileged discursive elements, outlined in the previous chapter, around which ideas, suppositions, superstitions and concerns on photography are articulated, and thus enable us to “think” press photography and photojournalism beyond the “how to” knowledge-based or illusive concepts, commonsense understanding and handed-down “this is how it’s done” skills.

At this point, it is necessary briefly to address the terminology that will be used in this debate and the divisions that it implies. Presently, terms such as photojournalism, press or even documentary photography are often still used interchangeably. Even the most acclaimed works have a habit of substituting precise definitions with vague concepts and assumed notions about the profession. For example, the widely acclaimed *Photojournalism: The Professional Approach* (Kobre 2004) treats news as a set of natural, pre-given topics. Instead of a discussion of events, journalistic practice or news values, it offers its readers simply a list of tips on “where to find news”, as the subtitle of the first chapter goes. Another telling example is Herrod’s *Photojournalism: An essential guide*, where the author opens his introduction with the following lines:

“Documentary photography, photo essay and photojournalism are terms used for telling factual stories through photographs. I have no precise means of defining one from the other but tend to employ the respective terms based on the number of photographs being used, with documentaries being longer than essays and photojournalism being the shortest.” (2003, 1)

There are, however, far more significant characteristics separating photographic genres than simply the number of photographs used by the media. Documentary photography and photojournalism are two distinct photographic and social practices which have developed characteristic codes and conventions,<sup>82</sup> have different target audiences, project motivations

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<sup>82</sup> Schwartz (1992) provides a thorough overview of photojournalism's codes and conventions – which will be addressed in Chapter 4. For a primer on the codes and conventions of documentary photography, see e.g. Solomon Godeau (1991), Coles 1998 or Mraz 2003.

and/or sources of financing, and focus on different subject matter and topics. Or at least different aspects of the same subject matter and topics, whereby documentary photography focuses on the long-term projects and broader aspects of particular phenomena or events, while photojournalism typically addresses the more immediate, short-term and more limited narration of a given phenomenon or event. One could argue, following Scott (1999), that both photojournalism and documentary belong to the same group of photographic practices that are based on indexical aesthetics<sup>83</sup>, but it is vital to separate the two, just as it is vital to differentiate between press photography and photojournalism, a distinction that Scott overlooks.

Press photography is a much broader term that describes images used by the media (newspapers, magazines, websites and occasionally television) for the purpose of visual news reporting, while photojournalism is just one of its genres, albeit the most prominent. Thus press photography features a wider range of imagery, including portraits, editorial illustrations or stock photography, which is now increasingly being used by print and Internet media to illustrate their stories. These photographic images are produced according to codes and conventions<sup>84</sup> that substantially differ from those of photojournalism – not only in terms of contrasting stylistic approaches (aesthetics) and looser ethical constraints (greater flexibility in terms of staging and post-processing), but also in different audience expectations and their “ways of looking”. This is why I would argue for their exclusion from the analytical category of photojournalism, regardless of the fact that they are often made by the same photographers and that they have found their place within the institutionalised discourses on photojournalism education (textbooks<sup>85</sup>, courses etc.) and practice (competitions and awards).<sup>86</sup> Analytically, it seems more reasonable to separate photojournalism and its “factual” sub-genres of spot news,

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<sup>83</sup> Scott (1999, 42) proposes a rather schematic but still very informative division of photographic production into indexical, iconic and symbolic genres:

- **indexical:** photojournalism, documentary, portrait, photogram, pornography and family snapshot;
- **iconic:** fashion, nude, photo-story, landscape;
- **symbolic:** allegory, photomontage, advertising.

The positions of genres are not entirely fixed, as index genres can move towards icons and all symbolic genres can move towards being iconic. Similarly, fashion and photo-story can move to either the indexical or symbolic camps while nude and landscape can only move towards the indexical.

<sup>84</sup> Which imply not only contrasting stylistic approaches but contrasting ethical constraints as well as different expectations and “ways of looking” for the audience.

<sup>85</sup> Kobre (2004) highlights eight sub-genres of photojournalism – spot news, general news, issues, features, portraits, sports, photo story and illustration, while Lester (1999) writes of “six basic types of assignments a photographer faces. News, features, sports, portraits, illustrations, and picture stories.”

<sup>86</sup> NPPA, for example, formalises the sub-genres through their competition categories, which include spot news, general news, features, sports action, sports feature, portrait/personality (close-ups), environmental portraits, pictorial, food illustration, fashion illustration and editorial illustration. (Schwartz 1992)



general news, background news/issues, features and sports news from the more “creative” ones of portraits, illustrations and picture stories, which, with the addition of stock photography, are more fruitfully and adequately analysed under the heading of press photography. The length of visual reports, which Herrod mistakenly uses as the criterion to distinguish photographic genres, is best treated as a modality: all sub-genres of photojournalism can appear in publications in two modalities – either as single-photo items or in the form of a photographic essay or reportage which consists of a series of images. The two modalities are best understood as the relationship between the number of photographs employed to narrate a particular aspect of an event; what counts is not the absolute number of published photographs but the narrative they convey, either individually or as a whole.

### 3.1 Death of Photography and Ethical Approach to Photojournalism

Present-day professional and scholarly discussions on photojournalism are heavily marked by a discourse about the profession's impending death. One strand of these debates in thinking photography, which Geoffrey Batchen (1999b, 9) aptly called a "sustained outburst of morbidity", is an offshoot of the debates on the degradation of news reporting and journalism's move from "serious" and "factual" news into the domain of entertainment and economic efficiency. Within the environment of cost-efficient newsrooms, photojournalists find it increasingly difficult to get their projects funded or commissioned,<sup>87</sup> which results in an increasingly narrow supply of available visually covered events and topics and their sources. On the other hand, a far more salient discourse of death has been formed around the notion of the medium itself. The introduction of digital imaging technology in the early 1980s fuelled the discourse on the end of photography – and by extension photojournalism – based on the medium's perceived loss of veracity. Initially, these critiques lamented the loss of ontological certainty due to the nonexistence of the original image imprinted on film. Proliferation, popularisation and increased accessibility of its means of production (cheaper digital cameras), post-production (computer editing software) and dissemination (Internet, particularly Web 2.0) during the last decade have all contributed to a more radical questioning

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<sup>87</sup> Alternative sources of financing – mostly international human rights and development agencies or NGOs – often have a similarly limiting agenda in terms of topics and locations and can hardly make up for the selective news focus of the mainstream media.

of photography's credibility. As I intend to show below, these debates have, in focusing on a highly selective understanding of photography (reducing it to the privileged discursive element of indexicality), significantly influenced the contemporary definition of photojournalism as a praxis of non-intervention.

### **3.1.1 The end of photography as evidence of anything**

The introduction of digital image-making and -altering technology in the early 1980s fuelled the discourse about the end of photography that soon overshadowed (but neither outweighed nor outpractised) the technical enthusiasm and creative possibilities offered by the new technology.<sup>88</sup> Much publicised cases such as National Geographic's manipulation of a photograph of the pyramids at Giza to fit the vertical format of the magazine's February 1982 cover provoked a mixed set of responses that outlined the basic parameters of the debate on digital photography that was to follow.<sup>89</sup> First, articles referring to "Records Departments with their elaborately equipped studios for the faking of photographs", envisioned by George Orwell in his novel *1984*, appeared the same year as National Geographic's "retroactive reframing"<sup>90</sup> of the Giza pyramids, and digital retouching soon became seen as an indicator of photography's waning evidentiary power, to the extent that the profession's prominent opinion-formers would end up claiming that the 1980s were "the last decade when pictures could be considered evidence of anything." (Lasica 1989, 23)

In an influential volume published in 1992, which very much summarises the tone of the debates, J.W.T. Mitchell announced the beginning of the "post-photographic era", a new era in the history of images that is allegedly characterised by the triumphant return of photography's iconicity and the demise of its indexicality. In a frequently quoted passage, he declared: "From the moment of its sesquicentennial in 1989, photography was dead – or, more precisely, radically and permanently displaced – as was painting 150 years before" (1992, 20). For Mitchell, digital photography is radically different from its film-based analogue ancestor

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<sup>88</sup> When asked about a controversial manipulation of a front-cover photograph, Rick Smolan, creator and photographer for the *A Day in the Life* series, is reported to have said: »We are very proud of the fact that we were able to use this technology to make the covers more dramatic and more impressive« (Reaves in Lester 1999, chapter 6). When asked the same question, series co-director David Cohen said: "I don't know if it's right or wrong. All I know is it sells the book better." (Lasica in Lester 1996)

<sup>89</sup> For (to a certain extent overlapping) lists of more publicised US cases of digital manipulations, see Lester 1999, especially chapter 6, or Wheeler 2002.

<sup>90</sup> Editors initially defended their decision by claiming that they were not seriously manipulating reality, since the photographer could have made the same composition »had he walked some fifty yards to the left before taking the picture«. (Allen in Wheeler 2002, 45)

because of its inherent mutability, endless reproducibility and the amount and type of information contained in an image. For Mitchell, the manipulability of digital images casts a shadow of doubt on “our ontological distinctions between the imaginary and the real” (1992, 225), since it undermines the certainty that was once the staple of photographic representation by erasing the difference between a photograph and a painting. This line of reasoning is based on the assumption that digital technology is destroying the causal relationship between image and its material referent, thus undermining (analogue) photography’s inherent ability to generate “truthful reports about things in the real world” (Ibid.). For Mitchell, this inevitably implies a crisis for/of institutions which routinely use photographic images as an authoritative source of information and proof:

Protagonists of the institutions of journalism with their interest in being trusted, of the legal system, with their need for provably reliable evidence, and of science, with their foundational faith in the recording instrument, may well fight hard to maintain the hegemony of the standard photographic image – but others will see the emergence of digital imaging as a welcome opportunity to expose the aporias in photography’s construction of the visual world, to deconstruct the very ideas of photographic objectivity and closure, and to resist what has become an increasingly sclerotic pictorial tradition. (1992, 8)

Such an understanding of photography is in fact a "sclerotic tradition" in itself – it equates photography with what is often referred to as "straight", unmanipulated photography and serves to mystify the medium’s inherent affinity for realism, ignoring the postmodern theoretisation of photography outlined in Chapter 2.<sup>91</sup> Ritchin calls this "conflation of the older technology with reality and newer one with fantasy [...] a widespread and unfortunate belief" (2008, 66). It is an idealisation of past practices which, as Manovich (1995) observes, mistakenly identifies the essences of photographic and digital technology in what are in fact "two traditions of visual culture. Both existed before photography, and both span different visual technologies and mediums." During the 1990s, the "conflation of older technology with

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<sup>91</sup> Or, as Cohen put it: "With new digital processes, it seems, we return to old theoretical haunts, and so we again find ourselves asking: ‘What has become of the Real?’ Previously, theory had achieved an uneasy detente with regard to the (territorial) status of the Real in photography; not a resolution of the debates so much as an abatement – perhaps a stalemate, perhaps an indifference. Now, with regard to Photoshop and its influences, the factual content of photographs is again taken to be under threat (always this siege mentality), and the question of the Real has been passionately revived." (2005, 884)

reality" was particularly widespread among the older generations of professional photographers and artists. David Hockney captured the spirit on the debate well. Commenting on the introduction of digital technology, Hockney claimed that "we had this belief in photography, but that is about to disappear because of the computer. [...] And I can see there's a side of it that's disturbing for us all. It's like the ground being pulled underneath us" (Hockney in Robins 1996, 37).

But what exactly is "being pulled underneath us"? Newton argues that "what is at stake is primarily a way of knowing – gathering information with our eyes. Visual reportage manifests the way of knowing in public discourse as a form of reality production – at once mediated and true" (2001, 12). Similarly, Rithchin argues that photography as a practice of "freezing and slicing the visible into discrete chunks has been a major player in a delineation of the real" (2008, 11), and if "documentary"<sup>92</sup> photographs cannot be trusted at least as a quotation from appearances, then photography will have lost its currency as a useful if highly imperfect societal arbiter of occurrences" (2008, 31).

The fundamental fear of digital photography is thus not only that photographs will come to stand for a counter-Barthesian "that-has-not-been", that viewers will not be able to discern "fake" or digitally "created" from "real" photographic images, that our "inventory of comfortably trustworthy photographs that has formed our understanding of the world for so long" is "destined to be overwhelmed by a flood of digital images of much less certain status" (Mitchell 1992, 18). It is also, as Batchen points out, about "the pervasive suspicion that we are entering a time when it will no longer be possible to tell any original from its simulations" (Batchen 1999b, 10). The current crisis of photography is thus twofold – *technological* (introduction of computerised images) and *epistemological* (broader changes in ethics, knowledge and culture).

How exactly have professional photographers addressed the two facets of the crisis? Within the field of photojournalism, various types of professionals (photographers, editors, professional organisations etc.) have continuously resorted to ignoring the epistemological crisis or, at best, subsuming it into the technological one. Since the crisis was predominantly perceived as technological, it required a technical, or more precisely, "techniquial", response.

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<sup>92</sup> Rithchin uses the term 'documentary' here to denote all factual-type photographs. The term is thus used as a characteristic of the image which is not limited solely to a specific genre of photography.

The challenges of digital technology (and corresponding changing social and communicative practices) were perceived as challenges to the profession's credibility and integrity, and the dominant move within photojournalism has been the build-up of enhanced ethical standards for image use and (non-)manipulation. Or as Schwartz summarised: "The positions taken by rank and file represent a retreat to a moral high ground from which to fend off assaults on credibility" (Schwartz 1995, 180). Even before the "age of scrutiny"<sup>93</sup>, in which the profession came "under fire from a suspicious public – watchdog bloggers, cable and radio pundits and other critics who question the profession's credibility and authority to bring us an accurate picture of the world" (Baradell and Stack 2008, 1), a consensus emerged that both photographers and editors should refrain from manipulating the content of photographs to avoid jeopardising the already dented public trust.

"Credibility. Responsibility. These words give us the right to call photography a profession rather than a business. Not maintaining that credibility will diminish our journalistic impact and self-respect, and the importance of photography as communication," wrote Howard Chapnick in 1982 (1982, 40), and ethics-inspired debates have been repeating the mantra of about the profession losing credibility if the public starts mistrusting the integrity of news photographs. As a National Geographic editor reflected on the magazine's controversial digital legacy:

"Nearly two decades ago we moved one pyramid to get the same effect as if the photographer had walked perhaps fifty yards to the left before taking the photograph. And yet after all this time, one of the most common questions I'm asked is do you guys still move pyramids? This reminds us just how fragile our credibility is. If you lose it, it's almost impossible to get it back. It's why we are so fanatic about disclosure now at *National Geographic*." (B. Allen in Wheeler 2002, 44; cf. Crisistomo in Lester 1999)

According to various surveys carried out in the US, photographers, editors and educators almost unanimously declare computer image manipulation to be the most serious threat to the integrity and credibility of photojournalism (Lester 1999). This consensus, that the greatest threat to photojournalism's "sacred trust to be truthful" (Long in Lester 1999) lies with the

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<sup>93</sup> [http://www.poynter.org/content/content\\_view.asp?id=110342](http://www.poynter.org/content/content_view.asp?id=110342)

post-production process, is recent in origin. Before the advent of digital technology, photojournalism was normally questioned from the production perspective, even though the chemical darkroom enabled most image manipulations that can today be achieved with the rearranging of pixels and practitioners being more prone to employing them to achieve enhanced visual representations (cf. Schwartz 1999; Baradell and Stack, 2008). After the Second World War, professional standards were primarily directed against the staging and re-creating of events or scenes, which were themselves fairly standard practice in the profession a few decades before that (Lester 1999, cf. Schwartz 1999, Kobre 2003).

As photojournalism became institutionalised, the staging of events became the profession's first taboo, clearly denounced in codes of ethics. By the early 1990s, digital manipulation became its second. In search of the discursive definition of the practice, the subsequent section will analyse the profession's most normative discourse – codes of ethics and sanctions applied to those that breach the stipulations.

## 3.2 Photojournalism Ethics and Question of Veracity

The question of veracity in photojournalism is a complex matter and cannot be reduced merely to the issue of image manipulation. As with textual journalism, it is to do with three main aspects that span pre-production, production and post-production practices, each of these aspects itself a multidimensional phenomenon. The veracity of photojournalism can be divided into questions concerning (1) the veracity of an event itself, (2) the veracity of an image, and (3) the veracity of the image-text relationship.

*(1) Questions concerning the veracity of an event*, such as staging, can be split into two groups: those where manipulation or changes of events were created by the photographer and those where photographers are merely recording manipulations instilled by non-journalists. In the case of the former, they range from less problematic practices such as posing to more extreme interventions such as the directing of subjects, provoking reactions by providing/controlling stimulus, re-arranging the scene, re-enacting scenes and events with original subjects or the use of models, and the outright staging of events. In the case of the latter, photographers might encounter pre-arranged “artificial” scenes and photo opportunities,

particularly common in what Boorstin (1961/1992) has termed *pseudo-events* (e.g. at press conferences, most protocol photography etc.), tempered “real” scenes (artefacts planted in actual scenes, such as children’s toys by Hezbollah activists during Israel’s attack on Lebanon in 2006), behaviour purposefully manipulated for press coverage that changes to a different mode as journalists and their cameras leave (exaggerated mourning), behaviour acted out exclusively for the purpose of being recorded by photographers (burning flags at demonstrations, or, in extreme cases, executions), paid actors performing scripted action (the kissing of US ‘liberators’ by Iraqis), and events as a whole being deliberately staged for the press (the toppling of Saddam Hussein statue in Baghdad’s Firdaus Square).

(2) *Issues concerning the veracity of an image* can likewise be divided into two subgroups, those that arise during production and those that are the outcome of the postproduction process. The first category includes decisions made by the photographer on how to record an image, namely the choice of point of view, vertical and horizontal angle, framing, depth of field, exposure, timing, point of focus, use of lighting (e.g. flash), filters, support (hand-held or tripod), camera movement during exposure (still or panning), medium (digital or film camera and, in the case of the latter, type of film stock) etc. Issues regarding the post-production process relate to cropping, burning, dodging, adjusting colour mode, colour saturation, tonal values, sharpness, or contrast, perspective correction etc., as well as adding or deleting elements to/from the image, merging two or more images or creating a non-existent image.

(3) *Issues concerning the image-text relationship* are, first of all, those that relate to inaccurate, misleading or non-existent captioning of photographs. Secondly, the text (article, headline) used in the accompanying article can trigger an interpretation that differs from the one offered by the photograph (or caption), or vice versa – a photograph can be used to prove a point in the text to which it does not relate. Thirdly, the use of interpretative photographs which are not marked as such can be considered a breach of journalistic ethics, and the use of symbolic, nonrelated photographs to draw attention to articles tends to be questioned. The final aspect has to do with the overall layout of the pages on which the images appear, and is related to the positioning of photograph within the body of the text, to the juxtaposition of two or more photographs on the same or on adjoining pages, or the juxtaposition of photograph(s) with non-news textual and graphic items, such as advertisements, that can elicit an interplay of meanings on their own.

Present-day discussions on photojournalism ethics, however, focus on a narrow selection of these multilayered issues. Professionals (photographers, institutions, media organisations and academics) mostly focus on the question of veracity of image; although they do pay limited attention to the issue of veracity of events, they are overshadowed in terms of scope, prominence and the degree of moral weight/guilt ascribed to it. In particular, the focus is on (preventing) computer manipulation of images. Critiques voiced by a part of the public, such as interest groups, civil society organisations and particularly web-based communities of political activists that scrutinise news reporting of specific events (e.g. conservative blog *Little green footballs*, which monitored news on the Israeli attack on Lebanon in 2006) or political news and party coverage tend to focus primarily on contesting the veracity of events and less on the digital manipulation of images, although the latter are considered to be more prominent “catches”. With both groups, the issues concerning the image-text relationship are generally not addressed, and crop up very sporadically as cases of false or misleading captioning.

### **3.2.1 Veracity of event**

Within codes of ethics, photographers are held to the same ethical standards as word journalists, and photojournalistic reporting is thus conceived as conveying factual, accurate eyewitness accounts in visual form.

Thus, the US National Press Photographers Association (NPPA) code of ethics states in its preamble that “as visual journalists [...], our primary goal is the faithful and comprehensive depiction of the subject at hand” and demands that its members uphold the standards that are a common feature of word journalism codes of ethics, such as accuracy or complete coverage:

1. Be accurate and comprehensive in the representation of subjects.  
[...]
3. Be complete and provide context when photographing or recording subjects.  
Avoid stereotyping individuals and groups. Recognize and work to avoid presenting one's own biases in the work. (NPPA Code of Ethics)



Furthermore, the code demands that photojournalists strictly record "real", i.e. both non-staged<sup>94</sup> and unaltered<sup>95</sup> events. Reuters has a similar policy of non-intervention into "real":

Reuters photographers, staff and freelance, must not stage or re-enact news events. They may not direct the subjects of their images or add, remove or move objects on a news assignment. Our news photography must depict reality. Any attempt to alter that reality constitutes fabrication and can lead to disciplinary action, including dismissal.

In many countries, however, photojournalism's mandate on reporting is stipulated not in specialised but in general codes of journalistic ethics. Thus, the Slovene code of journalism ethics simply states in its preamble that:

Journalists are obliged to present a comprehensive account of events and - taking into consideration the rights of others - report in an accurate and conscientious manner. Such conduct of journalists is the cornerstone of their credibility. This code of ethics applies to text, photography, video and audio. (Slovene code of journalism ethics)

An even more common situation is where this equation of photojournalists with journalists in terms of professional standards is not clearly explicated but taken for granted, and becomes more clearly implied only in sections addressing manipulation of information, such as in the cases of Germany, Netherlands, Lithuania, Georgia etc.<sup>96</sup> Professional organisations of photojournalists, however, sometimes oppose such levelling out of various newsgathering practices as the one stipulated by the Slovene code of ethics, on the grounds that there is too great a discrepancy in the routine practices employed by diverse groups of reporters in conveying news. Thus photojournalists within the NPPA recently fought against the admission of video reporters into the organisation, as the latter were seen as being too

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<sup>94</sup> Paragraph 2 explicitly states: "Resist being manipulated by staged photo opportunities." (NPPA Code of Ethics)

<sup>95</sup> In Paragraph 5, photojournalists are warned not to influence events with their presence: "While photographing subjects, do not intentionally contribute to, alter, or seek to alter or influence events." (NPPA Code of Ethics)

<sup>96</sup> Comparisons are based on a database of codes of journalistic ethics available at <http://ethicnet.uta.fi>.

“creative” and “flexible” in terms of the veracity of events, and they called video “a Trojan horse for photojournalistic ethics” (Baradell and Stack 2008, 31).<sup>97</sup>

Rigid standards of non-intervention are also promoted by the industry’s largest providers of news material –news agencies. Thus *The Associated Press Statement of News Values and Principles* specifies that:

Nothing in our news report – words, photos, graphics, sound or video – may be fabricated. We don't use pseudonyms, composite characters or fictional names, ages, places or dates. We don't stage or re-enact events for the camera or microphone, and we don't use sound effects or substitute video or audio from one event to another. [...]

We do not ask people to pose for photos unless we are making a portrait and then we clearly state that in the caption. We explain in the caption the circumstances under which photographs are made. If someone is asked to pose for photographs by third parties and that is reflected in AP-produced images, we say so in the caption. Such wording would be: “XXX poses for photos.”

Within discussions on the veracity of events, the problematic “active role” of photographers receives far more focus than “interventions into real” created routinely by political actors with their supportive staff of PR professionals or increasingly media-savvy civil society and pressure groups. While codes of ethics warn photographers not to succumb to the lure of staged photo opportunities, photographs of news conferences, handshakes and group portraits of politicians make up a substantial share of the photographs used by the media, just as word-based reporting has become increasingly reliant on official sources of information, pre-packed

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<sup>97</sup> Lynn lists three types of intervention into the veracity of events routinely carried out by video reporters: (1) staging for the purpose of editing (the conventions of TV news are based on cinematic conventions and employ “reverse angle shots, cutaways and other devices that often require the cooperation of the subject”, which “cannot be achieved by simply letting events unfold naturally”; (2) staging for the purposes of time (“Subjects are often asked to repeat, recreate or simulate actions that the videographer missed or does not have time to stay and witness in person”); (3) staging for the purposes of storytelling (“The [v]ideographer stages an event that may or may not naturally occur – and then does not reveal that it has been staged”) (Lynn 1991 in Baradell and Stack 2008, 34). While video journalists commonly regard the third intervention into an event as unethical, photojournalists oppose all three, claiming that “TV’s justifications for setting up shots represent a slippery slope – one that starts with relatively innocent staging for editing purposes, but can eventually descend into changing the nature of the story” (Baradell and Stack 2008, 35-36). Furthermore, directing initiated by video journalists might infringe on the picture-making of photojournalists often covering the same events, as in the following example given by Habib: “[M]embers of the media gathered for General Wesley Clark’s State House arrival. They were told he’d be entering by a back door. A TV reporter protested that it would be a much better visual if Clark walked up the front steps. Campaign cell phones buzzed, and the plan changed to having him walk up the front steps.” (2004, 44)

information (press releases or press kits) and coverage of pseudo-events. In professional discussions, the newsgathering process and routines are rarely questioned as such. By not questioning the newsgathering process, the debates on photojournalistic ethics are siding with a definition of photojournalism (as a straightforward, passive recording of events) that is at odds with current practice and becoming increasingly hard to maintain. For, as Ritchin warns:

Particularly today, given the media climate of manipulation and coercion, to record appearances without contextualising them, or at least questioning them, is no longer conscionable. There are too many media handlers, too many staged events and expert poseurs, for the photographer to point the lens and simply record what is most probably a manipulation: the starlet looking sexy or the politician looking like a man of the people. Photography may serve at times, recalling Baudelaire, as the “handmaid of the arts and sciences”, but it does not also have to serve as an acquiescent handmaid to people in power. (2008, 72-73)

What is essentially at stake here is not so much the trustworthiness of images or the authenticity of an individual event, but rather a practice of visual cognition of events through the media. As Rios emphasises: “When editors make decisions day after day to publish photographs that are conspicuously photo ops, over time they send a message to readers about the kind of images they think worthy of publication” (2004, 39). The question concerning the photographic recording of orchestrated events at carefully choreographed, pre-staged locations is not simply about access to unmediated information, it is essentially about a reversal of power relations in news reporting.<sup>98</sup>

### **3.2.2 Veracity of image – ethical norms**

Debates on the ethics of press photography that have been waged on the pages of professional publications, on podiums at conferences and conventions, during editorial meetings, behind the scenes of photographic contests and within the ever increasing volume of professional and scholarly literature on the ethics of image (e.g. Schwartz 1999, Lester 1999; Wheeler 2002; Lester and Ross 2003, Newton 2001, Baradell and Stack 2008) essentially revolve around a fairly narrow understanding of image veracity – as the integrity of image content in

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<sup>98</sup> Rios (2004) notes how political operatives not only carefully choreograph events but even advise photographers from where to cover the event or what kind of equipment (e.g. type of lens) would be most suitable for coverage from a particular spot.

terms of post-production manipulation, popularly referred to as “photoshopping” in reference to the industry’s leading image editing software. The emerging normative consensus links the use of post-production image manipulation directly with the audience's (waning) trust in the medium (and the media).

“Newspapers and magazines cannot afford to have their readers question the veracity of the images being published. If you can’t believe a photograph in news media, what’s the point of having it?” (Cartwright 2009). Cartwright’s statement is exemplary of this perspective, which in a way opens up more questions than it appears to solve. There is fairly little empirical evidence that would explicitly link image manipulations with the loss of confidence in visual communication that would go beyond short-lived outrage connected to specific, media promoted cases of “image abuse” or sporadic reader complaints.<sup>99</sup> Studies (e.g. Rieves 1991) have in fact shown that viewers are in fact far more tolerant of image manipulation than editors or authors of literature on press photography tend to presume, and that this tolerance varies according to the type of publication and purpose for which the photograph was used.<sup>100</sup> Typically, magazines can “get away” with more than newspapers, particularly in the sub-genre of portraits. In contrast, the debates on photographic ethics display little such stratification of standards and demands. While books, textbooks, industry publications or websites on the subject normally provide a long (and overlapping) list of examples of prominent cases of image manipulation (violations of integrity of image through the addition, deletion or changing of a part of content), the majority of these examples come from

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<sup>99</sup> Wheeler, for example, claims that »evidence is mounting that computer-altered photography is contributing to a loss of confidence in journalism, and that media consumers are becoming confused« (2002, 42). However, like other claims about loss of faith, Wheeler's is founded on commonsense assumptions, extrapolations and anecdotal evidence in the form of a handful of letters of complaint to publications that offer no insight into the extent of the »doubt«, »loss of faith« and »confusion«. Moreover, the data that supposedly reflects declining public trust in the media normally comes not from scientific empirical studies or publications but from opinion polls that tend to be fairly general in their questions (and are published by the untrustworthy media themselves), and which are at times conducted right after much publicised, controversial cases of news reporting abuses. Interestingly enough, texts that comment or lament on the loss of public trust towards images almost never present the data in terms of exact numbers but, just as in Wheeler's case, remain confined to descriptive announcements such as »are at a new low«. (Ibid. 33) In many cases, these texts treat the topic in a discourse that closely resembles what Stanley Cohen (1972/2002) termed “moral panic”.

<sup>100</sup> Given the scope of the debate, the relative lack of systematic empirical research of audience mistrust of visual images in news reporting is striking, and the numbers used in the debates could just as easily be used to prove a more complex point. Namely, audience trust in photojournalism should not be viewed as an isolated phenomenon but one that is related to general trust in journalism and news reporting. On the whole, available data still point to a significantly higher level of trust towards visual reporting than towards the verbal/textual side of journalism. Furthermore, levels of trust tend to be country-specific, dependent on the historical characteristics of particular media systems, recent media practices and political cultures. Additionally, the studies (most often opinion polls) tend to examine public perception of recent, highly controversial cases rather than the general practice of news reporting.

magazines, not from newspapers (and date back to the period when digital imaging technology was introduced). To a large extent, photojournalism ethics appears to be debated as a response to the editorial practice of magazines, often of magazines that are not conveyers of news but fall into the domain of popular culture. Kobre (2004), for example, discusses 20 cases of image manipulations, 16 of which are violations of image veracity; of these, 14 fall into categories of illustration, portraiture and other non-news genres. Similarly, Wheeler's (2002) list deals predominantly with examples of photographs used as (magazine front-page) illustrations and only 5 out of 21 listed cases could be classified under the category of news or photojournalism.<sup>101</sup>

The battle over “declining faith” in news imagery initiated by photojournalists, their professional organisations, news media and some parts of academia is thus fought mainly over “sins” committed by non-photojournalists. The introduction of digital technology and controversies following its initial adoption by (certain segments) of the media industry “set the stage for self-scrutiny, reassessment and potential innovation in the conception and practice of photojournalism” (Schwartz 1999, 167). Press photography in general, and photojournalism in particular, failed to readdress the fundamental questions of the profession (e.g. representation vs. presentation) and thus “seize the moment of change” as an opportunity for innovation and redefinition of professional routines (Schwartz 1999, cf. Ritchin 2008). Instead, the profession's response to the challenges of digital photography and growing public awareness (and practising) of image-making and manipulating has been to entrench a conception of photojournalistic realism, that, if not already outdated, has become increasingly hard to maintain, thus exposing the growing rifts between proclaimed ethical standards, routine practices and public perception of the medium.

Photojournalism's core response to the challenges of digitalisation has been radicalisation of ethical demands in terms of the non-manipulation of image content during the post-production phase. A widely held consensus has emerged that, in order to preserve the credibility of images (and of the profession), photographers were to confine themselves, in the use of new technology offered by computer workstation lightrooms, to the effects that could be achieved in the chemical darkrooms of pre-digitalised photography. This, as I will show below, is a somewhat ambivalent standard, since most image manipulations carried out on computers

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<sup>101</sup> Moreover, Wheeler's discussion of losing confidence in press photography uses five examples which are not even examples of photo manipulation but of staged video footage.

could be achieved in classical darkrooms (though admittedly, requiring more know-how and effort).

The consensus on the acceptability of traditional darkroom techniques such as dodging, burning, contrasting and cropping is based on a shared understanding that these are primarily not techniques of picture manipulation but of photo enhancement, used primarily to prepare the image for the reproduction process (e.g. halftone printing, but also for the Internet). Furthermore, dodging, burning and cropping are considered to be essential components in the language of photography, part of its basic expressive means. “These are merely technical in nature and have nothing to do with the actual content and meaning of the photo,” claims a former NPPA president (John Lang quoted in Kobre 2004, 332), as if oblivious of the fact that one of the most notorious cases of image manipulation during the past decade was created by old-fashioned style burning.<sup>102</sup> Another “merely technical” correction is the so-called “cleaning up” of photographs, which refers mainly to the removal of dust spots and scratches. As an unnamed director of photography at a large US newspaper defined the newspaper’s policy:

[T]he only manipulation is lightening and darkening, boosting the colors, dodging/burning, and spotting scratches and dust spots. No cloning pixels. No moving elements. No combining different negatives. NO sanitizing images after the shutter was clicked (telephone lines/open zippers). That is the photographer's initial responsibility and (the) photo editor's second. Pick another frame! (Reaves 1992, 153)

“Cleaning-up”, however, has proven to be a very flexible term. In the words of a Time magazine photo editor: “You crop a picture, there is a corner of an elbow, and somebody says ‘We’d better take that out. It looks funny.’ We do that sort of thing [...] everybody does that” (Stephenson in Kobre 2004, 329).

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<sup>102</sup> The darkening of O.J. Simpson’s face on the cover of Time magazine in June 1994 produced a strong suggestive interpretation of his arrest mug shot. »Many observers considered the cover to be nothing less than a misleading and perhaps racist or legally prejudicial attempt to make the former football star, TV pitch man, and accused murderer look guilty, or at least menacing« (Wheeler 2002, 43). The O.J. Simpson Time cover has become one of the classic examples of the dangers of digital image manipulation and breaches of photojournalism ethics, and is widely reproduced in literature on photo manipulation and ethics (cf. Kobre 2004, Lester 1999, Ritchin 2008).

Depending not on external ethical standards but on internal editorial practice, the merely “technical procedure” of image clean-up can be used in far more “flexible” terms to imply interventions into veracity of image that are of a more aesthetic nature and motivation. Cleaning-up can thus range from removing dust spots to extending the sky or background tone to fit the layout, from removing cropping “leftovers” to changing “anything that interferes with the ultimate aesthetic of the picture” (Furstenau in Kobre 2004, 329).

Given the scope and diversity of publications and their production standards, as well as cultural differences in the perceived role of the press, the absence of a universal ethical standard on image manipulation is not surprising. This does not mean that the standards are nonexistent or that there are no commonalities between various (mostly national) codes of ethics and organisational policies of proper practice. However, there exists a remarkable degree of latitude or specificity in applying particular techniques.

Only rather rarely do codes of journalistic ethics directly address the issues of image veracity and manipulation. Those that do provide rather loose normative claims, such as Article 56 of the Lithuanian code, which states that “the journalist and public information organizer shall not publish artificially manipulated photo arrangements”, or Georgia’s code, which demands that “photo and video modification, or any other alterations that might mislead the public, must carry an appropriate explanatory note” (Code of Journalistic Ethics). Similarly, the NPPA’s Code of Ethics stipulates its claims in fairly general terms: “Editing should maintain the integrity of the photographic images' content and context. Do not manipulate images or add or alter sound in any way that can mislead viewers or misrepresent subjects.”

Newspaper (US) editorial policies are generally far more specific. Schwartz, for example, quotes the Milwaukee Sentinel’s statement of practice, in which the newspaper claims that:

To maintain the newspaper's credibility, documentary photographs should not be manipulated in any way that alters the reality of the photographs. [...] The same ethical standards that apply to written stories are applied to documentary photography. Retouching of documentary photographs beyond conventional techniques is prohibited. Conventional techniques include color and tonal balancing through dodging and burning, electronic sharpening and spotting to eliminate dust, line hits and technical flaws. Careful consideration is always

given to color/tone balancing and image-sharpening to ensure faithful reproduction. To keep the integrity of documentary photographs, we do not alter backgrounds, use color screens or colorize photos, create photomontages, or flop or mortise them. We do not reverse or overprint type on documentary photographs. (in Schwartz 1999, 159)<sup>103</sup>

Major news providers such as Associated Press and Reuters offer even more detailed accounts of permitted and prohibited practices and routinely publicise and promote them. Thus AP guarantees that the agency does not “alter or manipulate the content of a photograph in any way”:

The content of a photograph must not be altered in PhotoShop or by any other means. No element should be digitally added to or subtracted from any photograph. The faces or identities of individuals must not be obscured by PhotoShop or any other editing tool. Only retouching or the use of the cloning tool to eliminate dust and scratches are acceptable. Minor adjustments in PhotoShop are acceptable. These include cropping, dodging and burning, conversion into grayscale, and normal toning and color adjustments that should be limited to those minimally necessary for clear and accurate reproduction (analogous to the burning and dodging often used in darkroom processing of images) and that restore the authentic nature of the photograph [...]. (The Associated Press Statement of News Values and Principles)

Reuters offers even more detailed instructions on the use of image editing programmes such as Photoshop, but generally urges photographers to refrain from editing photographs themselves but to “trust the regional and global pictures desks to carry out the basic functions to prepare their images for the wire” instead. Not only do its general rules prohibit additions or deletions to the subject matter of the original image, excessive lightening, darkening or blurring of the image or excessive colour manipulation, the agency gives its contributors an extremely detailed list of permissible modifications, a part of which is reproduced below :

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<sup>103</sup> Similar policies are employed in other US newspapers (Irby 2003b; [http://www.poynter.org/content/content\\_view.asp?id=46958#series](http://www.poynter.org/content/content_view.asp?id=46958#series)). It should be noted that most European newspapers adopt similar standards but do not publicise their policies of image manipulation.



Cloning, Healing or Brush Tools are not to be used. The single exception to this rule is sensor dust removal. The cloning tool will only be used below the 100 pixels radius setting. Unless performed on a well-calibrated screen under good working conditions we strongly recommend photographers to request dust removal by pictures desks. Saturation should not be used. [...] Sharpening should be set at zero (0) in the camera. Pictures may then be sharpened by 300% at a radius of 0.3, threshold 0, in Photoshop. No selective area sharpening should be done [...] (Brief Guide to Standards, Photoshop and Captions)

The discourse on the veracity of images and photojournalism ethics promotes a particular conservative definition of visual journalism as practice and of photography as such. While it accepts the fact that digital images have no easily discernable original and that “the essential relationship between signifier and signified [in digital photographs] is one of uncertainty” (Manovich 1995), at the same time it works to reinstate it as a defining criteria of ethical practice. Put bluntly, the digital image, should not be subjected to any intervention into the image due to possible loss of veracity and credibility that is claimed it does not poses to start with. By locating credibility in the image itself, photojournalistic ethics becomes a contradictory discourse. Its response to the digital era demands that photographers remain embedded in the domain of pre-digital photo enhancement tools, while simultaneously demanding a similar selective amnesia from the media audience as well. This request for amnesia implies, among other things, forgetting that photographers have been significantly altering images in chemical darkrooms for nearly 150 years, invoking “a purism few [generations of] photojournalists ever emulated” (Schwartz 1999, 179; my insertion). Many of the iconic images and role-model photographers from the golden era of photojournalism – whose work is routinely used in photography educational programmes and which are canonised through countless publications in magazines, (text)books, and histories of the medium – would fail to meet contemporary ethical standards.<sup>104</sup> Veracity of images is thus reduced to the question of (non-use of) technology: digital editing tools are considered very powerful, dangerous and tempting weapons that can have a devastating effect on the status of photojournalism as a medium of record. Or, as a former editor of National Geographic put it, “manipulating images is like limited nuclear war. There ain’t none” (Gilka in Lester 1999).

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<sup>104</sup> Veteran photojournalist Michael Coyne commented on the changes: “It is only since the advent of Photoshop that we have had this fundamentalist attitude about changing photographs. Before Photoshop, it was considered OK to change the images in the darkroom – burn, dodge, crop, print excessively dark to give a different mood, or sandwich negatives for a double exposure. We don’t have to look further than the great photography legend W. Eugene Smith to see all of these tools being applied.” (in Baradell and Stack 2008, 14).

Today, photojournalistic ethics stipulates special conditions for the use of digitally manipulated photographs. Even those codes of ethics that otherwise do not explicitly address issues concerning photojournalism frequently regulate the use of symbolic photographs and photo illustrations. Most commonly, clear, explanatory captions that state the “artificiality” of the image are demanded, often accompanied by a demand that the modifications to the content of the image should be made in such a manner that they are obvious to the viewer even without explanatory caption. For example the German press code demands that “if an illustration, especially a photograph, can be taken to be a documentary picture by the casual reader, although it is a symbolic photograph, this must be clarified.”

*[S]ubstitute or auxiliary illustrations* (i.e. a similar subject at a different time, or a different subject at the same time, etc.); *symbolic illustrations* (reconstructed scenes, artificially visualised events to accompany text, etc.); *photomontages or other changes*; must be clearly marked as such, either in the caption or in the accompanying text. (German Press Code)<sup>105</sup>

This concern about the erosion of professional standards through illustration assignments and digital manipulation is also clearly manifested in the rules of photographic competitions. Not only are photographs routinely rejected for being excessively processed with computer software, or are qualified in separate categories,<sup>106</sup> some of the professions’ most prominent competitions, such as the US-based *Picture of the Year*, have even eliminated categories such as editorial illustration because of the “growing popularity of set-up and contrived pictures and the threat to photographic credibility posed by computer manipulation of images” (in Lester 1999).

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<sup>105</sup> Similarly, the Montenegrin code of ethics stipulates: “If an illustration, especially a photograph, may leave an impression on an average reader that it is an authentic document, in spite of the fact that it is merely a symbolic picture, such a case must be made clear. Photomontage or other modifications of authentic documents must be clearly marked as such in the accompanying text or in any other, appropriate way.” (Codex of Montenegrin Journalists)

<sup>106</sup> Wheeler quotes official rules from the 2001-2002 William Randolph Hearst Foundation Journalism Awards for students of photography, which state: “Images cannot be digitally altered beyond what is traditionally accepted in the darkroom.” Excessive computer manipulation falls into a separate category: “Computer-generated composites must be labeled as computer illustrations.” (Wheeler 2002, 140)

### 3.2.3 Veracity of image – sanctioning the breaches of ethical codes

But the upholding of the idea of objective visual recording and a protectionist stance towards the audience can be even more clearly discerned in the industry's reaction to exposed cases of image manipulation. If undisclosed interventions into the content of image are discovered after the image has already been published, the media react almost uniformly by sanctioning the photographer in question. The breaches of ethic standards that have ended in the firing of a photographer range from changing the background colour of a sky,<sup>107</sup> to “enhancing” parts of the image by adding additional elements from the picture<sup>108</sup> to making a single composite photograph by combining parts of the two consecutively taken images.<sup>109</sup> As Schwartz (1999) and Carlson (2009) have convincingly shown, such cases of ethical norms being breached are particularly informative of the profession's self-understanding, as the discourse of the public debates they trigger (with often conflicting views among journalistic, photojournalistic and photographic communities) points out not only explicated definitions but also their implied, underlying arguments and the commonsense assumptions upon which they are based. The procedure followed by the media normally consists of:

- sanctioning of the photographer (normally firing, for lesser breaches unpaid suspension);
- explaining the manipulation to the public, which normally includes an apology to the readers, public condemnation of the photographer and publication of the sanctions taken; and

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<sup>107</sup> In 2006, Charlotte Observer photographer Patrick Schneider was fired for altering the colour of the sky in a photograph that was published on the front of the paper's local news section. The problematic image depicted a fire-fighter on a ladder, silhouetted against the sun and a vividly red sky. As the papers' editor described the changes: “In the original photo, the sky in the photo was brownish-gray. Enhanced with photo-editing software, the sky became a deep red and the sun took on a more distinct halo.” The editor's apology to the readers was accompanied by an announcement that the photographer no longer works for the newspaper and a reiteration of the newspaper's policy of not manipulating images: “No colors will be altered from the original scene photographed” (in Baradell and Stack 2008). Schneider claimed he only tried to recapture the original colour of the sky.

<sup>108</sup> During the 2006 Israeli attack on Lebanon, Reuters withdrew a photograph by their contributor Adnan Hajj, depicting a burning cityscape in Beirut following an Israeli air strike, immediately after it came under severe criticism from pro-Israeli US bloggers. The photographer enhanced the image by darkening the smoke rising from the buildings and added another column of smoke, thus implying more damage. The image was withdrawn and a replacement, showing the same scene, was sent along with apologies to the editors. Hajj claimed he was only trying to remove dust marks and that he made mistakes due to the bad lighting conditions in he was working, though the modification is clearly discernable.

<sup>109</sup> In 2003, the L.A. Times fired Brian Walski, a veteran photographer with 20 years' experience, for submitting a digital composite photograph of a British soldier gesturing to Iraqi civilians in Basra. Although the modification did not change the meaning or essence of the event, the editors decided to immediately fire their staff photographer for “improving” the composition of the photograph by combining a soldier from one image, and a civilian from the following image. Walski explained his actions as a consequence of assignment-related stress: “I have always maintained the highest ethical standards throughout my career and cannot truly explain my complete breakdown in judgment at this time. That will only come in the many sleepless nights that are ahead. [...] This was after an extremely long, hot and stressful day but I offer no excuses here.” (in Van Ripper 2003)

- attempts to restore the medium's credibility, either by publishing editorial guidelines or active participation in the follow-up debate in the media and within the professional community.

Carlson proposes that we analyse such sanctioning of ethical breaches in terms of what Bennett, Gressett and Haltom (1985) have termed news *paradigm repair*, a strategy that reinforces shared norms among journalists and at the same time works to re-establish journalism's status in the eyes of the public by singling out and publicly sanctioning the transgressor of the profession's dominant normative paradigm. In short, paradigm repair is a discursive regulation of boundaries between acceptable and unacceptable practice. Upon discovering they have published a composite photograph, editors at the Los Angeles Times fired their staff photographer Brian Walski and immediately published a correction on their website. The next edition of the newspaper carried an explanatory note (including information on firing of the photographer), accompanied by the two original photos and the composite photograph. In the case of the Adnan Hajj controversy, Reuters reacted in a similar manner. The agency immediately suspended the photographer and withdrew the photograph, publically reassuring their customers that "Reuters takes such matters extremely seriously as it is strictly against company editorial policy to alter pictures" (Moir Whittle in Lappin 2006).

News organisations react quickly and fiercely to any actions that might endanger their status as authoritative, objective arbiters of events. As Carlson notes of Walski's case: "To learn of the violation was simultaneously to learn of its resolution" (2009, 127). Swift and categorical reactions by organisations are meant to ensure their "statement to be the final word, rather than an entree to questions about digital imaging and photo manipulation" (Ibid.), serving also as a reference point for the subsequent public and professional debates. Reese notes that the journalistic community will engage in a tripartite normalisation process by disengaging threatening values, reasserting professional routines and downplaying the importance of journalists and his or her report<sup>110</sup> (Reese, 1990, 390).

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<sup>110</sup> An internal Charlotte Observer staff memo concerning the firing of Patrick Schneider can serve as an illustrative example of this: "We're sad to tell you that photojournalist Patrick Schneider is no longer with The Observer. *We will announce this in a note to readers in Friday's paper.* Patrick violated our policy about altering the color in a photograph that was on the Local front in Thursday's newspaper. *He was involved in a previous incident* with altering color in photographs, which the Observer told our readers about in 2003. Those of you who have worked with Patrick know he is an extraordinary photojournalist [...]. This is not an ending any of us

According to Berkowitz (2000, 127), paradigm repair is a *ritual* (cf. Ehrlich 1996), performed to outline the boundaries of the professional community by setting apart ‘objective’ from ‘unobjective’ journalists. Such maintenance rituals "perform double duty by re-affirming professional ideology in both the mind of society and in the minds of journalists who belong to and believe in that professional culture" (Berkowitz 2000, 125). The media act to show the disputed case to be both a deviation from normal practice and an isolated occurrence, thus claiming that "removal of the perpetrator equals a rooting out of the problem" (Carlson 2009, 128).

Similarly to Berkowitz, Bishop (2001) also stresses the *ritual function* of media's self-assessment reporting. His analysis of the media coverage of journalism can easily be applied to debates on photojournalism ethics, since these are repeatedly framed in terms of challenges to the journalist profession as such. Bishop claims that the self-policing of news media:

is a kind of ritual sacrifice, performed in the hope that it persuades the audience to regain its faith in journalism, and to sustain ratings and readership. Such self-reflexiveness is perhaps the ultimate pseudo-event, the most ‘synthetic product’ yet produced by journalists. (2001, 23)

The sanctioning of photojournalists indeed smacks of purification rituals and ritual sacrifices. The transgressions of the news paradigm within photojournalism are punished in a way that most often implies the “end of (professional) life”, or, as an L.A. Times article put it: “usually the offenders sink out of sight, never to be seen, heard or read again” (Martinez in Carlson 2009, 129). The ritual sacrifice functions thus not only as an offering to the offended public but also as an example and warning to members of the professional community. These punishments often appear as unreasonably harsh or draconian. In some cases, sanctions are also enacted retroactively and hence the deviant individuals’ past work can also be questioned

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wanted. We will miss Patrick's passion for photojournalism. *We must hold fast to the standards we set for ourselves and our profession. Credibility is fragile and precious*" (Burkins 2006, my emphasis). The announcement to the readers points to Reese's reassertion of professional routines and is directly connected to disengaging with threatening values in order to preserve “fragile and precious” credibility and professional standards, while the reference to Schneider's previous breaches of ethics (though connected to a photo competition, not Observer news stories) serves to depict him as a “repeated felon”, regardless of all the praise he is given in the part of the memo that was omitted in the above quote due to limitations of space.

and obliterated. In the case of Adnan Hajj, Reuters withdrew from public offering not only the two doctored photographs from the Lebanon war but over 900 other archive images captured by Hajj that predated the incident. This type of withdrawal of images from archives accompanied similar other "purges".

### **3.2.4 Veracity of image's relationship to text and context**

The third and final aspect of image veracity is the relationship of visuals to the context in which they are reproduced, which implies the relationship between image and accompanying text, other visuals (photographs) and the content of the publication (advertisements, adjoining articles or content of publication). The ethical guidelines regarding this aspect are designed to secure veracity of image as a non-misleading message and try to prevent other means of conveying news (i.e. words) to change the meaning (interpretation) of the visual message and vice versa. The former aspect, however, receives much more attention than the latter.

Codes of ethics<sup>111</sup> and news organisations guidelines extend the norms for textual reporting to captions of news photographs, demanding accuracy and intended to prevent misleading textual information (interpretation) of the images. Section 2 of the German press code offers an exemplary case:

The publication of specific information in words, pictures and graphics must be carefully checked in respect of accuracy in the light of existing circumstances. Its sense must not be distorted or falsified by editing, headlines or picture captions.  
(German Press Code)

Similarly, Reuters states that the captions should “reflect reality”, just as with other parts of news items that the agency transmits:

They must adhere to the basic Reuters rules of accuracy and freedom from bias and must answer the basic questions of good journalism. Who is in the picture? Where was it taken? When was it taken? What does it show? Why is a subject doing a particular thing? [...] The caption must explain the circumstances in which a photograph was taken and state the correct date. [...] Captions must not

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<sup>111</sup> Interestingly enough, the NPPA code of ethics, often considered to be one of the highest standards within the profession, does not explicitly refer to the image-text relationship. (NPPA Code of Ethics)

contain assumptions by the photographer about what might have happened, even when a situation seems likely. Explain only what you have witnessed. (Schlesinger 2007)

The text should thus remain subservient to the image, merely providing the factual information images alone cannot provide, or at least not as unambiguously as written explanation. Although most such stipulations speak explicitly (only) about captions, the stipulation extends to the articles alongside which the image appears, as well as their headlines.

The restrictions of “going beyond content”, however, work in the opposite direction too. It is not only the case that text veils image with interpretation (see Chapter 2), the image itself is a powerful communicator of meanings in its own right and can instil interpretation over the textual part of the message, particularly as the images are normally the first piece of information that registers with a readers. This observation is particularly valid for newspapers where photographs serve to draw the reader’s attention to a specific piece of news among the articles scattered over a large area of a printed page. Photographs in magazines have the similar, though less prominent function of luring the readers to text, due to their more linear manner of providing information, while the applicability of this principle to web-based media depends to a certain extent on the graphic design of the page in question.<sup>112</sup> Increasingly, codes of ethics have started including sections that address the use of “symbolic photographs”. There are two kinds of such images. They can be either photographs that are directly connected to a depicted event, person or object, but which are portrayed in a manner that interprets or comments on a depicted scene (either posed or captured moments), or photographs that are not directly related to the reported event, person or object (unmanipulated as well as composite photographs).

As the press has long been fond of using photographs that “go beyond the referential, projecting connotative and symbolic meanings that interact with, underpin or contradict photograph’s indexical features” (Huxford 2001, 45) through the use of easily recognisable

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<sup>112</sup> Most web-based publications, however, prominently use photographs to grab the reader’s attention, at least on front/entry pages.

gestures (mostly arms, hands and fingers<sup>113</sup>), props (e.g. flags or other recognisable symbols), facial expressions (smiles, grimaces, gazes) and the spatial arrangement of subjects, it is not entirely surprising that codes of ethics tend to overlook the first<sup>114</sup> and focus mostly on the second type of symbolic photographs. As with captions, the main argument underlying the prohibition is to ensure that the public is not misled. For example, the Montenegrin code of journalistic ethics is illustrative of this claim:

If an illustration, especially a photograph, may leave an impression on an average reader that it is an authentic document, in spite of the fact that it is merely a symbolic picture, such a case must be made clear. Photomontage or other modifications of authentic documents must be clearly marked as such in the accompanying text or in any other, appropriate way. (Codex of Montenegrin Journalists)<sup>115</sup>

The stipulations on the use of photographic material are to a significant extent looser than those on picture-making. While photographers are strictly sanctioned for tampering with the “reality” of an image, editors are allowed to use symbolic photographs<sup>116</sup> as long as this is clearly stated in the caption. As is evident from the paragraph above, the (use of) symbolic photographs could be considered as “modifications of authentic events” that fall into the same

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<sup>113</sup> Politicians are frequently depicted gesturing, particularly through pointing with their index fingers, which can connote determination or leadership. The general public is also frequently depicted gesturing with fingers. The latter can be used to communicate disrespect or an insult (an extended middle finger), celebration or triumph (a V-sign formed by an extended index and middle finger) or even belonging to national identity (extended thumb, index and middle finger can for example stand for identifying with Serbian national identity). The list of other easily recognisable gestures using fingers, hands or arms is far too extensive to be reproduced under a single footnote. What should be noted, however, is that recognition of some of these gestures is culturally specific, although in these cases they are not prominently used by international media, in contrast, for example, to the easily recognisable outstretched arms as a sign of triumph.

<sup>114</sup> Reuters’s guidelines are a rare example of addressing the symbolism of a subject’s non-verbal communication, but they are contested on the grounds of artificiality and not symbolism as such:

“Sometimes, subjects may strike an artificial pose, such as at a product launch, a showbusiness event or a sports victory ceremony, or when requested to do so to illustrate a feature. In some circumstances, such as during demonstrations, civil unrest, street celebrations or conflict, the presence of photographers and television crews may prompt subjects to act abnormally. These images should be few and can be clichés. They must be clearly captioned to show the reader that the actions are not spontaneous and to explain the context. There are many ways to describe the situation without saying that the subject poses for a photograph, though we should say so when it is clearly the case.” (Schlesinger 2007)

<sup>115</sup> Several other codes of journalism ethics, ranging from those used in Germany and the Netherlands to Bosnia, provide similar formulations.

<sup>116</sup> The term “symbolic photograph” is not used consistently, not even within literature on photojournalism ethics. My use of the term would for example merge the two categories that the German code of ethics treats as separate categories, the so-called *substitute or auxiliary illustrations* (i.e. a similar subject at a different time, or a different subject at the same time, etc.), and *symbolic illustrations* (reconstructed scenes, artificially visualised events to accompany text, etc.).



inauthentic category as photomontage or other manipulations. But the use of symbolic photographs does not feature prominently on the agenda of the photojournalism ethics debate. If ‘properly’ captioned, they are not seen as indicators of the profession’s impending death or factors contributing to the decline of trust among an increasingly sceptical media audience, regardless of the communicative power of such images. The Slovene code of journalism ethics is no exception to this rule; it demands only that symbolic pictures “be declared as such” (Slovene code of journalism ethics).

There is, however, an even more neglected aspect that concerns veracity of image and the context of its appearance – the relationship between a photograph and other visuals or other types of content. Huxford (2001), for example, shows how the press is routinely using representational codes that utilise photographs to construct symbolic meanings, narration, association or evaluation of a depicted subject or objects that the photographs themselves do not possess. Some of these are:

- spatial arrangement and the size of photographs on the page (can connote relationship between depicted subjects/objects, such as association in the case of closely connected images);
  - juxtaposition as a special type of spatial arrangement of two or more images (association, conflict or influence);
  - partial overlay or occlusion of images (overlay can imply association or temporal progress);
  - frame and its shape (oval frames or cut-outs are used to connote the past, a torn or shattered frame for separation, tilted frames instability etc.);
  - use of colour (black and white or sepia tone for past, colour for present events).
- (Huxford 2001, 50-62)

In addition to this, the reading of a photograph can be influenced by the adjacent material, such as advertisements or different type of news on adjoining pages, such as a supplement on tourism next to the international news pages. These can create visual or verbal juxtapositions that can interfere with the “reality” of a given image and challenge the intended meaning coded into the image or article, particularly given the prominence of competing content, such as advertisements, in terms of size and visual impact. As Sultze noted in her analysis of the New York Times Magazine special issue on women and power, the dominant message of the

issue was subverted and undercut by the prominence of advertising images (based on aesthetics of female subservience).<sup>117</sup>

### **3.2.5 Photojournalism ethics: debating veracity or debatable veracity**

A detailed examination of issues concerning veracity and integrity of the photographic image reveals many tensions, which are not confined solely to the material aspect of news production, such as the tension between image and text or editorial and advertising content in publications, but also between occupational groups, such as journalists and photojournalists vs. editors and art directors or news vs. marketing departments. As the gatekeeping studies of news production have convincingly shown, it is in fact the editors and designers (and not photographers) that determine the final selection of news and their presentation. As Newton (2001, 76) crudely put it: “Even the lowliest copy editor has power – power to frame the story with a headline, to crop a picture or perhaps even [to decide] whether to use it, to ensure accuracy and fairness in the news report.” The (photo)journalistic community has been sporadically complaining that questionable image manipulations and other breaches of best practice and (photo)journalistic ethics are frequently committed by people with little or no (photo)journalistic background, and yet the issue receives only passing references in the debates and literature on photojournalism ethics: as I have already indicated above, debates on the “dos” and “don’ts” of photojournalism treat visual news reporting as an isolated practice, reducing the debate on image-making and processing practices while neglecting to take into account the broader issues related to newsgathering, division of labour and power relations between various occupational groups.

Thus an influential volume on photojournalism ethics quotes an art director as saying: “I know who runs the newspaper and it’s not the photographers. It’s the editor, who has no visual literacy at all, who makes the retouching decisions” (Howard Finberg in Lester 1999), but the author never explores the issue in greater detail.<sup>118</sup> Reaves, for example, found

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<sup>117</sup> Consider the following description: “If a reader turns the page, she or he encounters the article titled “Family Values.” In the context of this layout, the juxtaposition is more than ironic; it is so contradictory that it is deeply troubling. In the two photographs discussed above, the school teacher in her classroom versus the woman who seduces children, the advertising image speaks louder in a number of ways. It is a significantly larger size, and it has a closer framing of its female subject. In the layout, it carries more weight.” (Sultze 2003, 280-281)

<sup>118</sup> In a similar manner, Kobre (2004, 332) reports Reaves’ 1989 study, which revealed that newspaper editors were at the time significantly less tolerant towards digital manipulation than magazine editors were, implying that this non-tolerance might be linked to the fact that the vast majority of newspaper photo editors came from a photojournalism background (85%), compared to only a quarter (22%) of magazine editors, but the issue is not explored in detail.

newspaper photo editors to be (slightly) less tolerant of photo manipulations if they had previous professional experience in photojournalism (1992, 151). Tolerance of manipulation, however, is not the same as “insensitivity” of positioning or juxtaposing photographs, to be reduced solely to occupational background differences. Such indirect interventions into the credibility of published photographs at least partly derive from the organisation of labour and the power statuses of different departments within news organisations. Although a detailed investigation of this topic surpasses the scope and purpose of this chapter, I would like to single out two factors: (1) separation of production of editorial and advertising content, each seen as filling their discrete boxes or pages of the publication, and (2) the superior position of marketing departments in the light of corporate takeovers of newsrooms gives news producers little leverage to influence or impart ethical considerations regarding the placement of advertisements. More likely, it will be the advertising agencies or advertisers and not news departments who will complain about the questionable juxtaposition of editorial and advertising content.

The intention of this chapter was to highlight key topics in the ongoing debates on the nature and status of contemporary photojournalism. The chapter offers an outline of the profession's normative self-definition around three facets of its central underlying concept – veracity. This discursive normative articulation of photojournalism is the profession's response to the burgeoning crisis of the medium (and the media) and its significance for social communication. In its struggle to secure the audience's trust in visual reporting of news, photojournalism ethics depends on highly selective interpretation of image veracity, which may be hindering at least as much as it is empowering the project of visual reportage. Even though certain authors claim that “photojournalism at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century finds itself maturing beyond the naive idealism of early and mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century positivism, and even beyond the dark cynicism of late-20<sup>th</sup>-century postmodernism, toward a profound sense of purpose” (Newton 2001, x), the contemporary ethical debates and norms presented above clearly work to reinstate the outdated conception of naive realism of the medium, often coupled with that of the naive reader. Although critical assessment of contradictions within the dominant discursive definition of photojournalism will be provided in the next chapter, a few remarks are already in order at the end of this chapter. The major shortcoming of an ethical definition of the practice is not so much in its reactionary understanding of visual evidence that has become increasingly hard to maintain, as it is in the fact that it fails to take into account the way photojournalism is allowed and conditioned to operate within the domain

of mass media. It eschews the notion of newsmaking as a process of social construction of reality and fails to acknowledge that photojournalistic images routinely appear in a *flow* (Williams 1974/1990) of different, mostly non-factual media content,<sup>119</sup> thereby ignoring the fact that the media environment is saturated with visual representations that are not bound by standards of realism and which produce highly potent and perfect visualisations of life with which photographers and news images willingly or unwillingly compete and try to keep up with in terms of efficacy or aesthetics.<sup>120</sup> The entertainment industry continually pours out powerful visuals that have raised the expectations of readers, editors and photojournalists themselves in terms of desirable photographs. As Rees commented on the Walski controversy: “Movies are perfect, so we have this expectation that journalism should be perfect as well” (in Johnston 2003). On the other hand, the dominant discourse of photojournalism ethics fails to acknowledge that news departments, of which photojournalists are a (lesser) part, are not the most important organisational unit of profit-oriented media corporations, thus overlooking important institutional and economic pressures that photojournalists and editors routinely face. For example, to claim that ethical issues are “totally black and white” and that “[p]hotojournalists sometimes have to take the hit and come in and say they don't have anything” (Joe Elbert in Johnston 2003) is to individualise blame and ignore the questionable financial obligations of media institutions towards their staff and contract photographers, who will not get compensated for “taking the hit” and maintaining the profession’s increasingly strict ethical standards. Moreover, increasingly perfect images have to be produced under unprecedented deadline conditions, since the introduction of digital technology not only changed image-making and processing, but also implemented increasingly mobile and instantaneous ways of transmitting the images. As one commentator vividly explained: “Along with the pressure to survive a war, there is the pressure to feed the deadline beast” (Gelzinis in Carlson 2009, 134), which is done under circumstances of increasingly tough competition, the “tyranny of the satellite uplink” (McLaughlin in Carlson 2009, 134), and the demands of 24-hour ‘real-time’ news reporting.

Contemporary photojournalism is faced with far more significant issues than pixel manipulation. “Among the most significant concerns is whether the conventions of

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<sup>119</sup> This point and its implications for the methodology of the present study will be elaborated in detail in Chapter 7.

<sup>120</sup> For example, the growing, continuous and increasingly graphic portrayal of violence on TV, in cinema and in computer games is often claimed to have desensitised audiences, who now need more explicit stimuli to generate the same effect. The need for – or simply tolerance of – increasingly strong stimuli has over time trickled into news coverage.

contemporary photojournalism facilitate, much less allow, legitimate visual reportage” (2009). Griffin, for example, notes in his analysis of war reporting that “media predispositions to publish some types of photographs and not others” (2004, 398), pointing out that “published pictures of the mainstream press do not provide natural, spontaneous, or independent views of locations or occurrences. Rather, they apparently prompt to reinforce those versions of events that have already been established in public discourse and entrenched in media institutions by powerful social interests” (Ibid., 399). Griffin emphasises that the range of published photographs in the commercial press is “arguably more restricted” than word-based reporting of the same publications, pointing to the fact that “within the commercial enterprise, photographic representation has not escaped its sublimation to the established discourse of government leaders or the concerns of commercial marketing. It is more likely to produce enduring symbols of that discourse than to give us a liberated view” (2004, 400). Similarly, Ritchin claims that: “[i]n a world where access is limited and budgets are tight, deadlines are looming and the reader-viewer is assumed to be nearly a simpleton, imagery is diluted. It tends to reiterate and provide a gloss over what we already know or, more accurately, illustrate someone’s ideas of what should be going on” (Ritchin 2008, 94).

Since the introduction of digital technology, breaches of photojournalistic ethics are sanctioned not only for violating the reader's expectations of the manner in which news photographs communicate social reality, but also on the grounds of their potential for contributing to an overall loss in the credibility of photojournalism. Photojournalists are “trustees of the public” (preamble to NPPA’s code of ethics) and, according to the dominant discourse, “newspapers and magazines cannot afford to have their readers question the veracity of the images being published. If you can’t believe a photograph in the news media, what’s the point of having it?” (Cartwright 2007, 349). In an age when seeing is no longer believing, photojournalistic ethics clings tightly to facts. However, in protection of trust and facts for the preservation of photojournalism’s contribution to rational perception of “ourselves and our relationship to our fellow citizens, our communities, our world” (Wheeler, 2002, 49), photojournalistic ethics utilises a discourse that is remarkably irrational, as it bears strong religious overtones.

Admittedly, every discourse on ethics is a highly normative one, but as Lakoff and Johnson (1981) have convincingly argued, the metaphors employed in describing and making sense of

our world are not devoid of significance. Since the introduction of digital technology, practitioners and theoreticians continuously talk about the *death* of photography/photojournalism, often with strong overtones of Millenarianism.<sup>121</sup> The discourse on death is complemented by a more optimistic rendering that implies *resurrection* of a new, liberated photography (e.g. Robins 1991, Ritchin 2008). Both of these inspire speculations on the medium's *afterlife*.<sup>122</sup> Codes of photojournalistic ethics and editorial policies frequently provide lists of *commandments* that stipulate morally appropriate and corrupt behaviour ("For photojournalists, it would be a great time to have a Bible" write Baradell and Stack (2008, 1) in the introduction of their discussion on ethics). These commandments (consider Reuter's precise outline of the dos and don'ts of digital manipulation quoted above) are handed down to protect the Real and Truth. The Real and Truth are seen as absolute, not socially constructed entities and the discourse of photojournalism ethics tends to imply a clear, absolute separation of right from wrong: "You never change reality [...] It's totally black and white" (Joe Elbert in Johnston 2003). Similarly, Walski commented on his manipulation: "There are no gray areas here. The line is very clear here and I crossed it." Or Van Rippers verdict: "Walski deliberately combined two of his good *legitimate* photographs to make one superb *illegitimate* one. [...] Remember: news photographs are the equivalent of direct quotations and therefore are *sacrosanct*" (2003, my emphasis). Violations of these commandments are treated as *sinning*: "His was the most grievous of journalistic *sins*: He intentionally misrepresented reality to the paper's readers" (Wycliff in Carlson 2009, 130; my emphasis); "I doubt that any media outlet is without *sin*," (Martinez in Carlson 2009, 129; my emphasis). Sinners are punished (e.g. unpaid suspension for a certain number of days) and their sins publicly exposed. For graver offences, they are excluded from the community, destined never to return. This evokes sanctions imposed for violations of religious *taboos* and *practices of sacrifice and ceremonial offerings*. The firing of "bad" photojournalists can be

<sup>121</sup> Examples range from Mitchell's already quoted claim that "from the moment of its sesquicentennial, photography was dead" (1992, 20) to Mirzoeff's categorical reassertion of the medium's death seven years later (1999, 65). They range from photographers' self-questioning such as the 1996 American Photo magazine survey titled *Is Photojournalism dead? -American Photo magazine September/October 1996*, to reiterations of the question in articles aimed at a more general public, such as Newsweek's 2007 *Is Photography Dead?* (Plagens, 2007) or the numerous blogs (often critically) tackling the issue (e.g. The Death of Photography Must Die-<http://touchingharmstheart.com/?p=193>). Death features prominently in the titles of publications and articles, such as *From Today Photography is Dead* (Robins 1991), *The end of photography as we have known it* (Ritchin 1991), *Phantasm - Digital-Imaging and the Death of Photography* (Batchen 1994) - the list could go on.

<sup>122</sup> Consider the following book and article titles: *Photography After Photography: Memory and Representation in the Digital Age* (von Amelunxen 1995), *Post-Photography: Digital imaging and the death of photography* (Batchen, 1994), *Post-Photography: After but not yet beyond* (Batchen 1999c), *After Photography* (Ritchin 2008) or *Digitisation and the living death of photography* (Willis 1990).

seen as a sacrificial offering for amelioration of the agitated deity of the audience/public. The obscurity of the public – the unwillingness of the profession to empirically study the public’s understanding, attitudes, wishes and demands concerning visual reporting, is also reminiscent of religious practices, where the sacred must remain obscured, veiled and its will can only be mediated, inferred by a separate cast that projects itself as guardians of Truth. Furthermore, sin is connected to *temptation* in the form of digital imaging technology. “Technology is here and so is the *temptation*” (Cartwright 2007, 340). Or Wheeler’s (2001, 40) assessment that “as computer manipulations have entered the editorial mainstream [...] adherence to photojournalistic norms have given way to the *temptation*.” In terms of ethics violations such as image manipulation, it is the digital technology and not the photographer that is seen as the real source of evil. The photographer is only someone who succumbed to temptation. As, for example, Walski said, “It just got out of hand” (Irby 2003a). The comparison could go on and on – practitioners are imbued with almost supernatural characteristics (Chapnick 1994), canonised selected photographers and their work become sanctified, and through this objects of fascination and ritual worship (services performed by histories, educational curriculum, documentaries<sup>123</sup> etc.). As a result, “you’ve got young photographers who think [veteran photographers] walk on water” (Kevin E. Schmidt in Johnston 2003). Even some tools of the trade bear religiously inspired names (“people were taken out of the pictures by using the digital equivalent of ‘hand of God’ burns” (Liddy in Mayer 2003b), and images are attributed the power to “burn themselves into people’s souls” (Bryant in Newton 2001, 41).

To sum up, while it proclaims to be the guardian of rational and real, photojournalism is in fact a practice founded on *belief* in the magic powers of the apparatus and its possibility of undistorted recording. While appealing to rational citizens and advocating social change, present-day photojournalism presents itself as a rigorous *belief* system, continuously resisting the Webrian disenchantment project in terms of the routines and practices of image-making and news reporting. The subsequent chapter will offer a critical assessment of this belief.

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<sup>123</sup> Although the practice is mostly reserved for photographers from the golden age of photojournalism and authors connected with morally immaculate organisations such as Magnum, the Chapnick-style superhero status (see section 4.1 below) can also be attributed to contemporary practitioners – a good recent example is the presentation of James Nachtway in Christian Frey’s 2001 documentary film *War Photographer*.

### 3.3 Discursive rendering of photojournalism – towards a definition

As was indicated in the previous chapter, photojournalism is best analysed as a discursive formation, an organised totality of dispersed statements on the medium that delimit the possibilities of our understanding of the subject. The overview of these statements presented above has a dual function for the present chapter. On the one hand, it serves as a basis for a summary definition of the practice, understood through the medium's basic theoretical premises – the six privileged discursive elements outlined in Chapter 2. On the other, it provides a starting point for critical assessment of this discursive formation, exposing its inherent contradictions and reintegrating it into the broader body of theoretical understanding of the medium.

Photojournalism is a form of visual news reporting. As such, its primary objectives are to provide instant, realistic, truthful eyewitness accounts of people and events as they unfold, in a visual form. Its core function is thus to record and convey events truthfully and visually, or as Newton put it: “Photojournalists distinguish their images from others in part by intention: the *purpose of making and distributing the images is to show the truth*, to the extent any human can discern and communicate, of stories significant to people's lives” (Newton 2009, 234; my emphasis). Normative definitions of photojournalism conceptualise it as a mirroring of word-based journalism, its practices, goals and ideals, or what critical literature describes as the professional ideology of objective reporting.

Photojournalistic codes of ethics, editorial guidelines and coercive measures taken against their violators clearly stipulate an objectivity norm without recognising any differences or specifics between word- and image-based reporting. They invoke a notion of mirroring and mutual transfer and reinforcement of authority between the two professions, suggesting that the two practices share common methods, norms and ideals of newsgathering routines and reporting, which is either implied through the lack of specific stipulations related to photojournalism or by explicitly stating that the rules of the profession apply indiscriminately to “text, photography, video and audio” (Slovene code of journalism ethics).



Photojournalism's self-definition constructs the practice around the denial of news as a subjective, cultural practice shaped by learned and naturalised conventions that need to be actively maintained, a fact most clearly evident in the practice of paradigm repair. While this evokes familiar debates and critiques of journalistic objectivity (as canonised by Schudson 1978; Tuchman 1978), it is crucial to note that photojournalism's claim to reality extends beyond that of word-based journalism. Its conveying of (visual) facts is explicitly linked to and founded on a specific understanding of the image-making apparatus. The camera is perceived to be a neutral device that facilitates the mechanical, optical and chemical/digital recording process; it is objective because it is based on objective laws of physics. Consequently, the material results of such image-making practice in the form of digital or paper-based images are perceived as factual recordings, or simply put – facts, transparent images of reality. Codes of professional ethics serve to sanctify and police this conception. Photojournalists today purport a professional self-identification as recorders of events, as operators of an apparatus whose points of view are as neutral as those of the machine they are commanding, and their manipulation of reality (*pace* framing and the use of photographic means of expression) is seen to be confined to “meddling” with objective recordings during the post-processing stages. As codes of ethics clearly state, the outcome of visual newsgathering is indisputable visual facts if correct operational procedures are followed, such as non-intervention before, during and after image-making. The ideological backing for photojournalism's claim to (the possibility of) objective news reporting is based on what I have outlined in Chapter 2 as the *privileged discursive element* of *indexicality*. The notion of photographic image as index, the trace of the real imprinted on a light-sensitive surface of film or CCD/CMOS sensor is the central organising element of the discourse of photojournalism. It purports the claim that objective recording or reality is possible and that it is guaranteed by the very nature of the medium as such. The tightening of ethical standards in the profession that came about during the late 1980s and early 1990s was a response to the perceived threat of the digital imagery to undermine the concept of indexicality. As Manovich summed up this concern, “the essential relationship between signifier and signified [in digital photographs] is one of uncertainty” (1995), because the digital image is perceived to be lacking a verifiable original and because computer-based tools for image processing enable manipulations of original images or renderings of virtual (non-existent) ones with lifelike realism, to the extent that they become undetectable as 'fake' images. In a profession guided by the rule of indexicality, iconic images (normally defined as symbolic images) can only be used with disclaimers that clearly prevent any misleading of the audience.

Within the discursive formation of/on photojournalism, indexicality becomes what Laclau and Mouffe (1985) would term the *nodal point*, a crystalliser of meaning that determines the hierarchy of other privileged discursive elements within the discourse. Privileged discursive elements such as *medium-specific means of expression*, *text* and *context* are subordinated to and function to legitimise and support the organising principle of *ficality*. However, this notion of news photographs as passive, factual, indexical recordings of the real is not uniformly supported by all discursive formations that apparently support them. (Ibid.) Upon closer examination, the discursive formation will reveal the inherent contradictions under the veil of photojournalistic indexicality. Some of these have already been indicated at the end of Chapter 3 in relation to photojournalism ethics, but I would like to turn now to another strand of the discursive formation within which the profession's inherent contradictions are most prominent – to instructional literature on photojournalism.<sup>124</sup>

### 3.4 Contradictions of the dominant discursive formation – textbooks and "how to" literature

Books and textbooks on photojournalism rarely offer a condensed, unambiguous definition of the practice, but normally content themselves with little more than listings of its subgenres or “how to” instructions concerning their basic codes and conventions for practitioners (e.g. Kobre 2004), ranging from photography techniques and assignment checklists to chapters on dress code, manners and behaviour. Often, the two approaches are mixed with mythologisations of the profession through sections dedicated to the work of canonised (Western) authors, as for example in Chapnick’s *Truth Needs no Ally* (1994), where the reader

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<sup>124</sup> There is another strand of the dominant discursive formation that points to the inherent contradictions of the dominant conception of photojournalism – its histories, biographies and anthologies. While photojournalists are generally deemed passive, impartial observers and mere eyewitnesses to events, with normative discourse often prohibiting intended and warning away from unintended influencing on the unfolding of events, the best practitioners are often praised for being ‘concerned’ photographers. Thus, for Chapnick the ideal photojournalist is not a dispassionate, voyeuristic observer aiming his gun-like camera, the type that Susan Sontag (1977) so strongly criticises, but someone that “takes sides and practise[s] advocacy journalism” (Chapnick 1994, 48). Photojournalism and documentary photography were at least partly born out of socially engaged activism. This is particularly evident in the case of war photography, where picturing “the pain of others” is justified by the desired effect of provoking public reactions against wars and the use of violence. War photography bears a strong humanist ethos and pictures are routinely intended to move the audience, if only to make charitable donations (cf. Taylor 2000).

is presented with a set of glorified, almost superhuman characteristics of photojournalists<sup>125</sup> and a handful of idols of worship that embody them.<sup>126</sup>

Schwartz's (1992) pioneering analysis of the most popular US textbooks on photojournalism has revealed at least two important points for the present discussion. First, that photojournalism and its sub-genres rely on a fairly stable pool of codes and conventions, based on the underlying unproblematised notion of photographic realism. And secondly, that photojournalism is inherently a contradictory practice, whose inherent dialectics evolves around the unsettled relationship between presentation (reporting of facts), representation (social construction of events) and translating the two into a form of visual communication (the artistry of creating images with visual impact). Or, as she put it:

Photojournalism relies upon the notion that photography captures an objective record of reality for viewers. Yet, at the same time, a clearly defined system of rules and conventions governs the professional practice of photojournalism, delimiting the range of appropriate images and shaping the form those images take. Paradoxically, news photographs are valued as neutral records at the same time that they are admired as carefully crafted pictures. Photojournalists earn kudos not only for what they show, but also for how well they show it. (1992)

Schwartz's analysis points to the fact that the realism of press photography in general and photojournalism in particular is a set of conventions that needs to be continuously upheld by

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<sup>125</sup> Thus Chapnick proclaims the essentials of the profession through the rather patronising section titled "So you want to be a photographer", tucked between a historical overview of the "chosen few", the photojournalistic hall of fame, and a longer "how to" section with practical advice to aspiring young photographers. According to Chapnick, "photography, in general, and photojournalism, in particular, may be among the toughest of all professions to enter" (1994, 49). Photojournalists are not merely photographers but primarily journalists who "must take pictures that dramatically and succinctly sum up the essence of a situation while also being informative and revealing". It is a profession that is physically tough, psychologically stressful and intellectually demanding, which demands that practitioners are skilled in photographic practice, knowledgeable about the medium's history, well educated (prepared to intellectually deal with many different subjects), and visually literate (to be able to slow down in order to see more and to take pictures that ask as many questions as they answer). Photojournalists have to be well informed, verbally persuasive and able to visually communicate ideas, but above all they have to be perceptive (in mind, spirit, heart and emotions). They have to have "street smarts, jungle smarts and survival smarts" and be prepared to be their own bookkeeper, secretary, business manager, publicist and salesperson. On top of that, they need to have boundless energy, believe in themselves and love to work, since they will most often have to give up their personal life in exchange for a profession that offers little money, fame or glamour and a very particular (one could even say peculiar) type of ego satisfaction (Chapnick 1994, 42-49).

<sup>126</sup> Chapnick offers a standard fare of canonised Western photographers, mostly from what was termed the »golden era of photojournalism«. As in the majority of similar accounts, idols from the period after the end of the Vietnam War are few and far between.

its practitioners. Rather than being an inherent characteristic of the medium, photojournalism textbooks imply that the status of photojournalism as a medium of record that captures the news is dependent on a set of pre-established, learned codes and conventions that need to be actively utilised to justify its social status. Four major codes of objectivity can be discerned from her analysis: (1) form, (2) content, (3) narrative, and (4) norms of effective visualisation.

### **3.4.1 Form**

“As an objective newsgathering activity, photojournalists view content as primary, while form serves as its vehicle, imperceptibly transporting content to the viewer,” writes Schwartz (1992). News photographs should appear as transparent windows on the world, and this transparency is seen as a guarantor of their neutrality and objectivity. Textbooks strongly emphasise that “conventions of framing, composition, lighting, and color or tonal value [that] guide the translation of newsworthy subjects into the two-dimensional photographic image” (Ibid.) should be obscured. Hoy thus claims that “content must communicate with the viewer so clearly that the viewer doesn't even notice the compositional devices”. If a reader notices its form or composition, then the photograph “has called attention to itself at the expense of the message” (Hoy 1986, 169). Photojournalists should thus ascribe to the communicational code of *naturalism* “a communicative strategy which seeks to obscure the articulatory apparatus utilized in the production of a message, diminishing the perceived presence of an author and the significance of intent or point of view” (Schwartz 1992). What Schwartz emphasises is that the *naturalism* of the photojournalistic image is not the result of the photographer’s focus on the content of the story but of “active manipulation of form in order to maintain the illusion of realism. Photojournalism textbooks offer a plethora of photographic means of expression for achieving this. The most effective ones are: framing, selective focus, composition and the overall economy of visual elements. The latter refers to using as few visual elements as possible to convey the most information (Kerns 1980, 76), in order to avoid “cluttered photographs” that hinder the reader’s comprehension of the subject of the photograph (Geraci 1984, 122). What Schwartz fails to explicitly point out is that transparency is often not solely the result of the photographic means of expression employed, but at the intersection of form and content. Kobre (2004, 45-54) suggests that one of the best ways to achieve transparency is through the unobtrusive depiction of candid moments, which often implies using special kind of equipment (telephoto lenses etc.) and behaviour (blending with the surroundings, staying clear of the pack). Another point that Schwartz fails to point

out is that the transparency effect is not the sole work of photojournalists but largely depends on the use of these images in news reporting: captioning and text, photo editing and the design/layout of the publication, which must all support the transparency paradigm by treating images as windows onto the world, rather than constructed representations of reality.

### **3.4.2 Content**

Photojournalists depend on the journalistic criteria of news selection as their first filter to determine which events are to be visualised. Textbooks often provide shorter or longer lists of these criteria, such as the public status of the people involved, magnitude of the event, or its (tragic) outcome. Unlike in journalism textbooks, the criteria for the selection of events are never addressed in detail, let alone debated. Most often, they are simply reduced to a list of events to be covered and possible angles of coverage, grounded in the vague concept of audience needs and desires. Consequently, Schwartz thus notes that “photojournalism texts are rife with inferences about the needs and desires of readers, although the characterizations are rarely supported by any explicit evidence.”<sup>127</sup> Instead, prospective photojournalists carve out their roles and responsibilities in response to an audience constructed on the foundation of “occupational wisdom” and common sense” (1992). A decade and a half after Schwartz's study, news reporting in photojournalistic textbooks remains a matter of common sense knowledge. Another important aspect of photojournalistic codes and conventions in relation to the content of news is the relationship between the photographer and the events and subjects that they are documenting. While codes of ethics explicitly prohibit interventions into the real, instructions offered to aspiring photojournalists are somewhat conflicting and contradictory. Along with emphasising the role of neutral observer, textbooks instruct would-be photographers in how to achieve better images by practices of intervention. The latter is frequently understood as creativity, required by certain types of events or sub-genres to which the image ascribes. In general, these guidelines concern the issues of rearranging (e.g. moving objects on the scene etc.), directing or posing (e.g. asking subjects to perform a certain action) and re-creating the scene or event, generally marked as capital sins by the discourse of photojournalistic ethics. But, as one of the textbooks informs the prospective practitioner:

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<sup>127</sup> Visual coverage of events such as fires and accidents is often justified through commonsense inferences such as »readers are curious about accidents« or »people want to see what they read about«.

Perhaps one of the most confusing myths of photojournalism is that posing or directing a subject is unethical. The second most confusing myth is that the vast majority of good photographs you see in magazines and newspapers are totally candid. [...] A working photojournalist cannot consistently cover assignments without being willing and able to pose, direct, or otherwise enlist the cooperation of subjects.” (Hoy in Schwartz 1992)

However, even authors who openly support the posing of subjects provide a plethora of tips on how to make posed photographs and depicted subjects appear more natural.

### **3.4.3 Narrative**

Schwartz points out that the central code of photojournalistic objectivity that directly calls the alleged non-constructedness of visual news reporting into question is associated with the way events are transcribed into news reports as dramatic narratives. She lists the number of preconceived images and possible angles on a given news story that are scripted in the photojournalism textbooks that enable photographers to “construct a visual narrative filled with drama, excitement and pathos” (Schwartz 1992), often focusing on the human dimension of a story. She notes how one of the authors compares the task of a photojournalist covering an event with that of a film director, and suggests a specific formal approach to covering the event in order to assure visual variety and complete coverage of the event:

The establishing shot should be taken from a high angle using a wide-angle lens. Medium shots "contain all the 'story-telling' elements of the scene...compressing the important elements into one image." The close-up adds drama and "slams the reader into eyeball-to-eyeball contact with the subject." The close-up "elicits empathy in the reader". (Schwartz 1992)<sup>128</sup>

Kobre's comparison of photojournalism with film-making is telling. As Schwartz emphasises:

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<sup>128</sup> Schwartz notes that other textbooks offer similar standardised 'scripts': »The photographic strategy includes making a shot to establish the scene; photographs of participants, whether victims or authorities; representing the nature and extent of conflict, injury or damage; photographs showing the modus operandi; and photos representing the effect of the incident.« (Schwartz 1992)

Utilizing these strategies allows the photojournalist to produce a dramatic visual narrative. The fact that Kobre employs comparisons from entertainment media – television and film – warrants note. By invoking these comparisons, Kobre implicitly frames news photographs within the domain of narrative fiction. Like a good movie or television show, photojournalism benefits from conflict, excitement, action and emotion. Pictures exhibiting these qualities are assumed to satisfy readers' visual appetites. The photographic strategies Kobre recommends require a simultaneous conception of news photographs as impartial recordings of events and as dramatic photoplays. This conceptual merger resembles the format of docudrama, an emergent genre of television entertainment that packages fact in the conventions of narrative fiction. (Ibid.)

### **3.4.4 Visualisation**

Visualisation is the final one of the four interconnected codes of photojournalistic objectivity. Photojournalism is based on the ability and dedication to communicate the significance of a scene or event visually. Although photojournalists strive to provide complete visual coverage of the event, every photograph should be able to tell something significant in case it is used alone. Since most publications rarely publish more than one image of an event,<sup>129</sup> visualisation is not guided solely by the conventions of journalism: the photographs are judged not only as a piece of news but also as a piece of visual material, merging journalistic criteria with those of image production. Put differently, their images are not evaluated solely for what they communicate but also for how they communicate – by the standards that guide photography and image production in general. These imply certain aesthetic principles that prescribe the economy and distribution of visual elements within the image, such as having a strong point of interest, vector of action, the rule of thirds, the use of leading lines to guide the eye to the point of interest etc. Photojournalistic textbooks explicitly link the efficacy of images with form and, for most authors, content alone is rarely enough to produce a “good news photograph”.<sup>130</sup> “The power of a great photograph is the power of an immediately understood

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<sup>129</sup> This is particularly true of traditional print media, such as newspapers. In this regard the internet has a potential advantage over paper-based media in being able to provide a more inclusive visual coverage of events through photo galleries or the use of multiple photographs. It is, however, unlikely that the internet would change the practice of condensing the essence of an event into a single image since, even within the more inclusive and prolific visual environment internet news pages provide, a certain hierarchy of images still exists and these images are displayed most prominently (at the top of the article, on homepages/entry pages etc.).

<sup>130</sup> Thus Geraci claims that: »photographs, to be good photojournalism, must be a "slice of life" lifted from reality and transferred to silver in such a manner that the viewer senses some of the spontaneity and excitement of the original scene. If the subject looks uncomfortable, the viewer will feel this discomfort. If the subject is static, "posing for the camera", the viewer will soon lose interest and move on to another thing. If the subject appears

message,” writes Hoy (1986, 5), and this stand is unanimously echoed throughout the texts on photojournalism. Kobre substantiates this argument by citing a survey that has shown that readers “tend to spend less than three-quarters of a second looking at a photograph” (2004, 192). As images compete for the short attention span of the readers, the economy of visual elements becomes a perceived key to success. “Convey the most information or emotion with the fewest visual elements possible,” advises Kerns (1980, 76). Geraci similarly argues that “[t]he less cluttered [an image is], the more readily the eye of the beholder can grasp the full meaning of a photograph” (1984, 122; my insertion). When simplicity of design is followed, “there is little to confuse the reader”, notes Kerns (1980, 76). Hoy extends this argument, claiming that “even when reporting a complex idea or scene, your design should be simple and effective” (1986, 163). If the criterion of simplicity is not met, a cluttered photograph may prompt the reader to “move on to something else without really comprehending the subject of the photograph at all” (Geraci 1984, 122). As Schwartz concludes, “the recurring assumption in photo texts is that readers cannot adequately deal with images requiring active, extended scrutiny” (1992). Such a patronising attitude towards the media audience has a rather conservative influence on practitioners, as it tends to limit the image production and presentation (layouts) to a range of fairly predictable imagery and non-innovative aesthetics.

Moreover, the emphasis on immediate impact produces a tendency to move from reporting into interpretation of events, since capturing the essence of an event, tugging at the heartstrings of readers and producing memorable, lasting accounts of events is more easily and effectively achieved through symbolic rather than factual portrayal of events. Photojournalists are thus routinely invited by the codes and conventions of their profession to report the essence of an event through a set of pre-existing images or to visualise the pre-existing ideas, standardised metaphors, metonymies or even stereotypes that can serve as ready-made frames for interpretation of events. In short, while the declared aim of photojournalism is to communicate the significance of events to readers, the most effective way of doing this is often by going beyond factual reporting and focusing on emotional impact and symbolism (cf. Griffin 1999, Huxford 2001). In photojournalism, this becomes apparent as a rift between the original mission of providing visual news in the form of eyewitness accounts (as visual facts), and striving to communicate this information in the most visually effective way. As photojournalism textbooks never fail to emphasise,

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commonplace, viewed from eyelevel and lacking action or some other visual appeal, the picture will not long command the attention of the viewer.« (Geraci 1984, 115)



“photography operates primarily at the level of emotional response” and aspiring photographers are advised to focus on “emotional impact”, to tug at “the heartstrings of the reader” by paying attention to drama, excitement, pathos, the human aspect, composition or symbolic photographs.

### 3.5 Photojournalism and the primacy of symbolism

A single most important contradiction of photojournalism's dominant discursive formation that emerges from instructional literature on photojournalism (and the underlying rationale of the profession's best practice awards) is the tension between the mission of visual news reporting and the desire to communicate a message with "visual impact".

In order to achieve “visual impact”, photographers must and are encouraged to resort to strategies of visualisation that go “beyond referential” (Huxford 2001). As Schwartz succinctly points out in her analysis of photojournalism textbooks, photojournalism is a storytelling practice and “stories told in an exciting way are valued above stories told matter-of-factly” (1992).

Action, drama and emotion are conveyed through the content of the image, but these qualities are also conveyed through the formal treatment given to the image. With news photographs, “*what* is represented and *how* it is represented give the image its impact. Despite the insistence on the pre-eminence of content, form plays a crucial role.” (Ibid., original emphasis)

Photojournalists are faced with a conflicting demand to report events so that they “dramatically and succinctly sum up the essence of a situation” which must, at the same time, also be “informative and revealing” (Chapnick 1994, 42). This, as Griffin clearly shows in the case of war photography (which in itself epitomises the ideal of photojournalism), is most effectively achieved by moving into the domain of the symbolic.

The enduring images of war are not those that exhibit the most raw and genuine depictions of life and death on the battlefield , nor those that illustrate historically

specific information about people, places, and things, but rather those that most readily present themselves as symbols of cultural and national myth. [...] What is apparent when examining celebrated photographs, however, is that the discernable narrative allusions are tied not only to familiar literary themes of violence, courage, sacrifice, heroism, and sometimes tragedy but also to long-established conventions of visual depiction. (Griffin 1999, 123, 129)

These “established conventions”, which make many celebrated photojournalistic images “articulations of scenes and compositions that resonate with a pre-existing stock of familiar scenes and compositions” range from shared expressions of basic human values and emotions discernible in the gestures and body language of the depicted subjects to recurring symbolic events (e.g. the toppling of statues) or references to shared images from popular culture and high art. References to compositions in classical painting and even to individual paintings are frequent. Thus the motif of *pietà* has been a “standard” image in the portfolio of several World Press Photo award winners in past years.<sup>131</sup> Another telling example is the 1967 photograph of the dead body of Che Guevara, which has been repeatedly compared to Mantegna's Dead Christ and Rembrandt's The Anatomy Lesson of Professor Tulp.

It appears that the “great photographs” draw their power not so much from their ability to capture a particular moment in time (through spatial and temporal discontinuity inherent to the medium) by stopping the continuous flow of events and securing them for further inspection, but from their ability to transcend the particularity of the moment they are depicting through the “process of photographic symbolization and dehistoricization” (Griffin 1991, 140; cf. Griffin 2004). Griffin’s argument could be extended beyond “great” photographs to include the less acclaimed part of photojournalistic image production that represents an extensive share of images transmitted by major news agencies and which supply a readily available script of visual types and stereotypes, such as the hooded Muslim extremist or the anonymous old lady being brought to cast an election vote.

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<sup>131</sup> Consider James Nachtwey's elaboration of the issue: "Yes. It's interesting to me that so many photographs, not only my own but also those of my colleagues, resemble classical or biblical motifs – a mother grieving for a dead child resembles a Pietà; a mass grave resembles Rodin's "Gates of Hell"; carrying a wounded man resembles the Deposition from the Cross. It's absurd to think that we go around trying to imitate paintings of the past – that's preposterous. What's closer to the truth is that those painters and sculptors from the Renaissance and classical periods were creating their art from life itself. The way a mother grieves for her child is universal. Those studies from life were then put into a biblical or classical context. I believe that we are now witnessing the same thing that the artists of the past witnessed. These are universal symbols of life itself. And I think that by painting them as classical or biblical scenes, they sanctified life itself and what happens to ordinary people on this Earth." (in Cruickshank 2000)

As has been already argued above, ficality and its accompanying notion of photographic realism are central organising principles of the photojournalistic discourse that determines the hierarchy and functionality of other privileged discursive elements, such as those of *medium-specific means of expression*, *text* and *context*. It is further interrelated with those of *efficacy* and *temporal and spatial dislocation*, which form a complementary nodal point. As was shown above, photographic means of expression are subordinated to the idea of photographic realism. Photojournalists, as Schwartz emphasises, have developed a fairly standardised set of “codes of objectivity”, such as framing, composition, use of angles, lenses etc., which serve to render news photographs as transparent windows onto the world. Modes of depiction, such as exaggerated camera angles, excessive tilting of images or framing that draws attention to the depiction as an image are exceptions to the rule. The publishing of ambiguous or puzzling images in the manner of *ostranenie* (defamiliarization) is not encouraged. Similarly, depicting events in a manner that reveals the newsgathering process is not encouraged. Ritchin reports how in 1976 one of his photographs of presidential a campaign was rejected because it broke the ideology of transparency: “[The editor] told me that it was a fine photograph and that she would consider it for publication, but only if she could crop out all extra photographers. The authority of the publication, it seems, could not be compromised” (2008, 94). Although the frequency of such self-reflexive images – photographs which depict other reporters in the process of recording news – or what Becker (1996) has termed *meta-pictures*, has increased in recent years, their use, apart from the cliché image of a politician surrounded by swarming reporters at staged (pseudo)-events like press conferences, is still not part of the dominant flow of news. Rather, they are used as criticism of or distancing from rival news organisations. In general, however, such photographs still represent a deviation from the norm, since the inclusion of other reporters “in the picture prevents the illusion that journalists are outside the event, as objective reporters” and reveals that the “gathering of words and pictures is constructing the journalistic event” (Becker 1996, 20).

Within the dominant discourse of photojournalism, the privileged discursive elements of *text* and *context* are also made subservient to the idea of indexicality and photographic realism. Thus text, either in the form of captions, articles, or headlines, tends not to be used in a way that would openly challenge or question the visual depiction. Captions merely replicate the information given in the photograph and explain the details, such as location or people

involved, that cannot be communicated visually, and serve to secure (Barthes would say *anchor*) the preferred reading of the image. Since photographs are routinely used to assure the credibility of word-based journalism, the relationship between article, photograph and text tends to be symbiotic, not antagonistic. Similarly, context (apart from incidental juxtapositions between advertising and editorial content) is not utilised to question the transparency paradigm of photographic realism. One of these conventions that builds towards securing the transparency of news photographs is refraining from publishing contrasting images of the same event – either by publishing a single image (a standard narrative practice in print newspapers) or by publishing multiple photographs of the same aspect of a reported event. The use of two or more contrasting photographs of the same event is a deviation from the norm. Thus an article in a printed newspaper on US airstrikes in Afghanistan would be reported by one photograph depicting either military machinery (airplanes, bombs etc.) or the consequences of the bombing (destroyed buildings, columns of smoke etc.), but not by the juxtaposition of the two images.

### 3.6 Questioning the discursive formation

As was already indicated above, critical scholarship on photography, visual studies and journalism is severely critical of the dominant discursive formation of photojournalism, outlined in Chapter 3. The aim of this section is not to provide an exhaustive overview of critical literature on the subject but to trace some key discussions related to the central underlying assumption of photojournalism – the ability to provide neutral, factual and believable recordings of events, places and people. The overview is thus not intended as a critique of the dominant discursive formation (though in the process, it will inevitably serve that purpose as well), but aims to explicate a selection of the contested issues in order to lay the groundwork for methodology and analysis.

Critical theory's questioning of photography's status as visual evidence goes far beyond acknowledging that photographic images are not transparent windows on the world because every image is a product of an act of choice, a partial selection from the visual environment and an attribution of significance. As was already noted, a photograph is the outcome of a series of decisions actively utilised by the photographer, ranging from selection of frame and

angle to exposure time or type of lens. These are used in accordance with codes of practice in line with which the photographer engages in the making of images, such as amateur photography, photojournalism, advertising etc (cf. Schwartz 1992). Although photographs are always characterised by referentiality, it is not passive referentiality but one invested with selection and interpretation. (cf. Scott 1999). Berger emphasises that to photograph is to select a particular sight from a plethora of possible sights, depending on the subject's position within the web of social relations and the social status of the image produced: "Photographs are not mechanical records but ways of seeing" (Beger 1978, 23) Similarly, Solomon-Godeau claims that "the thing itself is never just out there in the world waiting to be framed by the photographer's Leica; rather, it is something dynamically produced in the act of representation and reception and already subject to the grids of meaning imposed upon it by culture, history, language and so forth" (1991, xxviii). Photographs are thus "summations of a larger world; they are edited accounts of the world outside camera" and, for Mulholland in Rampley, this implies that "the choices made by the photographers are ideological in so far as they are consciously made" (2007: 126). This acknowledgement of the ideological nature of photographic choices needs, however, to be extended to the domain's unconscious selections and, as Flusser (1983/2000) would argue, to the photographic apparatus itself. "In every act of looking, there is an expectation of meaning," writes Berger (1982, 117), and photojournalism fails to acknowledge that the very act of photojournalistic looking (and its ways of materialising this looking in the form of photographic images) is structured by the onlooker's (reporter's) position in the complex web of professional, social and institutional relations in which he or she is entangled. Neutral photography is thus a choice in itself, or in the Photoshop era, an effect in itself.

### **3.6.1 Critique of ocularcentrism and naturalness of perspective**

Critical theory's reassessment of photography, however, extends far beyond the ideological implications of selective looking, by questioning the naturalness of photojournalism's underlying rationale (or occupational ideology) and its status as a meaningful practice of social communication. What is at stake is the use of seeing, taken for granted, as *the* method of cognition and gathering of reliable evidence and valid information about the social reality that is linked to photography's (and to a lesser extent, journalism's) role in the formation of modernity. It has been argued that photography is not simply a "mechanical by-product of the European technological revolution" (Scheerer 1992, 33) but rather "a product of (and

contributor to) certain shifts and changes within the fabric of European culture as a whole” (Batchen 1999, 181). Thus the specific position photography acquired within modern societies is claimed to be the result of modernity’s *ocularcentrism*, rather than a consequence of the medium’s nature “[It] coincided with a movement that involved both demise of the premodern and the invention of a peculiarly modern arrangement of knowledges” (Batchen 1999, 186), which brought about the redefinition of such fundamental concepts as subjectivity, nature or time. Modernity’s privileging of sight, argues Jay (1993), has elevated the visual to being its primary means of communication and, at the same time, its “sole ingress to our accumulated symbolic treasury” (Jenks 1995/2002, 1). Modernity’s privileging of the visual thus intertwines the acts of looking and seeing with the act of knowing, making them “decisive in the shaping of modern thinking and practices with respect to knowledge and identity, in particular the envisioning of a world of controllable or manageable objects shaped for and by the *will to knowledge*” (Heywood and Sandywell 1999, xiii). As Jenks succinctly summarises:

Our contemporary views on epistemology were [...] shaped by a combination of Cartesian ideas concerning ‘mental substance’ and Lockean ideas concerning ‘mental processes’. Descartes cogito centered understanding on an independent, located and subjective mind – a finite capacity and disposition – waiting to be unified with Locke’s conception of active ‘mentalism’, or what we might describe as practices by which we come to know. This powerful combination, that is this now ‘active’ ‘mind’, was latterly situated by Kantian philosophy within a total and unified cosmos which was both organised through and knowable in terms of pure reason itself. (Jenks 1995/2002, 3)

Traditional Western privileging of sight as the noblest of the senses gained an entirely new momentum through Descartes’ dualism, within which “intellect is separated from the corporeal body; the indivisible spirit is distinguished from the visible plenum of nature; and autonomous subject begins to relate its *cogitationes* as representational mirror of the world” (Sandywell 1999, 33). The dualism of the “inside” mind and “outside” nature converted sight into the most accurate and the most appropriate means for “transportation of the ‘outside’ into the ‘inside’” (Jenks 1995/2002, 3). Knowledge of the outside became dependent on the acts of “looking” and “seeing” but, equally important, so was the internalised domain of conciseness, as “knowledge of the self could now be secured by ‘looking inward’ into an autonomous sphere of ‘subjective ideas’. In short, Cartesianism’s dichotomies of body and mind, matter

and spirit and materialism and idealism, implied separation of eye and mind, turning the former into an organ of perception that paved the way for the subsequent equation of eye and camera.

The idea of a “man-centred” vision of nature and reality as a manageable totality of objects in turn effected practices of representation, and the “all-seeing ego” emerged as the *ideal spectator* of what was to become the dominant scopic regime of modernity – the representation of space according to the abstract rules of linear perspective.

Essentially, perspective is a form of abstraction. It simplifies the relationship between the eye, brain and object. It is an ideal view, imagined as being seen as a one-eyed, motionless person who is clearly detached from what he sees. It makes a god of the spectator, who becomes the person on whom the whole world converges, the Unmoved Onlooker. Perspective gathers the visual facts and stabilizes them; it makes them a unified field. The eye is clearly distinct from that field, as the brain is separate from the world it contemplates. (Huges in Jenks 1995/2002, 8)

Cultural critics have not failed to note that the ideal spectator, the “Unmoved Onlooker”, is a member of a particular social class, that of ascending bourgeoisie. Consequently, Baudry (1974/1975) and Comolli (1972/1986) have argued that bourgeois ideology is built into the image-making apparatus itself, since the camera reproduces the world according to a system of representation that was developed by and served the interests of a specific social class. Charges against the ideology of a basic image-making apparatus were particularly prominent in 1960s and 1970s film theory and criticism, but the basic argument<sup>132</sup> is easily transferred to photography, since both still and moving cameras were built around the same “basic apparatus” according to the rules of linear perspective, which creates a centred space of the transcendent subject and “merely sature[s] the spectator into the *doxa* of bourgeois common sense” (Stam 2000, 136). Photojournalism’s claim to be simply a reflection of the world, of reiterating Holmes’ definition of photography as *mirror* with a memory, is problematic

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<sup>132</sup> There are, of course, significant differences in the way cinematic and photographic subjects are constructed by their respective mediums. Film operates with several representational modalities such as movement or sound that photography does not possess; consequently, the medium’s interpellation of its spectators into particular types of subjects is different and operates on a different plane, that of the Lacanian imaginary (see Metz’s (1975) classical account, but also Baudry (1974/75) and Comolli (1972/1986)).

already at the level of apparatus as such (that is even before the acknowledged subjective input of framing, setting of exposure etc.). Photography is not neutral in its depiction of the social and natural world, since photographers cannot refrain from using the codes of (Renaissance, bourgeois) linear perspective, which is built into the very apparatus they operate. Perspective is not merely a system of representation but a system of cognition. It is, as Panofsky (1927/1993) has argued, a convention whose seemingly non-arbitrary nature is not a consequence of its perfection but a result of it becoming a dominant convention<sup>133</sup> of visualisation long before it “has been readily adopted by other powerful representational systems such as photography”<sup>134</sup> (Mullholland 2007, 120).

### 3.6.2 Photography and competing realisms

Photography theory, however, has put far more emphasis on the connection of photography and its “basic apparatus” to a particular strand of bourgeois culture – its relationship to institutionalised forms of knowledge-making, gathering and processing, such as science, medicine, law and repressive state apparatuses (e.g. Tagg 1988 or Sekula 1986/1992). Science, particularly the development of positivism within the domain of social sciences, proved to be particularly instrumental in securing the dominant status of photography as a medium of factual recording. Photography seemed to embody the positivist notion of detached, value-free investigation (observation) of the separated objective domain of phenomenal reality by an autonomous subject. It offered visual, materialised evidence for positivism’s dictum that “what can be *seen* can also be believed in”, or its radicalised version of “*only* that which can be ‘seen’ can be believed in” (Jenks 1995/2002, 6; original emphasis). The many strands of positivism all demanded that “ideas – theories, concepts, generalisations, and so on – either can or must arise only from perceptual experiences of materiality of the world. Scientific methods of observation, experimentation, evidence and verification/falsification all operationalise the primary notion that ideas (subjectivity) must be anchored in materiality (the object as clearly perceived in itself)”<sup>135</sup> (Slater 1995/2002, 220). Photography’s power was seen to derive from its ability to lay bare the realities through

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<sup>133</sup> Due to limitations of space, I shall refrain from reiterating too much of the theoretical arguments and polemics concerning the natural or conventional nature of perspective-based representation. For a more comprehensive account, see Mitchell 1992. For the present purpose, it should suffice to note that it is not entirely arbitrary (see Messaris 1994).

<sup>134</sup> And later by cinema, television and computer graphics.

<sup>135</sup> Put differently: “Modernity’s ‘disenchantment’ or ‘demythification’, then, is based on defining the real in terms of the material, which can be accessed through the visible. Disenchantment, in this sense, is the reduction of the knowable world to discrete, observable and measurable facts which represent physical particulars.” (Slater 1995/2002, 221)



investigation of the surface (material reality), in order to secure insight into the underlying nature and truth of the given phenomena. Photography scrupulously investigates the surface, but this also enables it to penetrate to the truth behind the appearance. Or, as Bazin phrased it:

Only the impassive lens, stripping objects of all those ways of seeing it, those piled up preconceptions, that spiritual dust and grime with which my eyes have covered it, is able to present it in all its virginal purity to my attention and consequently to my love. (Bazin 1967/2004, 15)

Due to its mechanical nature and the scientific rationale underlying its production of images (optics, chemistry), photography appeared ideally suited to be drafted into modernity's project of "disenchantment or demythification, which rigorously reduces the world to its appearance, its visible surface; it reduces both the knowable and the existent world to the observable properties (colour, mass, shape) and behaviour of material things" (Slater 1995/2002, 220). Slater argues that an understanding of realism as an inherent property of photography, "its meticulous, objective and impersonal representation of the surface attributes of matter", for which photography came to be seen "as an exemplary of modern, modernising vision", stems from three interrelated aspects of the medium's *trivial realism*:

**(1) *representational realism*:** Photography was conceived as a superior form of realism because of its superior draughtsmanship or its superior rendering of objects in terms of exactitude, detail etc. To reiterate a familiar line of postmodernist critique, photography's realism is not an objective but a relational category – it is a superior form of realistic representation in comparison to other forms of representation, primarily drawing and painting. This is clearly evident in early descriptions of the medium and writings on photography, as well as the subsequent move of visual representational forms, such as painting, away from the idea of mimesis towards abstraction.

**(2) *ontological or existential realism*:** The evidential power of photography, to a great extent, depends on photography's "necessary" relation to the real, to the world of the object, as the image is basically a collection of light reflected from material objects. In other words, photography's ontological realism is a matter of photography's indexicality.

**(3) *mechanical realism*.** Slater argues that there is more to mechanical realism than the mere mechanical guarantee of objectivity (that image-making is a mechanical process whose outcome is not reliant on human agency). Apart from implying that the mechanical is

impersonal, it further suggests that “sight should be produced by the same industrial means that produced the objects of sight. [...] To represent, to know and to transform become not only mutually reinforcing but united activities, three forms of appropriation of the material world which both produce and assimilate modern experience of command and control” (Ibid., 222-223). There is, however, a further dimension of mechanical realism – the idea that the camera “is constructed on, and functions by, the same optical principles as the human eye” (Wright 1999, 6), an idea that originates with Kepler but was most vividly promoted by Dziga Vertov and his understanding of camera as “kino-eye” – a technological perfection of human sight, a mechanical eye that enables a heightened, unblemished perception of reality (see Vertov 1985, especially *Kinok Manifesto* of 1922).

However, the establishing of the truth status of photography in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century cannot be reduced to its relation to positivism or its usefulness for both individuals and social institutions in the modernising bourgeois state (science, medicine, police and law, public administration, commerce) as instruments for the production of knowledge through the accumulation of facts for the appropriation of material goods, but has, as contemporary writings on the subject have shown, an influential “unrealistic” side to it. Green-Lewis comments that “realism’s triumph over the meaning of photography in general was ironic in that science deemed reliably truthful a process of representation that had achieved notoriety and popularity through its potential to lie” (1996, 4). Slater, for instance, argues that securing photography’s status as a medium of record depended as much on its scientific value as proof as on the medium’s ability to “re-enchant the world through natural magic” (Slater 1995/2002, 236). The term natural magic, writes Slater, “aptly describes the cultural appropriation of the powers of modernity as an ability to make nature display wonders which are not to be experienced as truth based on knowledge but spectacles based on quasi-magic” (Ibid., 227). He describes how, during their 19<sup>th</sup>-century popularisation, science and technology often resorted to techniques that presented modernity’s mastering of nature through reason in a form of visual spectacle that evoked enchantment and wonder. Demonstrations of scientific laws and equipment to the fee-paying public or popular forms of entertainment such as dioramas often employed the latest realist technology for the purpose of creating ever more perfect illusions and simulations of reality,<sup>136</sup> a process in which a scientist was transformed into a

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<sup>136</sup> While promoting modernity’s project of disenchantment of reality, these practices served as a particular kind of reality’s re-enchantment. What made these practices modern is that the re-enchantment did not imply

magician. Thus, argues Slater, the popular belief in the power of photography as factual record developed in part from its ability to construct “fantastical worlds which can be experienced as real” (Ibid., 232). Green-Lewis also traces the popularisation of photography’s status of factual record through counter-rational discourse, in her case that of Romantic and melodramatic fiction. Thus she argues that photography’s function as a relay of truthful information has much to do with the discourse on photography promoted, for example, by popular fiction (detective stories, mysteries, crime novels) and not only with institutional influence through the use of photography as a means of social control (visual evidence gathered by police and used by the judicial system), as elaborated by John Tagg (1988) or Allan Sekula (1986/1992).

### **3.6.3 Photographic realism and truth beyond appearances**

One of the conclusions that can be drawn from these debates is that photographic realism as defined by the dominant understanding of photojournalism (as unpartisan, non-interventionist passive recording) is neither the medium’s natural nor necessary mission. Documentarism from which photojournalism later emerged as a separate genre and inherited much of its thematic and stylistic codes, has explicit partisan roots. The drive behind the work of early documentarists such as Jacob Riis or Lewis Hine was not mere record-keeping. They used photography not solely for its factual nature but also for its visual, emotional impact, with the explicit mission of mobilising public support for the purpose of social reform.<sup>137</sup> During the 1920s and 1930s, when documentarism, as a way of perceiving and representing reality, gained prominence in both photography and film, the active/passive role of the photographer and the mode of capturing reality were still rather unresolved issues. While the aim of documentary and photojournalist photography was to convey truthful information about the world gathered through observation, for a large number of practitioners, the “truth value” of events was to be derived primarily from the act of observation, not from the act of recording. Thus, in order to capture the truth of a given social phenomena in a photographic image, photographers considered themselves to be fairly free in “intervening” into their subject matter:

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returning to the understanding of nature as controlled by occult forces; on the contrary, the fascination viewers derived was based on explicitly knowing that the “magic” is that of science (and not the occult).

<sup>137</sup> As Kelsey and Stimson note: “Photography was to bring its truth claims about these hidden social conditions to the attention of wealthier classes, whose members generally preferred to turn away to live their various contradictions with a minimum of anxiety and self-recrimination. It thus carried the promise of indexical guarantee forward into an explicitly political calling through the new discipline of social science and the new politics of reform.” (2008, xvii)

The photographer [must] become not only a cameraman but a scenarist, dramatist, and director as well [...] providing the results are a *faithful reproduction of what the photographer believes he sees*, whatever takes place in the making of the picture is justified. In my opinion, therefore, it is logical to make things happen before the camera and, when possible, to control the actions of the subject. (Rothstein in Mraz 2003, 2)<sup>138</sup>

Rothstein's elaboration of "directed" photojournalism is revealing of the general conception of this competing notion of realism – any kind of active involvement is appropriate, justified by the final goal of visualising a truthful perception. Deliberate distortion, argued Rothstein, may actually add to or accentuate the reality of an image (Ibid.). The directed image thus is not and should not be artificial; the effects of "direction" should produce realistic, believable images.<sup>139</sup> This competing notion of realism was reflected in standard practice among a large number of now canonised documentarists and photojournalists, such as Eugene W. Smith, who claimed that "the majority of photographic stories require a certain amount of setting up, rearranging and stage direction, to bring pictorial and editorial coherence to the pictures" (in Mraz 2003, 2). This competing notion of realism still builds on the credibility of the apparatus as an objective, non-intervening mechanical eyewitness, but depends on the photographer's creative control over the scene or event. To reiterate, directing served only (to enhance) the communicative side of the project of visual documenting, while the "directed" event was the photographer's truthful observation which need not be in straightforward spatio-temporal relation to the depicted image.

It is also worth noting that, at approximately the same time, another competing concept of photojournalism and documentary film-making was vividly promoted. It can be seen as a particular twist in the positivistic privileging of sight as a means of acquiring knowledge, and of modernity's belief in the progress of reason, embodied in the machines that flourished in

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<sup>138</sup> Rothstein's quote is from his 1943 essay *Direction in the Picture Story*, for which Mraz (2003, 2) claims that it is "the only extensive written argument by a working photojournalist explicitly advocating the strategy of staging".

<sup>139</sup> Interestingly enough, as the codes of photojournalism changed, Rothstein revoked his advocacy of directed photography and claimed that the very examples he used to illustrate his 1943 essay were in fact passive, objective recordings adhering to changed norms of profession that by then had changed.

the 1920s and early 1930s, particularly in the Soviet Union and Weimar Germany.<sup>140</sup> The underlying rationale of this competing form of realism is the avant-garde notion of truth (or true beauty) being hidden beneath the appearance of things, and that it can be unveiled with the help of machine. The motto was no longer *to see* but rather *to see beyond*, and found its theoretical backing in Marxist-Leninist epistemology, which conceptualised truth as something beyond the mere surface appearance of phenomena, as explicated by Marx's contention that outward appearance and the essence of things do not necessarily directly coincide, or Lenin's (1914) assertion that "truth is not the initial impression".

In their quest to aid/facilitate social reform, the Soviet avant-garde embraced the machine-based image production of photographic and cinematic cameras (also a machine) as an ideal instrument for the representation of modern, industrial society, and the development of a revolutionary consciousness in the "age of the machine" that should be based on facts and truth, not on "beautiful lies and deception" (Rodochenko in Moholy 1939/1996, 98), the opium of traditional art forms. The avant-garde (particularly Constructivists and Formalists) believed that the two competing concepts of realism already discussed above were still failing to produce a truthful depiction of the world, for they lacked a central organising (scientific) principle that would enable the depiction of "real" facts. Lukacs' distinction between naturalism and realism might come in handy in presenting their case for a new "art of facts" (see Tretyakov 1927/2003a,b). For Lukacs, *naturalism* was a form of representation dedicated to meticulous fidelity to *the* present, to the study of immediate and the apparent. "True" *realism* on the other hand "reflects the full process of life" since it "reflect[s] correctly and in proper proportion all important factors objectively determining the area of life it represents" (1970, 38). True realism thus has to go beyond mere appearances, since the "extensive totality of reality can only be produced intellectually in ever-increasing approximation through the intimate process of science" (Ibid.). Thus, in order to be truthful accounts of social reality, observed facts need to be organised according to an objective, scientific principle (historical materialism). Thus, for Vertov, the new documentary realism was the result of the organisation of recorded documentary material of "life facts". The camera is a superior instrument for the gathering of facts – it is an apparatus "more perfect than the human eye", he said (Vertov, 1923/1985, 15), and its mission was to record unposed reality, and capture

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<sup>140</sup> The idea of hidden beauty and the revelatory gaze of the camera can be traced back to avant-garde circles in pre-First World War Paris, particularly to authors who advocated the artistic potential of cinema (e.g. Canudo, Dillac etc.).

“life unawares”. These visualisations, however, were considered to be not only *raw facts* but also *raw material*. Unlike the dominant mode of photojournalistic objectivity, realism of the Vertovian kind would not stop at the mere gathering of facts, since it insisted that the truth lay *beyond* appearances. Meticulously gathered facts about life needed analytical (re)arrangement in accordance with objective scientific knowledge about historical-materialism. In cinema, this analytical (re)arrangement was achieved through the principle of montage, where Vertov freely used the raw material of visual facts to produce the desired effects, mixing footage taken at different locations, times, occasions etc.

In photography, such analytical (re)arrangement was created through photomontage and photoreportage. Photomontage, an “assemblage and combination of expressive elements from individual photographs” (Stepanova 1928/1996, 64), basically followed the principle of cinematic montage by transforming the raw material of photographic images and mixing them with text to produce a “static film” (Haussman in Moholy 1939/1996). Photoreportage, in its dominant form of photo essay, depended on a narrative that developed through a series of nonmanipulated single-image photographs and the emergent meaning(s) resulting from their juxtaposition. The emphasis on a series of photographs is crucial – Rodchenko, for example, argued against the creation of “synthetic images” and in favour of analysis: “Do not try to capture a man in one synthetic portrait, but rather in lots of snapshots taken at different times and in different circumstances” (quoted in Salomon-Godeau 1991, 101). I should also note that this type of realism also advocated self-reflexivity in the form of the inclusion of material and formal elements that reveal the construction of the image, either of the producer him/her self, or more frequently, by resorting to de-naturalisation of conventional ways of looking. As Salomon-Godeau notes: “Worm’s-eye, bird’s-eye, oblique or vertiginous perspectives relate not only to the strategy of defamiliarization, but to an affirmation of the apparatus itself as the agent of this vision. [...] What is being stressed is the manifest presence of the means of production, and, concomitantly, an implicit rejection of the popular perception of a photograph as either transparent or self-generated” (1991, 101; cf. Moholy-Nagy 1927/1969). What avant-garde photography in the Soviet Union and Weimar Germany did was, in fact, to subvert the long-standing critique of photography as the soulless, exact recorder of anything and everything that came into its sight and which supposedly prevented it from becoming an art form (such as Baudelaire’s eponymous handmaid critique<sup>141</sup>), and instead used it as a way

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<sup>141</sup> In his review of the Salon of 1859, Baudelaire (1859/1980) argues that photography should return to its true duty of being a very humble “handmaid of the arts and sciences”.

to give the new emerging world “new values of perception” (Haus and Frizot 1998, 462), to give men and women of the new industrial era, a new “new objectivity” of vision that would not be tainted by the traditional conceptions of beauty and art, echoing the writings of Rodchenko, Vertov, Trety and indeed those of Renger-Patzsch (see e.g. Renger-Patzsch in Haus and Frizot 1998, 464). This new vision and its “new objectivity” in both its Soviet and German (*Neue Sachlichkeit*) optics not only demanded that the age of the machine become the focus of attention and representation, but insisted that the investigation of the world which was continuously being mastered through industry and science must be conducted by industrial means – the mechanic, impartial eye of the camera<sup>142</sup> - for it alone was seen to possess the emancipatory potential that could critically empower the new (worker) citizens to see beyond the surface, or, as Brecht would have it, to make them see the exploitation behind the image of the Krupp factory.<sup>143</sup>

### **3.6.4 Photographic objectivity as industrial need and an outcome of occupational struggles**

The final non-ontological aspect of photojournalism’s critique addresses the construction of photographic realism as a non-interventionist recording through photography’s placement within the broader economy of media production, such as objectivity vs. sensationalism and occupational frictions between word and picture journalists. While histories of photojournalism often condition the rise of factual photojournalism with technological innovations,<sup>144</sup> such as those of image-making (the invention of more sensitive roll films, or small, portable cameras, such as the Leica), reproduction (halftone process) and distribution (wire photographs)<sup>145</sup> (e.g. Davenport 1991; Ritchin 1998), photojournalism has a far more complex and “uncomfortable history within Western journalism” (Becker 2000, 130). Hardt

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<sup>142</sup> Or, as Hoholy-Nagy referred to it, “the most reliable aid to a beginning of objective vision.” (1927/1969, 8)

<sup>143</sup> “The situation [in capitalist societies] is now becoming so complex that a simple “reproduction of reality” says less than ever about reality itself. A photograph of a Krupp factory or the AEG says practically nothing about these institutions. Reality itself has shifted into the realm of the functional. The reification of human relationships, such as the factory, no longer betrays anything about these relationships.” (in Jameson 1998, 163)

<sup>144</sup> As Roberts emphasises, the history of photography should not be “a history of photography’s unfolding debt to technological development, but more precisely, a history of photography’s resistive and transformative place *within* the dominant relations of technology. The new conditions spontaneity introduced into photography by the Leica and other portable cameras were produced out of the critical and political aspiration of the technology’s formal effects.” (Roberts 2008, 164, original emphasis)

<sup>145</sup> A more extensive list of technological innovations includes: “perfection of printing techniques to reproduce photographic images (halftones)—beginning with the New York Daily Graphic (USA), 1873, or Le Journal Illustré (France), 1886, although the US press did not use halftones regularly until 1897. Also important was the development of flexible, transparent film (George Eastman, 1889), and the invention of smaller cameras (Ermanox, Leica/Germany, 1925), faster films (35mm, Kodak/USA, 1923, reversible emulsion (AGFA/Germany, 1923), and the introduction of electronic flash equipment (Vacu-Blitz/Germany, 1929; Sashalite/England, Photoflash Lamp/USA, 1930).” (Hardt 2001, 11403)

(2001, 11402) writes that photojournalism emerged in two distinct phases, “during the latter part of the nineteenth century with the use of photographic images in newspapers and magazines as a new form of covering the news, and during the 1920s when photojournalism matured with the aid of technological advancements and was recognized as a form of documentary expression in most parts of the world”.<sup>146</sup> During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, visualisations of people or events oscillated between their function as a means of storytelling, attention-grabbing and vouchers of credibility.

Very early on, illustrated periodicals advocated their published visualisations (then still in the form of wood engravings) as factual records. Thus the Illustrated London News claimed in 1842 that “the public will have henceforth *under their glance* and within their grasp, the very form and presence of events as they transpire, *in all their substantial reality*, and with *evidence visible* as well as circumstantial” (in Schwartz 1999, 164; my emphasis). Descriptions of illustrations aimed at securing the notion of accuracy by claiming them to be “accurate”, “authentic”, a “faithful” sketch or delineation (Fox in Schwartz 1999), invoked the authority of an eyewitness report (“from a sketch by our own artist taken on the spot” (quoted in Becker 2000, 131)) and objective, photographic fidelity (emphasising that illustrations were based on photographs). Moreover, images proved to be powerful selling points for publications, and the growing tabloid press started to rely more and more on visual means of narrating news. The popularity of the tabloid press gradually influenced the style and appearance of quality newspapers. As Bessie notes, “when the tabloid taught its readers to expect a picture with every story, the large papers were forced to imitate this popular practice” (in Schwartz 1999, 168). However, the success of tabloids also created a status divide between textual and visual reporting within the newsrooms, a divide that at least in part remains to this day. The primacy of text came to be seen as the mark of the serious, rational press, while images on a negative, irrational cast due to their prominent use by the tabloid press, “where pictures were seen as key to successful and sensational coverage” (Becker 2000, 133). In its race for increasing profits, the tabloid press was accused by editors, journalists and political thinkers of reconstructing “journalism’s audience – transforming its ‘public’ into “an undifferentiated and irrational” mass<sup>147</sup> (Ibid., 133), while “photography’s more immediate,

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<sup>146</sup> While other authors might divide the periods of photojournalism’s ascent into different (or a different number of) stages (e.g. Nerone and Barnhurst 2003), most authors identify the 1920s as a turning point in the direction of contemporary photojournalism.

<sup>147</sup> In contemporary writings on public opinion, this division is often evoked in the distinction between the rational (bourgeois) “public” and the irrational, easily manipulated “crowd” (e.g. Park 1924/1967).



direct appeal [was] seen as a threat to reason, and to the journalistic institution's Enlightenment heritage" (Ibid., 130).

After the First World War, newspaper readers on both sides of the Atlantic grew increasingly sceptical about news reports in the media, due to overt sensationalism (e.g. exaggerated and false stories in US tabloids), the excessively partisan party press (intensive party propaganda both in Europe and the US) and the class bias of major, established publications towards politically dispossessed groups such as the proletariat, women, immigrants and minorities (e.g. Tönnies 1922/1998; Kaplan 2002; Zelizer 2004a). While readers grew increasingly sceptical about the truthfulness of news<sup>148</sup> and ceased to believe everything they read in the news, they were still very inclined to believe "a newspaper picture taken (allegedly) on the spot". (Bessie in Schwartz 1999, 168).

Newspaper owners soon started to capitalise not only on the public's growing desire to 'see' the world, a desire fuelled by intensive developments in visual culture (e.g. film, amateur photography, advertising), colonial expansion, the affordability of travel, tourism etc. but also on the credibility photographs could provide to their written accounts of news. The widespread introduction of photojournalism was dictated not so much from within the newsrooms as from "above", as owners, managers and editors embraced the new technology as a means of restoring trust in the truthfulness of the word journalism. During the 1920s, photographs became the standard feature of the daily press – at least with major national (Europe) or metropolitan (US) newspapers - and appear to have (along with journalism's conscious move towards objectivity in news reporting, particularly in the US) "restored some measure of credibility to the newspaper" (Schwartz 1999) and contributed to the readability and accessibility of news<sup>149</sup> (Zelizer 1995, 80; cf. Becker 2000, Hardt 1999). However, the introduction of photographs into the printed press was not completed without severe frictions

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<sup>148</sup> Zelizer quotes a US survey (Scott in Zelizer 1995, 80) in which a third of respondents said they did not believe what they read in the media, a figure remarkably similar to current polls: [http://www.globescan.com/news\\_archives/bbcrcut.html](http://www.globescan.com/news_archives/bbcrcut.html)

<sup>149</sup> The opposition of the elite press to the introduction of visuals into news can be seen as part of the aforementioned class bias of elite publications. While the bourgeois press sneered at visuals, claiming that "mankind is well on the way backward to a language of pictures" by "pulling down the dignity of [...] press" and thus pushing society back to the "Stone Age of intelligence" (US editors quoted in Zelizer 1995, 83-84), visual reporting of social reality was widely embraced by the workers' press, as it made news and political agitation more readily available to the working-class audience, which at the time was to a significant extent illiterate or did not speak the language fluently (e.g. immigrants). It is worth noting that, during the 1920s and early 1930s, many of the major developments and much of the innovative use of photography for news and issues reporting came to life on the pages of the workers' press, such as Germany's *Arbeiter-Illustrierte-Zeitung* (Worker's Illustrated Press) or the Soviet *SSSR na stroike* (USSR in Construction).

between old (textual) and emerging (visual) reporters.<sup>150</sup> These heightened in particular during the 1930s, with the introduction of technology (the wirephoto) that enabled photographs to be transmitted across the world with the same speed and efficiency as words, making the two comparable in terms of actuality and hence potential impact on readers. During this time, photographs progressed from being separate content, clearly separated by borders and decorations from “grey columns of good text” (Robb in Zelizer 1995, 83), into “content, fully integrated into the journalistic enterprise” (Barnhurst and Nerone 1999, 62). Zelizer (1995) traces the reactions of word journalists and editors against “photography as an unwelcome interloper in the field” (Vitray et. al. in Zelizer 1995, 82), showing that word reporters did everything they could to undermine photography’s growing presence and delineate its tasks in Baudelairean terms of being a mere handmaid (see note 141). In the process, they succeeded in transforming photojournalists into “second-class citizens” in newsrooms (Northup 1974, 177), by defining news photographs as a medium of factual reporting. Relying on support of the popular perception of photography as a mechanical recording device, their reduction of visual reporters to “lowly button-pressers” who, unlike the writing reporters, needed no special training or expertise, should come as no surprise. As Zelizer emphasises: “For journalists faced with accommodating photography, its referentiality made particular sense. For it positioned photography as a craft in need of the intervention of journalists, making it an adjunct to that of word-journalism” (1995, 87). What was essentially at stake was determining the power relations between the two professions and the prestige to interpret the news. Word journalists thus handed part of their task of describing events in terms of factual reporting over to the allegedly superior eye of the camera only to maintain the position of arbiters, of interpreters and of commentators of events. Nerone and Barnhurst note that “as pictures took on much of the descriptive and affective work of the news, textual reports abandoned the present tense and moved into the future, explaining the implications of events” (2003, 121). Reducing press photography to denotation, recording and referentiality, word journalists were seen as being able to justify their excursions into connotation, speculation and commentary (at least in certain types/portions of news) without endangering the credibility of their publications (Zelizer 1995). Becker describes this as a contradictory pattern “of use and journalistic structures that refer to photography and exploit its popularity, while

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<sup>150</sup> It should be noted that not all types of publications treated visuals with suspicion. Apart from the tabloid press, the drive for visual narration of events during the 1920s and 1930s gave birth to a new type of publication, the picture magazine, that soon became the hallmark of the fast developing practice of photojournalism. Picture magazines were particularly important for its advancement, since they gave photographers more freedom in visual reporting than traditional newspapers did, and more value was placed on the images as such, as well as on the overall visual communication of the publication (design and layout).

simultaneously insulating the elite segments of the daily press in exclusively verbal forms of journalistic practice” (2000, 130).<sup>151</sup>

While press photography in time acquired more prestige and equality in the newsroom, particularly over the last three decades, as the press has moved towards more intense exploitation of visual communication in its ever tougher competition for audiences in an increasingly visually saturated environment, photojournalism’s attempts to transgress or reject the assigned role of mere “record keeper” were few and far between. In the years following the Second World War, which many authors suggest was as important for the profession’s development as the enabling of real-light photography and candid shots taken with portable small cameras, photojournalism became an increasingly organised, professionalised, routinised and, to a large extent, standardised practice. This consolidation paralleled journalism’s move to (an at least proclaimed) norm of objective reporting and, with the development of ethical standards of photojournalism, practices that deviated from the ideal of neutral, factual reporting were gradually eschewed. And as I have shown above, if anything, the introduction of digital photography had made profession’s adherence to the standards of passive reporting of events even stronger.

### 3.7 Postmodern critique and the challenge of negotiated realism

Postmodernist and cultural critiques presented in this closing section of the chapter are all based on a belief that the documentary realism of press photography is not medium’s the ontological characteristic but a socially constructed (and hence ideological) set of practices. Competing and contradictory accounts of realism point to the fact that much more is at stake here than simply the ideological tainting of the basic recording apparatus. Where the three concepts of realism outlined above differ is over a basic ontological question concerning not so much photography as a medium but the very act of acquiring knowledge through observation. All competing photographic realisms are dedicated to conveying truthful information, but differ in their respective conceptions (locations) of the truth and the relative power for its revelation they attribute to the “basic apparatus”. Thus photojournalism’s dominant mode of realism considers truth to be surface-bound phenomena, and links it

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<sup>151</sup> At the same time as news photography moved into the passive recording of events, photography’s distancing from the “real” proliferated in a competing section of media content – advertising. (Craig 1999)

explicitly to operation of the recording apparatus. “Directed” realism also connects truth to surface but links it explicitly to the act of observation and not to the operation of recording. Avant-garde realism, however, locates truth as something obscured by the surface reality and thus links it to observation of another order, that of the analytical gaze of science, which reworks the impartial gaze of the recording machine in accordance with objective, universal laws. It should thus come as no surprise that the competing realisms are intricately connected to dominant ideologies of the societies that endorsed them. While avant-garde realism has been widely discredited in the West on the basis of its explicit goal of the political reform of society and “false” ideology and epistemology (and became valued primarily for its aesthetic merits<sup>152</sup>), the former two have been much less frequently exposed as ideological apparatuses of capitalist social-democratic nation-states. Tagg (2008) points out how the rhetoric of documentary realism formed at a moment of social crisis in the late 1920s and early 1930s. For Tagg, the ideological function of documentary was “recruitment of *subjects* as citizens, called to witness, called to reality and coherence, precisely at a time when the established regimes of sense and sociality were profoundly threatened by a crisis that was never solely political or economic” in order to “close down the openness and disputability of reality” (2008, 125). Its “demand to look” and “dramatization of witness” were to bear witness to the truth of citizenship and to renew again the ethical contract between the citizen and the State as a form of our collective participation in that truth” (Ibid.) News media are instrumental in constructing and promulgating a shared sense of community and polity, as their audiences are ritually addressed as citizens. Authors such as Kovach and Rosensteil (2001) have argued that quality newspapers in particular are seen by their owners, creators and audiences as instrumental to the functioning of a democracy, a prestige position which in Europe they share only with public service broadcasting. However, the citizens they address on a regular basis are not some universal subjects of democratic order but are profiled mostly as the largely urban, educated, bourgeois public (Bryce 1897/2007, Tönnies 1922/1998) of a particular nation-state (Tarde 1898/1969, Andersen 1983/1991, Billig 1995/2001). Roberts extends this argument to press photography:

Critical reportorial and documentary photographic practice, despite the mass cultural ubiquity of photographs themselves – has never been at the center of culture; even at the height of photography’s political and organizing functions in

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<sup>152</sup> Ironically, the production that drew its power from rejecting art and its refusal to become divorced from the social reality it was depicting, was coopted by the dominant discursive regime almost exclusively in terms of short-lived artistic movement, as deviation from the norm, rather than its alternative form.

the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s, it was always a minority form, and in many contexts highly policed by its own institutions; *its audience was always primary literary, specialist, middle-class*. (2008, 167, my emphasis)

A 1936 description of Margaret Bourke-White's photographs by *Life* editors is an illustrative example of this: "What editors got was a human document of frontier life which, *to them at least*, was a revelation" (in Davenport 1991, 98; my emphasis). Bourke-White's photographs were not a "revelation" in itself but a "revelation" for editors as members of a particular social formation, the urban middle class. As cultural critiques of photojournalism never fail to emphasise, the middle-class bias of objective photojournalistic realism is that it stops short of mobilising the public to political action. It does lay bare the realities for inspection by the readers and their inquisitive gaze, but its impetus to view does not imply the need for radical social change, it merely agitates the need for reform, for an improvement in existing social relations.<sup>153</sup>

Kaplan, for instance, argues that journalism's move towards a normative ideal of objectivity in fact disabled journalism's critical stance:

Despite the unmistakable gains in reliable and factual information and in openness, objectivity does not provide reporters with the political authority they need to accomplish the hard questions and probe democracy's unpleasant issues. Rather, objectivity renders the press weak in the face of pressures from the market, the public, or the political elite. (2002, 194)

Adoption of the objectivity doctrine reduced journalists from fairly autonomous arbiters of events to mere conveyors of other people's information, opinions and critique. Moreover, journalism's move towards seeking and reporting hard facts and reliable information by default privileges "those in positions of power and institutional authority" (Ibid., 193). What journalism gained from this was "a semblance of power and prestige", an insulation from "supposedly ignorant, powerless and irrational mass" and absolution from public criticism, as it replaced former explicit political macro-narratives with more covert, but nevertheless

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<sup>153</sup> In the dominant sense of the term, documentarists are generally not revolutionaries but reformers.

ideologically potent codes of professional practice that rest “upon a flexible array of taken-for-granted social norms and cultural common-sense” (Ibid., 193; cf. Tuchman 1978).

To sum up, the aim of this chapter was to delineate a working definition of photojournalism. In the process, photojournalism emerged as a contradictory discourse structured around the privileged discursive elements of photographic theory, normative demands of profession and working practices of mass mediated communication. Most of these contradictions originate in photojournalism’s adoption of an unaccomplishable goal (ideal) of passive, neutral recording of events that disregards both the medium’s inherent symbolic characteristics as well as the necessarily constructed nature of news reporting as social practice. However, photography’s realism is of a dual nature, based in part on the medium’s characteristics, and partly a convention, based on and upheld by a set of social and institutional practices. As was already indicated in previous chapters, the present-day insecurity of mainstream photojournalism derives from its reluctance to embrace this duality. If anything, recent debates on photojournalism ethics have clearly shown that the credibility of photography is not an aspect of the medium’s inherent nature but depends on (the institutionalised) practices of its use. In the age of post-photography and Photoshop, credibility and trust in the medium can no longer be maintained by mythologisation of the basic apparatus and its operator. A much more viable strategy appears to be to accept a sort of *negotiated realism*, a practice of visual narration that would, among other things, lay bare the forces influencing image production in order to maintain the credibility of reporting<sup>154</sup> and a distance from the prevailing norms of the 24-hour global news cycle and standard modes on image display and circulation (see e.g. Ritchin 2008). Brunet contends that “if we ‘know’ that photographs are truthful, today as before computer images existed, we tend to base this knowledge not on a simple ‘principle’ about technology but on the ‘*traceability*’ of a whole chain of [...] production, publication, and circulation of pictures” (2008, 45). What we are witnessing, particularly after the introduction of digital imagery, is the shift of the key element securing the credibility of photography “from image to its maker” and his/her “track record” in the eyes of the audience (Wells 2007). The credibility of contemporary photojournalism thus involves active participation by photographers, their subjects, editors and designers involved in post-production, word journalists *and* audience members. The latter have not only grown increasingly sceptical of the images and the media but also increasingly visually literate and media-savvy. A part of the

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<sup>154</sup> Stiegler writes that “it is neither a matter of naturalism nor of constructivism but rather of a reflection on constructivism as well as naturalism conveyed by means of this medium.” (Stiegler 2008, 195)

audience has also become more critical, sceptical or active in their search of news, due to the proliferation of the internet. All this potentially opens up opportunities for a new form of *negotiated realism* for press photography that need not be as rigid and simpleton-oriented as the dominant conception of photojournalistic ethics presupposes.

Let me illustrate this point. In recent years, the primacy of trust in the image-maker and traceability of the production chain as guarantees of an image's credibility over the proficiency of recording apparatus came to the fore as the press started using photographs that were high on news value (actuality and content-wise) but of such poor quality that they could hardly supply it on their own. What I am referring to are photographs taken by non-professionals caught in the midst of breaking news (e.g. the 2004 Asian tsunami, the 2005 bombings on the London underground), poor quality frame grabs (e.g. Saddam Hussein's execution, Osama Bin Laden videotapes) or images made by military machinery (e.g. smart bomb footage popular since the 1991 Gulf War). Due to their poor quality and legibility (at least in terms of printed media), most of these photographs have very little informative value of their own. In most cases, they make sense and gain the status of authoritative evidence only through accompanying textual reports. Put differently, they are valued primarily as eyewitness accounts, but their eyewitnessing has had to be vouched for by explanatory text and the context of credible publication. In these cases, the audience had no problems wirelying on "imperfect" imagery, since their trustworthiness was vouched for by the credibility of the institution and the traceability of production chain, even when that chain led to US military briefings at press conferences.<sup>155</sup> As Friday emphasises, photographic transparency (on which photojournalism rests) is not a *characteristic of* but "an *attitude towards* photographs" (1999, 28; my emphasis). The act of photographic looking is an act of temporary suspension of disbelief through which photographs become "*treated as if* they put us in a perceptual contact with the objects they depict" (Ibid., original emphasis). This temporary suspense of disbelief does not originate in the apparatus' perfect recording capabilities, but in spite of all its deficiencies, since veracity of image is a result of the interrelation of apparatus, its operator and the context of distribution.

In spite of the thrust of postmodernist critique of photography, shortcomings and ideological biases of photojournalism's partly self-imposed, partly ascribed definition as a practice of

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<sup>155</sup> See Tirohl 2000, cf. Perlmutter 1998, 133.

factual recording, contemporary critics are not inclined to dismiss the notion of photographic realism as such. As Newton remarked, what is at stake here is "a primary way of knowing – gathering information with our eyes. Visual reportage manifests the way of knowing in public discourse as a form of reality production – at once mediated and true" (2001, 12). Ritchin shares this sense of the colossal implications for the individual, but even more for the collective, societal level. Should photography really lose its relevance as a documentary witness, this would profoundly “handicap democracy’s capacity to function, due to a dearth of credible evidence” (2008, 62).

This humanistic and to some extent idealistic insistence on the importance of maintaining a viable photo realism in news reporting is closely connected to belief in photography’s power as a means of communication – a power to influence both the cognition and behaviour of its addressees. Unlike its status – which, as I have shown above, has been constructed around the notion of photography’s indexicality – the power ascribed to photography is not based on its capacity for a realistic rendering of given scenes, but on its capacity to mobilise strong emotional, non-rational responses to depicted imagery, a belief that will be the starting point of the next chapter.



## 4 EFFICACY OF NEWS PHOTOGRAPHS AS FRAMING DEVICES

*Photography represents a will to see reality.* Bernd Stiegler,  
Photography as the medium of reflection

*The magic of photography is metaphysical. What you see in the photograph isn't what you saw at the time. The real skill of photography is organized visual lying.* Terence Donovan (from Guardian)

*The knowledge gained through still photography will always be some kind of sentimentalism, whether cynical or humanist.* Susan Sontag, On photography

Since the introduction of the medium, photographs have been reported to have moved, outraged, scarred or mobilised individuals, groups, even nations. The belief in the extraordinary power of photography to influence individuals and collectives is almost universally acknowledged and is shared by photographers, members of discourse elites and the general public alike. The envisaged effects of images are immediate, universal and strong. As indicated in Chapter 2, they are conceived as almost magical, deriving not so much from photography's "truth" or "proof value" but from their ascribed capacity of persuasion through mobilisation of emotional, non-rational responses to depicted content, which grants them the power to cloud, bypass or overpower reason.<sup>156</sup> In short, the key element of the efficacy of photographic images, including photojournalistic ones, is not their indexicality but their iconicity. James Nachtwey, one of the best-known and most highly regarded contemporary photojournalists, summarised much of this commonly shared belief on the efficacy of photographs when he described his method of work in the following manner:

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<sup>156</sup> These contemporary notions on the efficacy of photojournalistic images have strong historical roots – within Western philosophy, the notion of images as false perceptions "clouding the mind" can be traced back at least to Platonism. On the other hand, it could be claimed that photojournalism itself is built according to the Platonic ideal: an individual (photojournalist) escaping the limited understanding of the world inside the cave. Through a long, tortuous intellectual journey, the individual discovers a higher realm, a true reality, and returns to the cave in order to dispel the world of shadows and enlighten those who stayed behind.

*I want the first impact, and by far the most powerful impact, to be about an emotional, intellectual and moral reaction to what is happening to these people. [...] If there is something occurring that is so bad that it could be considered a crime against humanity, it has to be transmitted with anguish, with pain, and create an impact in people – upset them, shake them up, wake them out of their everyday routine.* (Nachtwey in Cruickshank 2000; my emphasis)

The present focus on the efficacy of images is intended as a move away from theoretical and normative investigation of photography and photojournalism towards building a methodological and analytical framework for analysis of the visual material. The chapter will centre on presenting framing as a productive and insightful analytical concept for the analysis of images. Within media studies, framing research has become increasingly popular, but it is still mostly a word-oriented research paradigm. Although images are routinely listed as framing devices, they are rarely incorporated into framing research, let alone made the central object of investigation. The present chapter links framing with the issue of image efficacy, which has itself gone largely uninvestigated despite (or because of) the nearly unanimous consensus on their strong communicative effects. Due to the somewhat commonsense conceptualisation of image efficacy, the chapter will open with a systematic overview of claims to image efficacy, complemented by available research findings.

According to Zelizer (2005b), there are four groups of social actors that are particularly invested in articulating assumptions about the efficacy of images in news reporting:

- *journalists and photojournalists* emphasise the “having been there” effect of photographs and power to substantiate news reports;
- *newspaper publishers and chief executives of media organizations* recognise that images compel public attention;
- *officials and politicians* regard images as valuable tools for shaping public opinion and justifying policy in wartime;
- *the public(s)* sees images as a way of coming to terms with news, helping them grapple with the world in a more manageable, reliable and readily understandable fashion.

For at least three of the four groups, photojournalism has a clear mission within the democratic political process – it provides information on the basis of which citizens can influence official policies through the formation and expression of public opinion, while at the same time enabling “governors to know the wishes of the governed” (Bentham 1843). Less ideally, in some cases (e.g. censorship in war reporting, but also staged photo opportunities) it also enables ruling elites to circumscribe public knowledge and manage the “wishes” of the general public. This utilitarianism with regard to the political process also justifies the photojournalist’s (and by extension audience’s) status of eyewitness. Taylor (2000) speaks of good/decent<sup>157</sup> and bad/indecent looking, particularly in relation to images of human suffering and destruction. He claims that “photojournalism is caught between the two: it claims objectivity [associated with good looking] but it is associated, inevitably, with looking on and standing by” (2000, 136; my insertion). Active participation in the political process (via the influence of public opinion) and mobilisation for action are thus the sole factors that prevent press photography from turning into mere voyeurism.

What is striking, however, is not simply the unanimity of belief in the (strong) efficacy of (certain) images among the four groups of social actors defined above, but the lack of empirical evidence to sustain it, a fact also noted by Perlmutter 1998, Domke et al. 2002, Zelizer 2005b and Andén-Papadopoulos 2008. While discourse elites are fond of proclaiming the power of newspaper photography, “systematic investigations of the actual influence of visual news images are rare” (Domke et al. 2002, 132). They rest mainly on anecdotal or incidental evidence, such as declining public support for military engagement after publication of one or a series of photographs, such as for example the dramatic fall of public support for the Bush administration in the US just after the photographs of torture in Baghdad's Abu Ghraib prison became public (e.g. Andén- Papadopoulos 2008). Furthermore, they are also based on what Perlmutter has called the *first person effect* – the projecting of the effect images have had on oneself to society as a whole (1998, xiv).<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> “Everything that relates to observation and therefore to producing hard facts that lead to truth, to positive knowledge, is welcome. The look must be cold, a kind of disembodied stare which is so remote, so far from heat and interest that it attracts no blame to those who see and note their findings.” (Taylor 2000, 136)

<sup>158</sup> Perlmutter shows how the interpretations of the two Vietnam War *icons of outrage* are complex and contested issues, emphasising how Eddie Adams' photograph of a summary execution on the streets of Saigon in fact generated a great deal of sympathy with the general and contributed to support for the war, not only to its mythologised rallying of anti-war sentiment.

The discourse on the efficacy of photographs is, in fact, essentially a debate on the relevance of photojournalism. In spite of frequent debates about the looming *death of photojournalism*, the belief that news images continue to be relevant for our contemporary political reality is indicated – if, by nothing else, than by the attacks, jailing, murders and killings of photojournalists. Such gruesome statistics<sup>159</sup> do not, as Newton (2009) concludes, indicate the influence of photojournalism and its images as such. Rather, it points to a shared *belief* that photojournalism has influence. As Perlmutter argues: “Whatever the effects of images are, there is clearly a perception among the public, the press, and our leaders that images *are* powerful; this perception can be more influential than its less sensational reality” (1998, xvi, original emphasis). Indeed, assumed effects can have “real” consequences for photojournalism practice. Ever since the Vietnam War, state and military apparatuses have been enforcing increasingly stronger control over visual journalists, either by limiting of access to the conflict zone (e.g. Falkland Islands 1982, Tiananmen 1989, Sudan 2006, Iran 2009), direct censorship and pre-approval of certain images (e.g. Gulf War 1991), or through embedded reporting (e.g. invasion of Iraq 2003).

## 4.1 Perceived effects of news photographs

In his analysis of this widespread belief in the power of news images to influence the political process, Perlmutter outlines a set of presuppositions on which this belief is based. According to him, *visual determinism*<sup>160</sup> is based on six (not always correlated) beliefs that:

- Policy-makers survey the foreign affairs environment through the mass media;

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<sup>159</sup> According to *Reporters Without Borders* in 2008, a total of 673 journalists were arrested, 929 were physically attacked or threatened, 29 were kidnapped and 353 media outlets were censored. In the same year, five photojournalists and eight cameramen were killed and, in 2009, the body count was two photojournalists and seven cameramen. Additionally, with the explosive growth in non-media reporting on the internet, bloggers, citizen journalists and other individuals with their “weapons of mass photography”, to borrow a phrase from Clarence Page, have increasingly become targets of pressure formerly directed against professionals. The 2008 killing of a Chinese businessman, Wei Wenhua, who was beaten to death by police while acting as a ‘citizen journalist’, is only the most brutal example of this transfer of pressure. Another telling example is the recent banning of phone cameras and wireless gadgets among US soldiers and military contractors in Iraq, which extends to the publishing of images on the internet. *Reporters Without Borders* claim one blogger was killed, 59 bloggers were arrested, 45 were physically attacked and 1,740 websites were blocked, shut down or suspended in 2008.

<sup>160</sup> While visual determinism is a belief in the power of press photography as such, images that seem to have affected policy-making (or policy-makers), according to Perlmutter, appear to share a set of common characteristics. Among other things, icons of outrage have the qualities of what was in the previous chapter described as “great” and “symbolic” photographs. Their ability to become metonymies of particular events or even their underlying idea(l)s to a large extent depends on their compositional characteristics and their ability to strike a chord with common cultural or primordial themes (1998, 9-20, cf. Griffin 1999 on great war photographs).

- the instantaneousness of media imagery bypasses the normal channels of political decision-making;
- pictures drive policy;
- news is visual;
- pictures cannot lie and their “meanings” are fixed;
- pictures trigger an emotional response in the viewer that overrides reason. (1998, 1-5)

What I propose is a slightly different typology that will enable a more systematic overview of commonly held assumptions regarding the power of images, and correlate them with existing research on image effects, adding empirical evidence to Perlmutter’s outline of anecdotal ones. Thus I argue for introducing a distinction between the part of the belief in visual determinism that is linked to the *nature of images* and the one that evolves around the *nature of communication*.

#### **4.1.1 Nature of communication**

The first half of the presuppositions outlined by Perlmutter relates to the nature of contemporary mediation of news and is normally backed by anecdotal evidence. It has been argued that 24-hour news coverage and its global accessibility (satellite TV networks, the internet) have influenced not only audience habits and expectations but also patterns of intelligence-gathering by political elites. Perlmutter thus lists a number of cases where “the diplomatic sophism ‘we are monitoring the situation’ increasingly means watching it on TV” (1998, 2). The instantaneousness of global news flows bypasses the normal channels of political intelligence-gathering, and politicians increasingly rely (or even prefer to rely) on media information, instead of traditional diplomatic and intelligence service reports, in order to be able to respond swiftly to the equally instantaneous (real or perceived) demands of the public. Thus the standard procedures of political deliberation and decision-making can get bypassed, and long-term goals in foreign policy can be clouded by the short-term goals of reacting to mass media(ted) issues. Occasionally, political leaders are described as having subsumed to the so-called CNN effect.<sup>161</sup> A much publicised account in relation to press photography is the US intervention in Somalia, whose start and finish have been attributed to the power of press photographs: “Pictures of starving children would rightly encourage

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<sup>161</sup> The term CNN effect has been used (somewhat inconsistently) to describe the power of media to influence policy decisions – either in the form of policy agenda-setting, acceleration of decision-making response time, or impediment to action due to the achievement of desired policy goals (Livingston 1997, 2).

Americans to press their government to intervene, then equally dramatic pictures of American casualties would force a premature withdrawal before the job was done” (Rudgway in Perlmutter 1998, 5). The anecdotal evidence supporting these three presuppositions is plentiful, but their importance, particularly the *CNN effect*, might be overstated. As Perlmutter notes, while media images can influence opinions and inspire the rhetoric of government officials, these opinions and publicly expressed views do not necessarily drive a country’s foreign or economic policy as such. Thus, strong US condemnation of China’s suppression of student demonstrations on Tiananmen in 1989 did not change economic policy and trade arrangements between the two countries.<sup>162</sup>

#### 4.1.2 Nature of visuals

The other three presuppositions of visual determinism identified by Perlmutter address the effect of visuals by considering the nature of visual messages which have been (at least sporadically) addressed through empirical research and will be dealt with in more detail below.

##### 1. News is/if visual

It has been argued that the impetus for visualisation of news has reached a point when a non-visualised event’s entry into the news flow has become increasingly rare. Although print media do not need the visualisations to publish a news item to the same that extent television does, the existence of suitable imagery greatly increases the chances that news will be published. If important events lack visualisation, media outlets routinely supply the missing visual material through archive photographs, illustrations<sup>163</sup> and increasingly sophisticated computer info graphics and animation.

- Existing research confirms that images are indicators of the perceived importance of a given event. In the case of momentous events, the size of single photographs or the

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<sup>162</sup> Even in cases when media reports inspire personal responses by high-profile political leaders, their involvement seems to remain confined to the micro/personal level – while British Prime Minister John Major personally intervened to ensure medical treatment for the five-year old Bosnian girl Irma Hadzimuratovic and a number of others injured during the shelling of Sarajevo in 1993, this did not change the UK’s policy of non-intervention in Bosnia (Perlmutter 1998, 22). Probably not the best local example of personal involvement and foreign policy abstinence was the case of Slovene President Janez Drnovšek’s 2006 Darfur peace initiative, which was not actively supported by the de facto shapers of Slovene foreign policy, the government and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Admittedly, the case is somewhat more complex, but it does go against the universal efficacy of press images that visual determinism presupposes.

<sup>163</sup> As for example with the comic-book-style illustration of the arrest of Josip Zagajski at the Dobova border crossing published in the July 2009 edition of Slovene free paper *Žurnal*.

total quantity of published photographs greatly increases. Slovene media are no exception to this practice. Photographs that mark important events can increase almost to the whole front page (e.g. Delo's cover for Josip Broz Tito's death or Dnevnik's for the funeral of John Paul II). In the case of particularly momentous events, such as the Slovene Independence War in 1991, the September 11 terrorist attacks or the US invasion of Iraq, both the total number of published photographs and the space given to them increased.

- Studies also confirm that photographs attract the reader's attention, with size being the decisive factor (Knobloch et. al 2003). Eye tracking studies have confirmed that readers do not read newspapers linearly but "enter" pages through the most powerful graphic elements, namely photographs (Gibson 1991) and headlines (Harrower 1998), their reading path moving from one salient element to the next (Gunther and van Leeuwen 1996, 218) before deciding which news items deserve their attention.
- While images are found to attract attention, some studies emphasise that the attention to images did not necessarily extend to text (Garcia and Stark, 1991), claiming that photographs draw attention mostly to themselves (Knobloch et. al. 2003). Other studies found that readers are "more likely to examine a photograph than to view text, although combining both text and photograph makes it three times more likely that at least some of the text will be read" (Pfau et. al 2007). The effect of images drawing attention to accompanying text seems to be dependent on the content of the image. Studies have found that the presence of danger-signalling images (impending or manifest victimization) increases the likelihood of news items being read when compared to articles that were accompanied by innocuous, unthreatening images (Gibson and Zillmann 2000, Zillmann et. al 2001).
- Research has shown that most people find images easier to process than verbal reports. Additionally, visual images appear to be far more memorable than verbal accounts of news. Studies indicate greater information recall in cases where news items are accompanied with visuals (Waddill and McDaniel 1992; Mayer and Gallini 1990 and Harp and Mayer 1997). Pavio (1971) explains the increased memorability of images through dual code theory, which claims that visual and non-visual information are coded separately. Gibson and Zillmann (2000) find that once visual images are encoded and stored in the memory, they tend to "dominate verbal representations in subsequent retrieval, resulting in a 'picture-superiority effect'" (Pfau et al. 2006, 152). Similarly, Pezdek (1977) found that the content of images and words tends to combine

with time, with a distinct preference for visual content (cf. Grimes and Drechsel 1996, Pavio1971, Bower and Cohen, 1982; Gibson and Zillmann, 2000 Zillmann and Gan, 1996; Mendelson 1980/1999). Brosius (1993) also found that readers who can not recall details from textual information will infer those details from their memory of visual representations, and Waddill and McDaniel found images to be important retrieval cues (1992).

- Additionally, studies on false memory have shown that a photograph can change one's memory of a news story (Garry et al. 2007), and that a combination of images and false information can lead to individuals' forming false memories, even of their own childhood (e.g. Lindsay et al. 2004).

## **2. The emotional effect of images**

Photographs – it is argued – are a powerful means of communication since they appeal to the emotions, and thus hinder or overshadow the power of rational processing of information. This argument is an extension of the ancient belief in (and fear of) the magical efficacy of images, very clearly explicated in western philosophy by Plato. Many practising journalists and photojournalists (consider Nachtway's quote above) believe that images are “mainlined directly into democracy's emotional bloodstream without the mediation of conscious thought” (Lance Morrow in Perlmutter 1998, 4). Likewise, politicians have claimed that images can evoke an emotional response (sympathy, outrage etc.) from the public(s) and thus “lay the groundwork for policy by setting up public expectations” which are often characterised as unrealistic, unstrategic and short-sighted in terms of policy-making and diplomacy (Ibid.). Moreover, visual determinism presupposes that emotional reactions to given pictorial stimuli are universal: “the attitude and kind of emotional response is assumed to be the same regardless of the observer. Having a different response, an emotion of a different kind, is seen as deviance” (Ibid.). Perlmutter describes this as a *first person effect*, where “people react to a mediated stimulus in a certain way, and then assume that others must be reacting in the same way” (Ibid., 4-5). Discourse elites such as politicians and journalists are particularly fond of ascribing universal validity to their particular interpretations, claiming that “the whole country” was shocked or moved by a certain image.



- Studies of human brain structures seem to give some validity to “bypassing reason” hypothesis, as visual signals appear to be processed differently, separately and before reason-based cognition, as studies of human brain structures suggest. Barry claims that “the language of images, grounded in the stuff of perceptual experience, affects us directly and involves instinct and emotion, before the linear logic derived from language can be imposed on it”<sup>164</sup> (1997, 116). Barry claims that, while language has to undergo a process of translation from abstract symbols into meaning, an image is processed directly and is therefore “capable of reaching the emotions before it is cognitively understood” (Ibid., 78). We thus “*begin to respond* emotionally” to images “before we can think them through” (Barry 1997, 18, my emphasis). Pavio makes a similar conclusion, claiming that “affective reactions would ordinarily occur more quickly to pictures than to words because the former have more direct access to affect-mediating imagens” (1990, 79; cf. Graber 1996). Moreover, her conclusions are also based on the fact that the processing of visual content involves the right brain hemisphere, which tends to make the processing more holistic and emotional. These findings do not presuppose that the emotive capacity of images necessarily overpowers rational perception, but merely that they have this capacity and that the whole process plays out on a subconscious level (cf. Zhou 2005).<sup>165</sup>
- Research has also shown that it is generally the visual content of news and not textual reports that elicit emotional mental states such as pain, happiness, sadness, curiosity, doubt, fear or embarrassment (Graber 1996). In research on images of war, negative images (e.g. war casualties) were found to elicit negative emotional effects such as puzzlement, anger and sadness, while text (if compared to photographs) appeared to enhance positive emotions (Pfau et al. 2007, 160-161).
- Additionally, Graber’s (1990) research on television (which can also be applied to still images) showed that certain modes of depiction, particularly close-ups of individual people, can serve as a potent means for the creation of emotional bonds between an audience and the individual(s) portrayed: “Pictures make audiences care about an issue and the people involved in it” (Graber 1990, 154). The connection between the mode of depiction, particularly the type of frame (proximity as a sign of invited identification), and the direction of subject’s gaze are a standard tool for semiotics-inspired visual analysis, where they connote invitation to identification (e.g. see Lutz and Collins 1993; Kress and van Leeuwen 1996).
- Visual images were also found to be more efficient in communicating ‘things’ that can not be fully expressed in words, such as the implicit conveyance of affective meanings and (symbolic

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<sup>164</sup> Cf. Berger’s opening of *Ways of seeing* (1972).

<sup>165</sup> “Without realising it, emotional response can [...] influence attitudes, thinking, and behaviour, allowing us to cognitively congratulate ourselves on our perceptive thinking, while all the while we are in fact being guided by emotionally laden perceptual judgements beneath the level of our awareness.” (Barry, 1997, 19)

or implied) relations between subjects (El Refaie 2003). This is consistent with a standard proposition of photography theory about the incomplete match between the possibility of expression in images and that of words: the “translation” is always incomplete and a certain “residual” remains after images are translated into words. Barry, for example, claims that “what visual images express can only be approximated by words, but never fully captured by them” (1997, 75; see also Chapter 2).

### **3. Photographs as evidence with fixed meaning**

Perlmutter writes how visual determinism presupposes a highly simplistic account of image interpretation and media effects, suggesting “widespread belief in a ‘hypodermic needle’ model of the impact of visuals on policy and opinions, according to which pictures have a special power to drive people to change attitude, and that, crucially, the direction of that changed attitude or galvanization is preordained” (1998, xiv). Thus, in contrast to theoretical considerations outlined in Chapter 2, visual determinism positions images as fairly unambiguous visual proofs with stable meanings that will produce a predestined, universal change of opinion.

- Existing research findings, however, support the more complex view of image perception and reception already addressed in previous chapters. Communication science has long ago rejected the “conveyor belt” or “hypodermic needle” conceptualisation of message flow and effects, and has repeatedly pointed out that media messages can be interpreted in remarkably differently ways by their respective audiences (Hall 1973/1980). This should apply even more to photographs, which are by themselves more polysemic than textual news. While images can resonate with large audience numbers in much the same way (a fact exploited by advertising), the likelihood of which increases with the iconicity of a given image, Perlmutter shows that even photojournalism’s much publicised and canonised “icons of outrage” (1998) in fact elicit mixed responses from the audience, and that they are used to substantiate diametrically opposite causes.
- The existing research rejects the notion of “preordained” response. Rather, it points to the fact that “news photographs can trigger a complex set of cognitive and affective processes, and that these intertwine closely throughout people’s mental frameworks to shape information processing and decision making” (Domke et al. 2002, 149; cf. Conover and Feldman, 1986; Marcus and MacKuen, 1993). These findings derive from the understanding of cognitive processes involved in information processing, storing and appropriation based on the concept

of schema as a central organising unit of perception – an issue that will be presented in more detail below.

- Additionally, some authors criticise commonsense notions of the efficacy of photojournalism as well as scholarly inquiry into the matter, on the grounds that both uncritically limit themselves to the study of short-term effects<sup>166</sup> and fail to recognise that news images can have a life beyond “the breaking news and elite political spin” (Andén-Papadopoulos 2008, 16). Andén-Papadopoulos convincingly shows how the efficacy of the Abu Ghraib photographs as facilitators of public debate about US military involvement in Iraq depended to a large extent on their appropriation by activists, street artists etc., who continued to use these images after they were removed from the dominant media spotlight: “Such images may evoke a wide range of responses besides the ‘outrage’ that Perlmutter looks for, and they might contribute to gradual alteration of attitude even if they do not cause people to categorically shift their position for or against a given policy” (Andén- Papadopoulos 2008, 11). The power of photographs to shift opinions seems to be dependent not so much on their explicit content but on how this content resonates with already existing attitudes or opinions on a given issue. They thus act as powerful crystallisers and motivators of public debate. This dependency of their power on already established positions is itself already indicated by the types of images that most commonly become images that move nations – they are not “regular” news photographs but *icons* and thus function not as straightforward records but as metonymies and summations (and interpretations) of events, and work particularly effectively when they have cultural resonance or evoke primordial themes (e.g. Griffin 1999, Perlmutter 1998, Zelizer 2004b). Rather than simply instilling pictures into our heads, photojournalism pictures appeal to “pictures in our heads”, to borrow Lippmann's (1922) famous phrase.

For a number of years, media and communication studies have emphasised the importance of the individual's (pre-existing) mental categories and values in the process of information selection, perception and retrieval. The cognitive and affective dimensions of the individual's meaning-making are particularly salient in studies on agenda-setting, priming and framing – though most of this research (particularly large-sample studies of news reporting and experiments on perception/interpretation) exhibits a marked preference for textual stimuli or the unit of analysis, leaving the role of visual images virtually unexamined. Collectively, the results of existing studies on the efficacy of visuals presented above point to the fact that, as with processing of text or speech, images are not encountered and processed as isolated

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<sup>166</sup> Conversely, the work of Griffin (1999), Sturken (1997), Zelizer (1998) and others continuously points to the long-term effects on the shaping of public consciousness and collective memory.

stimuli but are evaluated in relation to pre-existing beliefs and experiences, i.e. *schema*, defined as "general cognitive mental plans, that are abstract [...] and serve as guides for action, as structures for interpreting information, as organised networks for solving problems" (Fiske and Taylor 1991 in Domke et. al.2002, 134). In particular, images appear to be potent "triggers" of an individual's mental frameworks, they have the ability to activate "considerations in a manner that fosters a spreading activation process through the mind as individuals evaluate a social and political environment" (Ibid., 148) that bypass or precede rational cognition. In short, they have powerful potential to act as news frames, guiding the processes of information selection, interpretation and retrieval, a role that will be addressed in detail in the subsequent section.

## 4.2 Images as Framing Devices

The link between photojournalism and framing is thus not formed by the increased salience an article receives if it is accompanied by photographs or through the often emphasised fact that photographs essentially operate through "framing" of reality, but stems from the theory of a socially shared, internalised method of information processing, most often referred to as *schema(ta)*.

According to the associative network model (see Anderson and Bower 1973, Collins and Lofus 1975), memory is an organised network of concepts. These concepts or nodes are linked through associative pathways, the nodes can be more or less readily available, and associative pathways between them can vary in their weakness or strength. The individuals do not process, store and retrieve information in their totality but resort to "shortcuts", such as comparing new information to already existing organising principles in the network of concepts (*schemata*), which also structure information retrieval and its subsequent adaptations. Internal knowledge networks "learn" to represent a "central tendency" of a given category of information and ignore uncorrelated information as "noise" (McClelland and Rumelhart 1989). Or, as Ajzen and Sexton put it: "Only certain features of our experiences are stored in long-term memory and the retrieval of information [...] is an active process that involves inferences and reconstructions of the experiences in question. [...] Memories are not stored in isolation, but in relation to other mental constructs. They are grouped with similar

ideas and organised under superordinate categories” (1999, 118). For communication research, this suggests that media can have relatively strong indirect effects on individuals’ perception and opinion formation if they can (1) trigger the associations between concepts or (2) by making certain concepts appear more accessible than others by means of repetition. The former effects are generally referred to as *framing*, while the latter are termed *priming*, although recently, in much of the related literature, *priming* has become subsumed within a broader notion of *agenda-setting*.

Although framing research is an increasingly popular approach in the study of media effects (see Weaver 2007) and marks – along with studies of agenda-setting and priming – the latest paradigm shift in political communication and effects research (Scheufele and Tewksbury 2007, see also McQuail 2005), it remains a contested and “fractured” (Entman 1993) paradigm. Due to its fragmentation, a number of authors have attempted to structure this growing field of empirical research according to theoretical underpinnings, levels of analysis, type of effects etc. (Scheufele 1999, D’Angelo 2002, Tewksbury and Scheufele 2008, Reese 2003), and the opening part of this section will serve to situate the present study within the existing maps of framing research, thereby outlining and acknowledging the employed and implied theoretical premises of my research design.

#### **4.2.1 Mapping the field I: typologies and implied theoretical premises**

Tewksbury and Scheufele (2008, 17) have defined various approaches to framing according to *disciplinary origins* and *explanatory models* of envisaged effects. They trace the disciplinary origins of framing to the micro level of psychological approaches and the macro-level orientation of sociological approaches. The former presupposes that an individual’s judgements and perceptions occur within certain “frames of reference” (Sherif 1967), which implies that “a given piece of information will be interpreted differently, depending on which interpretative schema an individual applies. More importantly, different interpretative schemas can be invoked by framing the same message in different ways” (Ibid. 18). Macro-level approaches build on (cause-effect) attribution theory (Heider 1959/1982, Heider and Simmel 1944) and Goffman’s (1974/1986) frame analysis, according to which individuals classify (new) information in accordance with “primary frameworks”, which Goffman defined as relatively stable and socially shared category systems. My research is situated within the macro-level tradition, which treats framing as “modes of presentation that journalists and

other communicators use to present information in a way that resonates with existing underlying schemas among their audience” (Scheufele and Tewksbury 2007, 12).

In terms of *envisaged effects*, Tewksbury and Scheufele introduce a division between “applicability” and “other effects models” that separates framing from “other processes and effects that bear at least a passing resemblance to framing effects and, very likely, occur in parallel to framing” (2008, 19). Frames are basically devices that build or strengthen the associations between concepts, and framing effects are “perhaps most visible in what people think is important about an issue or relevant to understanding it” (Ibid., 20, cf. Nelson et al 1997), which implies that framing effects are interpretational rather than attitudinal effects. They work by building associations and hence work through the *applicability* of information, ideas or images to a certain concept or issue (Price and Tewksbury 1997, Nelson et al 1997). In contrast, other similar media effects approaches such as agenda-setting or priming are based on *accessibility*. Thus priming works through making (more frequently) repeated information more accessible in the individual’s mind and hence “increases the likelihood that people will base subsequent evaluations on their thoughts about the issue” (Brewer et al. 2003, 494). The applicability/accessibility criteria can also serve as a rationale through which one can defend framing’s separate status from agenda-setting or priming. In recent years, some have claimed (e.g. McCombs 1997) that framing could be subsumed within the wider umbrella of agenda-setting, i.e. that framing is merely a second-level or second stage effect of agenda setting.<sup>167</sup> Scheufele and Tewksbury reject this position on the grounds of locus of effect, insisting that the difference between the two corresponds to the one “between *whether* we think about an issue and *how* we think about it” (2007, 14, original emphasis; cf. Scheufele 2000, Pan and Kosicki, 1993). Or, as Price and Tewksbury claim: “Agenda setting [sic] looks on story selection as a determinant of public perceptions of issue importance and, indirectly through priming, evaluations of political leaders. Framing focuses not on *which topics or issues are selected* for coverage by the news media, but instead on the *particular ways* those issues *are presented*” (1997, 184, my emphasis). Although image analysis will not deal directly with the effects of images on audience perception, the envisaged effects of photojournalism in connection to national identity are those of applicability effects.

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<sup>167</sup> While the debate currently seems to have been resolved in favour of framing’s separate status (e.g. Weaver 2007), Entman recently even argued a contrasting case – that agenda-setting is actually “another name for successfully performing the first function of framing.” (2007, 164).

Scheufele (1999) introduces a distinction between framing studies that treat framing as a dependent or as an independent variable of research. He discusses these in terms of *frame building* and *frame setting*. Frame building (a dependent variable) focuses on how intrinsic factors influence the production of news, and Scheufele suggests a set of five factors that can influence the framing of news: “social norms and values, organizational pressures and constraints, pressure from interest groups, journalistic routines and the ideological or political orientation of journalists” (1999, 109). Zhou and Moy emphasise that these internal factors should be complemented with consideration of interactions “between the political system, the public and the media”, pointing out how “political culture and social values on news construction have remained significant” and underscore “the roles of prevailing ideology, governmental stances, and national interest in framing international news” (2007, 82). In connection with international news reporting, perceived national interest proved to be one of the key factors determining the framing of news reporting (Yang 2003; Lee and Yang 1995), along with political ideology (e.g. Wang 1992, Pan et. al 1999, Akhavan-Majid & Ramaprasad 2000, Reta 2000, Rachlin 1988). Frame setting, on the other hand, operationalises framing as a theory of media effects that have an impact on attitudes, opinions and frames of individuals, as a result influencing individuals’ perception and interpretation of a given issue and thus shaping political decision-making and public opinion (e.g. Entman 1991, Pan and Kosicki 1993). My work is situated within the frame-building side of framing approaches.

Finally, D’Angelo (2002) discerns three perspectives within framing research which he labels *cognitive*, *constructivist* and *critical*. He describes the difference between the three in terms of “hard-core conjectures” about framing. Since this thesis positions that “political power is not distributed in a pluralist way” and that “news frames ultimately constrict political reality” while still leaving “the door open for individuals to cognitively mediate the power of news frames”, it would be best positioned within D’Angelo’s *critical* perspective, which essentially emphasises the strong influence of frames on a given society. However, the precise pinpointing of the present study within D’Angelo’s framework is not crucial, as his categories are intended for the classification of studies that examine framing effects, while my analysis will engage with the representational aspect of framing and thus falls into what D’Angelo termed “content-only” studies.

The purpose of this rudimentary positioning of my project on the provisional maps of the fractured field of framing research was, in fact, twofold. It outlined the implied presuppositions on the nature of framing effects, and this in turn outlined the contours of the employed working definition of framing that will be presented in the section below. A detailed definition of framing is needed not only because of paradigm's fragmentation<sup>168</sup>, but because the visual component is generally neglected in framing studies,<sup>169</sup> leaving my project with few direct references on which to build.

#### **4.2.2 Mapping the field II: in search of a working definition of framing**

The present study uses framing as a theoretical and methodological framework for the analysis of representations of Slovene national identity in press photography. The applied concept of frames is derived from Entman's definition of frames as "information-processing schemata" (Entman 1991, 7) that operate through *salience* – "selecting and highlighting some features of reality while omitting others" (Entman 1993, 53), by the conscious or unconscious prioritising of selected concepts, keywords, symbols, metaphors and visual images.

Such understanding of frames as mechanisms for selection, and consequently for the inclusion/exclusion of information, resonates throughout most of the theorising about framing. Thus Giltin defines frames as "principles of *selection*, *emphasis* and *presentation* composed of little tacit theories about what exists, what happens and what matters" (1980, 6, my emphasis). Similarly, Gamson and Modigliani claim that "frame is a *central organizing idea* for making sense of relevant events and suggesting what is at issue" (1989, 35; my emphasis), while Tankard et al. similarly describe media framing as "the central organizing idea for news content that supplies a context and suggests what the issue is through the use of *selection*, *emphasis*, *exclusion*, and *elaboration*" (1991, 277; my emphasis).

In an often quoted definition, Entman outlines four basic functions of framing:

"To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a

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<sup>168</sup> As Cappella and Jamieson put it, the idea of framing "has been used in different ways in several different disciplines to mean different things [with different] outcomes." (1997, 39; my insertion)

<sup>169</sup> Even though most conceptualisations of framing emphasise the notion of salience and list images as one of the "framing devices", their systematic inclusion in framing or priming analysis (e.g. Entman 1991) is still the exception rather than the rule.



particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described.” (1993, 52)

Similarly, Hertog and McLeod claim that the frame determines the relevance of available information (1995, 4). These particularities are given greater relevance than they would receive under an alternative frame (Nelson et al. 1997), thus providing “interpretational background by which the story is judged” (Graber 1989, 146), selecting a potential reality out of “a kaleidoscope of potential realities, any of which can be readily evoked by altering the ways in which observations are framed and categorized” (Edelman, 1993, 232).

In an attempt to provide a working definition of framing, Reese offers the following consensual definition: “Frames are *organizing principles* that *are* socially *shared* and *persistent* over time, that work *symbolically* to meaningfully *structure* the social world” (2003, 11, original emphasis). His definition emphasises several important aspects of framing that can serve as a starting point for image analysis. Frames (1) serve to organise information and (2) achieve this by providing identifiable patterns or structures of varying complexity. They are (3) based on abstract principles and ideas and are (4) consequently discernible in symbolic forms of expression. In order to be functional, frames (5) must be shared (at least on some level) by members of a given group or society and are (6) persistent – their value lies in their durability, persistency and routinisation over longer periods of time (Ibid.).

There are three more points that must be raised in defining framing which are not explicitly delineated in Reese’s definition (but which are implied in his understanding of framing elsewhere). First, framing is an activity in which different social actors are actively engaged. Frames are actively produced “structures [of meaning] that draw boundaries, set up categories, define some ideas as out and others in, and generally operate to snag related ideas in their net in an active process” (Reese 2007, 215). This makes framing a process within which social actors compete for definition of mediated social reality. These groups include government bodies, political parties, NGOs, interest groups and civil society movements. While these groups<sup>170</sup> compete for media attention and promotion of a particular definition from “a kaleidoscope of potential realities”, the media should by no means be seen as passive receivers of these power struggles. Journalists are, as Giltin has emphasised, not simply

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<sup>170</sup> Instead of groups, Miller and Parnell Riechert (2003, 109) use the term *stakeholders* in order to refer to “individuals and groups in the policy-making process that ‘stand to win or lose as a result of a policy decision’”.

promoters but also routine producers of frames<sup>171</sup>: framing is an information processing mechanism “by which symbol-handlers routinely organize discourse, whether verbal or visual” (1980, 7), as they transform information into news.

Secondly, the processional nature of framing implies that frames are not unchanging constructs but that they develop across time. This is particularly evident in cases of novel events or topics, as “early in the life of an issue a dominant frame may not have taken hold” (Reese 2003, 17), especially if reported content can not be immediately subsumed within one of the salient, pre-existing frames. Miller and Parnell Riechert (2003, 111-113) define three stages of the framing process: (1) *the definition/conflict phase*, in which social actors try to gain media attention and establish “a specific point of view as an appropriate frame for the issue”, and often the conflict between these actors and their frames is the main driving force of news coverage; (2) *the resonance phase*, during which a particular frame becomes ascendant when it “resonate[s] with the values and experiences of the public”, which leads contending groups “to adjust their rhetoric”; (3) *the equilibrium or resolution phase*, which is marked by the establishment of a dominant frame. “The winning frame can so dominate that others are delegitimized and given no credence in the media and public discourse. When this occurs, the dominant frame could be said to be acting hegemonically, rendering ‘natural’ the prevailing definition of the situation.” (Miller and Parnell Riechert 2003, 113) This does not mean that opposition to the dominant frame has ceased but only that it has at least temporarily lost its salience in mediatised public debate. New events can challenge the dominant frame, opening it up for contestation, or simply increase its complexity or coherence. Entman similarly discerns three stages of the framing process which he terms as *frame parity*, *frame contestation* and *frame dominance* (2004, 48). Frame parity is both a state and a stage of contending frames that provide complete alternative narratives, “a tale of problem, cause, remedy and moral judgment” of fairly equal magnitude and resonance. Frame contestation is a transitory stage in which social and political actors struggle for acceptance of their problem definition, while frame dominance marks the outcome of these struggles and is seen as their ultimate goal. As Entman elaborates: “The framing of a given matter over a defined time period can be arrayed along a continuum, from complete dominance by one frame to a complete standoff between competing frames”, noting that “one among the potential frames of a situation [can] so thoroughly dominate the media that developing alternative readings

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<sup>171</sup> Cf. Tuchman 1978, Gans 1979/1980.

becomes difficult for most people” (Ibid., 47). A recent Slovene example of very salient contestation of frames was the 2004 pre-referendum debates on the Erased (Izbrisani), in which right-wing political parties managed to frame the debate in terms of financial compensation and patriotism, as opposed to frames of basic human rights and the rule of law (abiding by the ruling of the constitutional court). Another example that involved a more explicit use of photojournalism for the promotion of frames was the 2006 Israeli attack on Lebanon: numerous cases of problematised depiction could in fact be seen as an effort by Hezbollah activists to promote a humanitarian frame for the interpretation of the conflict, and its activists were engaged in the staging and directing of events (attending to casualties of bombings, mourning of relatives) and re-arranging of scenes (e.g. planting children’s toys among ruined buildings) that prioritised the humanitarian aspect (civilian victims).<sup>172</sup> The relative power of certain frames and their ability to become the dominant ones depends in part on their resonance with shared beliefs, but also on power relations between the competing groups and social actors that promote them. Frames could be seen as indicators of power, since the ability of their placement bears “the imprint of power” (Entman 1993, 55). Ruling elites, particularly governing administrations, seem to be the most powerful stakeholders in the process: they speak from the position of arbiters and policy-makers, are privileged sources of information and exert great direct and indirect influence over information through the so called information subsidies, such as press releases and press kits. As noted already by Tuchman (1978) and Giltin (1980), media routines favour elite opinion and official sources of information.

Thirdly, frames do not only develop and change over time but also operate on different levels of generalisation and specificity. Thus several authors distinguish between macro-level frames, also referred to as journalistic, master frames (Snow and Benford 1992), and meta-frames (Wolfsfeld 1997) or enduring (cultural) frames that could possibly be applicable across different events (Gamson and Modigliani 1989). Examples of these would be archetypal themes such as the struggle between good and evil, or presenting events in terms of oppositions (e.g. political demonstrations as a confrontation between law and chaos or a confrontation between the forces of repression and freedom). The more specific, event or topic-related frames are positioned within these general frames and social actors often

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<sup>172</sup> Similarly, activities of conservative activist-bloggers (e.g. <http://littlegreenfootballs.com/weblog/>) who unmasked these “interventions” were part of promoting competing frame of interpretation (conspiracy against Israel).

struggle to secure the explicit connection between the two levels, i.e. to connect their specific interpretation with a resonating primordial theme. A good recent example would be former US President George W Bush's framing of the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, which bore the distinctive logic of what Said (1979/1994) termed Orientalism (specific frame), as a part of the global Manichean (and melodramatic – Brooks 1976/1995) struggle between the forces of good and evil (general frame).

### **4.2.3 Mapping the field III: Framing and national identity**

The particular usefulness of the proposed understanding of framing for the study of visual representations of national identity derives from its emphasis on a selective interpretation of reality that is based on shared, culture-based schemes of cognition. Photographs, with their interpretative ambivalence (outlined in Chapter 2), their suggestive power of affective meanings (Chapter 4), and their ability to communicate symbolic or implied relations between subjects (Chapter 2) and express 'things' that can not be fully expressed in words (Chapter 2 and 4), seem to be particularly valuable "framing devices" for the communication of abstract principles and ideas of national belonging. National identity is a set of shared basic orientations which act as broader interpretative schemas that Goffman (1974/1986) termed "primary frameworks". Tewksbury and Scheufele emphasise that media discourse is often "tailored towards specific primary frameworks in order to influence audience interpretations" (2008, 18), particularly in times of national crisis (e.g. conflicts, wars, economic crisis, crisis of fundamental cultural values etc.), or during periods of identity-building (e.g. in the newly founded or 'restructured' states). Similarly, Entman speaks of frames in relation to *culture*, which he describes as a "stock of commonly invoked frames" (1993, 53). Such a broad understanding of culture inevitably implies that at least part of this repertoire of possible frames is shaped by mechanisms and themes that permeate the process of national identification.

Moreover, national identity and framing are explicitly linked through the concept of ideology. Akhavan-Majid and Ramaprasad, for example, point out how definitions of ideology tend to be very similar to those of framing,<sup>173</sup> claiming that "[b]oth frames and ideologies provide the people in a given society with a framework within which to interpret events, define problems,

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<sup>173</sup> Thus Hall defines ideology as "the mental frameworks – the languages, the concepts, categories, imagery of thought, and the systems of representation – which different classes and social groups deploy in order to make sense of, define, figure out, and render intelligible the way society works." (1986, 29)

diagnose causes, and seek remedies” (2000, 48; cf. Entman 1993). Both are thus highly value-laden and interpretative processes which, although “realised” on the level of the individual, work through collectively shared and maintained understandings. Similarly to dominant frames, certain ideologies come out of hegemonic struggles as “preferred rationalities and schemes of cognition within the collective culture of society” (Ibid., 49). Akhavan-Majid and Ramaprasad outline three types of ideology that can exert primary influence on the framing of news: *dominant ideology*, *elite ideology* and *journalistic* or ‘*occupational*’ *ideology* (Ibid., 48). Although the three have a tendency towards covariation, tensions between them are not unexceptional. Thus elite ideology, which they define as “a particular ideology or policy orientation on the part of government or the administration in power at any given time” (Ibid.), can differ from the dominant ideology of a given society, while journalistic ideology can stipulate conflicting imperatives with either of them (e.g. opposing the nationalism and xenophobia of a dominant ideology or policy orientation pursued by a given political elite). Within this tripartite division, national identity is an integral part of dominant ideology, and Akhavan-Majid and Ramaprasad’s research has shown that in international news reporting, the dominant national ideology functions as a major source of framing. As they emphasise:

Although individual journalists can, and sometimes do succeed in stepping outside such ideological boundaries, their overwhelming tendency to draw upon ideologically driven frames serves as a powerful mechanism by which dominant ideology is transmitted and perpetuated through news media. (2000, 57)

Similarly, comparative analysis of international news reporting found that, apart from the criteria implied in news values and other complementary concepts, contextual factors such as *political ideology*, *diplomatic sensitivity* and *perceived national interest* play a major role in framing international news (Yang 2003, 232, cf. Lee and Yang 1995, Entman 2004). Yang, for example, even argues that national interest could and should be treated as an independent framing variable of news reporting, particularly in international news:

Ideology may share some overlapping meanings and implications with national interest. However, in terms of definition and usage, national interest differs from ideology considerably. While ideology concerns a person’s, an organization’s or a nation’s value or belief system, national interest is more closely related to a nation’s standing in dealing with international affairs. (2000, 233)

Drawing on Nye's definition of national interest as "a set of shared priorities regarding relations with the rest of the world", Yang points to a "close relationship between national interest and foreign policies in international affairs" (Ibid.). However, Yang's distinction between national interest and ideology might not be as revealing and universal as the author presupposes. Perhaps in terms of Akhavan-Majid and Ramaprasad's tripartite scheme, it would be more pertinent to introduce a distinction between national identity that would be more closely related to dominant ideology, and national interest that has a more concrete and specific policy aspect and is thus closer to what Akhavan-Majid and Ramaprasad termed elite ideology. It is very likely, however, that such a precise distinction between the two might not be discernible in all societies or during all historical periods. In cases where societies are engaged in practising explicit forms of nationalism, the two categories would most often converge. The relation between national identity, framing and structuring of international news reporting will be further addressed in Chapter 8.

To sum up, the proposed definition of framing, its underlying theoretical premises and envisaged effects support its use as an analytical framework for investigation of visual representations of national identity on several levels. First, frames which resonate with a stock of shared, culture-based meanings are routinely used in news reporting. Secondly, as a process, framing operates in a similar manner to the central mechanisms of collective identity construction and maintenance. The next chapter will consequently analyse Slovene national identity as a discursive formation in a manner that will allow the isolation of its privileged discursive elements as individual news frames. Moreover, images were shown to be particularly potent – though analytically undervalued and neglected – framing devices, particularly due to their communicative mode that is best described as that of excess: a strong emotive/irrational component, communication of things that elude verbalisation, and implying connections or (moral) evaluations in a seemingly neutral and objective mode of address.

## 5 NATIONAL IDENTIFICATION

*We tend to write about national identity as if the second term were not problematic, as if everyone ought to have identities or to have certain kinds of identities, and not too much of some of them.* Katherine Verdery, *Wither 'Nation' and 'Nationalism'?*

*National identity is not a theory but a leisure time practice.* Carlos Monsivais, *Junto contigo le doy un aplauso al placer y al amor*

During the last three decades, the concept of *identity* and its particular collective derivate, *national identity*, have gained astounding popularity, not only within various areas of social science<sup>174</sup> but also outside academia, thriving in everyday political, media and popular culture discourses. This popularisation, however, has not been entirely beneficial to the study of the phenomena in question. It has, to borrow Schöpflin's vivid description, among some insightful works produced "its share of weak analysis, dubious emphases, misunderstandings, the projection of one's own agendas on to others, the failure to appreciate the complexity of culture driven politics and just plain nonsense" (2001, 1). In a way, the concept of *identity* has been simultaneously overused and undertheorised, thus becoming "a grand umbrella term to contain all the unexplained and constantly emerging phenomena of our times in a single word" (Malešević 2002, 212), to the extent that it has been declared as useless for social analysis (Brubaker and Cooper 2000).<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> For a succinct summary of this process see Brubaker and Cooper (2000).

<sup>175</sup> The notion of *national identity* is subjected to two different lines of "terminological critique". Some authors, like Brubaker and Cooper (2000), focus on the ambiguity and impreciseness of "identity talk", and propose the use of more specific and descriptive terms that are closer to the nature of the analysed phenomena, such as *identification*, *categorisation*, *self-understanding*, *social location*, *commonality*, *connectedness* or *groupness*. They argue that conceptualising all forms of belonging, experiences of commonality and connectedness under the concept of *identity* produces a "conceptual melting pot" whose output, the notion of *identity*, consequently bears a multivalent and contradictory "theoretical burden" that manifests itself in at least five different uses of the term within contemporary writings on identity (Ibid.). The other line of "terminological critique" comes from the constructivist tradition, where authors such as Hall (1992, 1996/2000) and Bhabha (1990/2000) point to the ineptness of the term *identity*, as it fails to capture the fluidity of identity-creating and -maintaining processes and purports the essentialist notion that identity is a finished, readily available product. In Bhabha's words: "[I]dentity is never *a priori*, nor a finished product; it is only ever the problematic process of access to an image of totality" (1990/2000, 99-100). Accepting the arguments of both strands of "terminological critique" of the concept of *identity*, I will, when applicable, use the term *identification* instead of its vaguer cousin, *identity*, although admittedly reserving some scepticism regarding the beneficial consequences of such re-terminologisation, because of the widespread unreflected use of the term, both outside academia as well as in

The extensive literature on the field is characterised by a great deal of terminological and theoretical inconsistencies. Authors of texts on nations and nationalism routinely use the term *national identity* without specifically defining it or delimiting its use. National identity has become a popular buzzword and authors have a tendency to use it in a commonsense manner, producing an illusion of consensus about its meaning and along with it a great deal of theoretical confusion. National identification has rarely been treated on its own terms – as a process of specific collective belonging<sup>176</sup> – but has most often been embedded or subsumed within writings on *nationalism*<sup>177</sup>, and its use does not always reveal whether it is being used for describing allegiance to the nation (as a community) or to the state (as a polity).

In recent years, attempts to form a universal theory of nationalism have— much like those of theorising photography – been abandoned due to the "complexity of empirical issues"<sup>178</sup> (Smith 1994, 392). As with theorising photography, the field has remained divided into two contrasting camps, most often labelled *primordialists* (or *perennialists*) and *modernists*. Typically, the works assigned to the primordialist camp conceive national identity as a given, innate and biological characteristic of a certain group. This position dates back to Romanticism and to the works of Fichte, Herder, Lord Acton, Mazzini and others, who spoke of *Volksgeist*, the "souls" and "spiritual essences" of nations. This essentialist notion of nations and national identity is contrasted with a more "constructivist" notion that sees nations not as a given but as outcomes of social action and (ongoing) processes of imagining. While this tradition is generally attributed to recent authors such as Ernest Gellner (1983), Benedict Anderson (1983/1991), Eric Hobsbawm (1983/2003) or Tom Narin (1977), some of the basic premises of their arguments were in fact proposed much earlier by authors such as Otto Bauer (1907/1996) or Ernest Renan (1882/2001).

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many areas of social studies as well. It is my belief that the major problem of "identity talk" is still in its theoretical underdevelopment, in its everyday "commonsense" use, as will be shown below.

<sup>176</sup> Thus texts on national identity fail, for the most part, to provide more than a superficial sketch of the mechanisms through which collective identity is constructed at the level of its primary unit, the individual. More often, they answer the "what" question rather than those of "how" and "why". Even such authoritative works as Smith's *National identity* (1991) at times tend to blur the line between national identity and nation.

<sup>177</sup> This subsumption under the heading of *nationalis* has a highly problematic consequence – that studies on national identification are with but few exceptions limited to the non-Western geographical and cultural space and limited to their malign forms and manifestations. As Billig points out, "nationalism is often associated with those who struggle to create new states or with extreme right-wing politics" (2001/1995, 5), instead of being treated as an "endemic condition" of both established and establishing states, in other words, as an everyday cultural phenomenon.

<sup>178</sup> A fairly large number of theories about nations and nationalism appear to suffer from a variant of "Eurocentrism" or "Westcentrism" – they fail to explain the emergence of nationalism outside Europe, or in some cases, outside the Western "core" of Europe (e.g. Chatterjee 1996).



However, this strict bi-polar division has recently grown less and less effective, partly because of the abandonment of the project of unitary theory of nationalism and partly because most contemporary authors tend to agree on at least the partial constructedness and invention of nations, differing mainly over estimates of the recency of these inventions and imaginings. The division as such appears to say more about the difference in scientific and popular understanding of the subject, whereas the latter still remains deeply embedded within the essentialist perspective. What the first part of this chapter will offer is an attempt to 'think nations' beyond the entrenchments of the aforementioned divisions by focusing not on nations or nationalism but on consistent theorising of national *identity* as *identification* – a process with interlaced individual and collective dimensions. The second part of the chapter will build on the outlined essential characteristics of collective identities by conceptualising the boundary of Slovene national identification through seven privileged discursive elements that structure its (institutionalised) discursive articulations. These seven privileged discursive elements will be presented in detail, as they will serve as frames for the analysis of visual material in Chapter 6 and 7.

Due to the varying use of terminology in related literature, a brief terminological clarification is needed at this point. I use *national identity* and *national identification* to mark a sort of basic structural grid that enables and defines the articulation of collective identification, as well as the resulting feeling of belonging to a particular collectivity. *Nation* stands for the emerging collectivity of these identification processes (as an outcome) as well as the sum of individuals, groups and institutions that carry out these processes from within (as subject). The concepts of national identity and nationalism are not identical or interchangeable with *nationalism*, which I understand as a form of ideology that articulates the ideas and concepts of nation<sup>179</sup> and national identity by transforming them into explicit political claims of unalienable, exclusive or even sacrosanct rights of a particular collectivity, usually linked with territorial claims or claims for independent administration of certain territories.<sup>180</sup> Although the three phenomena are interlinked and their mutual influences intertwined, they are not

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<sup>179</sup> Acting as ideology, nationalism implies two general principles as "natural" and "inevitable" when it comes to nations: first, that nations should possess their own state (or at least extensive autonomy), and secondly, that the world is comprised of an international system of nation states. Nationalism thus "names the relation between states and their subjects" as well as "between states and other states". (Verdery, 1996: 227; see also Smith 1991, Billig 1995/2001)

<sup>180</sup> Contrary to popular belief, not all nationalistic movements strive toward political independence in the form of a sovereign state – in Catalonia and Wales, for example, the nationalistic movements (currently) strive for greater independence within the boundaries of the existing state.

reciprocal – while nationalism necessarily depends on the elements of the former two, national identity and nation are not necessarily nationalistic *per se*.

## 5.1 The nature of individual and collective identifications

In an attempt to move beyond the entrenchments described above and provide a clear conceptual framework for the notion of national identification used in this thesis, I shall embrace a more inclusive definition of national identification proposed by Richard Jenkins in *Social Identity* (1996) and *Rethinking Ethnicity* (1997). In short, Jenkins sees national identification (identity) as one of the forms of social identities and as a particular socio-historical allotrope of ethnic identification (ethnicity), whose function is the social organisation of cultural difference through culture and interaction.

This conceptualisation of national identity (or national identification) is built around the notion that social identities are not given, inborn, unitary and static, but rather emerge in the form of a narrative of the self through unconscious processes of meaning-making over time and in relation to particular social context and its limitations. Although they may be experienced as unitary or "whole" by individuals or parts of societies, identities are temporary fixations of intersecting discourses that produce multiple, even contradictory identities that individuals internalise and re-negotiate in the passing of time. The construction of identities is therefore a process of active construction, of "imagining" self and others that develops through the processes of socialisation and is constructed and maintained in the "embodied habits of social life" (Hall, 1992; Jenkins, 1996; Billig 1995/2001 etc.).

Such an understanding of (collective) identities argues against the drawing of sharp distinctions between individual and collective identities – between individual self and society – which frequently implies that collective identities are formed by “some sort of psychological or conceptual coming together of individuals, each of whom is pre-equipped with a personal self-identity” (Mannell 1994, 176). Rather, it builds on the notion of similarity of the individual and social identifications: “each is routinely related to – or, better perhaps, entangled with – the other; that the processes by which they are produced, reproduced and

changed are analogous; and that both are intrinsically social” (Jenkins 1996, 19; original emphasis).

Jenkins argues that we can and should approach both types of identities (individual and collective) through a unitary theoretical model (which he calls the internal-external dialectic of identification), since both processes of identification operate in a similar manner – both are intrinsically social and both are based on a dialectics of internal and external definitions.

The emphasis on the *social nature* of identities is not of recent origin and can be found in the works of authors as diverse as Karl Marx, George Herbert Mead, C.H. Cooley, Jacques Lacan, Erving Goffman and many others. Although there are undeniable differences between their respective concepts of consciousness, selfhood, identity or self-image, they all share a general strand of argument that the individual's identity obtains meaning only in and through the process of connection to the social world of other people. Thus Marx in his famous passage in the preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* emphasised that consciousness develops as a consequence of social (inter)action: "It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness" (Marx 1859/1977, 1). From the point of identifications, this means that identity does not precede social (inter)action but is in fact its product. In a somewhat similar manner, Mead claimed that "the part is explained in terms of the whole, not the whole in terms of the part or parts" (Mead 1934/1977, 7). In other words, it is society that "explains" the individual and not vice versa. According to Mead, mind and self arise in a social process and selfhood emerges as a synthesis of internal as well as external definitions of self provided by significant others. Comparatively, Goffman's work on identity is based on the notion of interactive negotiation of private (backstage) and public (front stage) identities; the individual is a social construct consisting of acts of performing these identities that fundamentally depend on their recognition by Others (1959/1990). From a different perspective, Lacan, in his discussion of the "mirror stage", argues that the self can only be formed in "the look of the Other", i.e. in the individual's relationship to the symbolic systems that exist outside himself or herself and which are, inevitably, products of society. Hall (1992/2003, 288) paraphrases Lacan by saying that, like the unconscious, identities are also structured as language, where meaning arises not from the objects themselves but from the relations of similarity and difference between words within a socially existing code of language (cf. Saussure 1910/1997). However, this emphasis on pre-existing social reality and the constitutive role of others does not imply determinism in terms of "content" of the individual's identity, but only

with regard to the nature of its "formation". As Jenkins succinctly sums up: "Individuals are unique and variable, but selfhood is thoroughly socially constructed" (1996, 20).

There are two more points that stem from the premise of *social relationality* in relation to the general, unitary notion of identity formation processes that I need to consider before moving to more a specific characterisation of national identity: first, that identities are formed by internal as well as external processes of defining, and, secondly, that identities are not only about sameness but inherently also about differences.

As I indicated to a certain degree above, identities are constructed through an interplay of both internal and external definitions. In the case of groups or collectivities, internal definitions are self-ascriptions of groups and external definitions are categorisations of the group by other groups and collectivities. The latter are equally, and in some cases even more important for processes of identification, although, as Jenkins (1996, 23) points out, they have often been neglected or downplayed in theorisations on identity. External categorisation can serve as validation of an in-group's self-ascriptions. It can also serve as an equally powerful tool for defining the group by means of ascriptions from outside. Categorisation by out-groups can construct the identity of a group through ascriptions that run counter to the group's self-ascriptions, a phenomena that becomes very obvious when, for example, we compare autostereotypes of a nation with stereotypes about this nation by neighbouring nations. But even more importantly, categorisation by out-groups can construct a group with a certain identity and "reputation" without members of such a "group" actually experiencing a common sense of belonging, and without members of such a "group" recognising themselves as a group, which can often be the case with categorisations that are not based on national identities (eg. arbitrary regional identities, such as the Orient etc.). This highlights one of the central characteristics of identification in general and categorisation in particular – that it involves and is based on relations of power. An illustrative example of how the production of collective identifications through such external categorisation is embedded in power relations can be found in Said's (1979/1994) notion and critique of Orientalism.

Secondly, although identities are primarily (or are at least perceived as) markers of sameness, they are always simultaneously markers of difference. Like the notion of *social relationality* of identities, the dialectics of sameness and difference is not new in conceptualisations of identities and is, in fact, one of the few points of consensus among the variety of approaches

to identity. It can be traced in classical sociological or anthropological literature and is present very explicitly within social psychology. Social identification theories, for example, emphasise that social categories, by stressing who we are, always simultaneously indicate who we are not (Tajfel 1981). This can again be linked to the post-Saussurian understanding of meaning-making, best illustrated by Derrida's famous notion of *différance* as the very "possibility of conceptuality" as such. Derrida's claim that identity presupposes differences is based on the notion of the arbitrariness of signs<sup>181</sup> and the fact that "every concept is inscribed in a chain or system within which it refers to the other, to other concepts, by means of the systematic play of differences" (Derrida 1968/1982, 11).

The section above briefly outlines the basic model of identification, applicable to both types of identification processes – individual and collective. This kind of a "unitary" model of identification is needed because, with individuals, the processes of personal and collective identifications are intertwined and operate under the same basic structure, incorporating the same basic premises. This does not, however, negate the specific traits of each of the two types of identification nor their particular articulations or functions. To sum up, *social identifications* such as collective identities of groups or nations are basically ongoing processes of symbolic construction of relations of similarity and difference that provide the scheme or patterns for a more general model of meaning-making, of constituting the world as meaningful. *Individual identities* can in fact be seen as amalgams of an array of collective or social identifications, as their *personalised* and *evolving* narrativisations. These are (at least for the most part) subconscious cognitive and emotive processes that to a large extent depend on culturally and institutionally supplied and reified frameworks of meaning in the process of producing identity as a fantasy of the "whole" self. Using Althusser's (1971) terminology, we would talk of subjects' response to (and reworking of) the *interpellation* of ideological apparatuses.

## 5.2 National identity as ethnic identity

As was outlined above, social identities are individualised temporary renderings of an ongoing process of identification that produce and maintain certain feelings of belonging among

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<sup>181</sup> He argues that the "signs are arbitrary only because the system of signs is constituted solely by the differences in terms, not by their plenitude". (Derrida 1982, 10)

members of a group or collectivity. They are constructed in social processes (educational, cultural and political) primarily through the means of language, emotions and symbols, promoted and reified through the communication networks of social groups and institutions of state and civil society. Social identities are stratified, and most authors distinguish between primary and secondary identities. The first group or primary tier of identities consists of selfhood, gender and humanity, while the second tier is constituted from a colourful palette of feelings of belonging to geographical, occupational and interest groups. The location of ethnic and national identity in this scheme is somewhat contested. Jenkins (1997, 47) points out that although ethnicity is not a primary social identity, it can become one under "certain local circumstances". Similarly, its derivative of national identity is not normally regarded as a primary identity (e.g. Calhoun, 1994; Schöpflin 2001), although authors do acknowledge that under certain socio-political circumstances and for certain periods of time, national identity can override or displace other forms of primary and secondary social identities, such as those of gender or class.

Based on these presuppositions, I offer the following tentative definition of national identity, whose propositions and implications will be further developed in this section:

National identity as one of the forms of social identity is a particular socio-historical allotrope of ethnic identification (ethnicity), whose function is the social organisation of cultural difference through culture and interaction. National identity consists of internalised shared patterns of social differentiation that promote and elicit feelings of belonging to an imagined community. This community (nation) is understood as a community of destiny which includes both notions of communal shared past as well as anticipated future.

### **5.2.1 National identity is a particular socio-historical allotrope of ethnic identification (ethnicity).**

Contrary to the debates on the extent to which nations and nationalisms are grounded in ethnicity, I follow Jenkins' line of argument, which moves beyond Smith's influential thesis that, although nations are constructed, they are never invented from scratch but build on the foundations of pre-existing traditions. For Jenkins (1997, 10-11), ethnicity is the fundamental

organisational form of social groups, a product or group-ness. Building on the insights of Max Weber, Everett Hughes and Fredrik Barth, Jenkins claims that the existence of a particular group is not a reflection of its cultural difference. Cultural traits are not causes of difference but should rather be seen as points around which difference is articulated and organised. Barth (1969/1998) argued that "ethnicity is a matter of social organization above and beyond questions of empirical cultural differences" (1969/1998: 6), that ethnicity is primarily about the social organisation of culture difference that emerges from and within interaction between different groups. Shared culture is therefore the result of a group's boundary maintenance processes through negotiation of self-ascribed and other-ascribed characteristics, from what Jenkins (1997, 54-57) termed *group identification* and *social categorisation*. From such conceptualisation of culture and ethnicity as "neither static nor monolithic" (Jenkins 1997, 51) but potentially changeable and variable phenomena, national identity emerges as a historical specific manifestation of ethnicity.<sup>182</sup> It is to be understood as a specific organisation of a group's self-understanding, based around a shared and commonly understood set of criteria and symbols that demarcate the group's separate status, which emerged within a specific socio-historical setting and institutional contexts that determine its specific nature.

### **5.2.2 National identifications are internalised shared patterns of social differentiation.**

Although national identity is first and foremost a "collective cultural phenomenon" (Smith 1991, vii), it can exist outside of the consciousness of individuals. As Jenkins phrased it: "Even the most private of identities is not imaginable as anything other than the product of a socialized consciousness and a social situation. Even the most collective of identities must, in some sense, exist in the awareness of individual actors" (1997, 72). National identity is, however, not something that exists "objectively", outside the individual, something that people could "have", "possess" or "belong to". It is best understood as a set of internalised social repertoires of collective self-understanding, "imagined" and practised by the individuals. Billig notes in *Banal nationalism* that national identity is more than simply an inner psychological state or individual self definition: "it is a form of life, which is daily lived in the world of nation-states" (Billig 1995/2001, 68). Billig's emphasis on the "form of life" is crucial here: national identity is not only a way of talking about self and community but "is to be found in the embodied habits of social life" (Billig 1995/2001, 8). It is a complex repertoire

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<sup>182</sup> "The communal, the local, the national and the 'racial' are to be understood as historically and contextually specific social constructions on the basic ethnic theme, allotropes of ethnic identification." (Jenkins, 1997: 43)

"which people experience, use, learn and 'do' in their daily lives, within which they construct an ongoing sense of themselves and an understanding of their fellows" (Jenkins 1997, 14).

National identity essentially provides people with a sense of place in the world; it situates individuals geographically or physically, as well as linguistically, socially, legally, economically, politically and emotionally within a distinctive homeland, a nation-state. It also simultaneously contextualises the homeland nation-state within a world system of nation states. Bonds of solidarity form around at least four fundamental features of national identity: (1) historic territory or homeland; (2) common myths and historical memories; (3) a shared mass culture<sup>183</sup>, and in most cases (4) a shared language. These notions are utilised in the process of social differentiation (the group's boundary maintenance) that are internalised by individuals through their primary socialisation and continually perpetuated by state institutions or their functional equivalents. Although national identity emerges as an interaction and transaction between individual and collective (social), it is foremost an explicit and institutionalised project of the state<sup>184</sup> and its institutionalisation is necessary for achieving a sufficient level of homogeneity. As a specific form of ethnicity, national identity is by definition open to negotiation and change, but its institutionalisation ensures that "it is not infinitely variable, malleable or negotiable" (Jenkins 1997, 169).

### **5.2.3 This community (nation) is understood as a community of destiny.**

The understanding of nation as a community of belonging is two-fold; on the one hand, nation is a product of shared collective narrativisation, on the other, it is the sum of individuals (and institutions) that perform the narration. The existence of nation as a community is therefore not dependent on possession of a set of objective criteria (e.g. language, primordialist notion of ethnicity etc.) but on the idea, on the act of shared imagining. The use of the same language or sharing of geographical space, religion, social class or race does not inevitably and automatically generate a shared ethnic or cultural identity but has to undergo a collective act of imagining a "specific group as an actual entity" (Scheff 1994, 282). As Benedict Anderson

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<sup>183</sup> Smith (1991, 14) lists five essential features of national identity, adding to the aforementioned common legal rights and duties for all members and a common economy with territorial mobility for members. His conceptualisation of national identity is somewhat problematic, as he does not clearly distinguish between national identity and nation as its product. The national identity/nation that he outlines in the introduction to *National identity* is essentially that of established nations with already existing nation-states, since only those can fulfil all five criteria/characteristics, including common legislation and economy. These are precisely the two characteristics that emerging nations or nation-states (that heavily utilise national identity) lack and are striving to achieve.

<sup>184</sup> Or, in case of stateless nations, of intellectual elites and cultural or religious institutions.



points out, such imagining is a basic feature of collective identifications, since "all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined" and can only be distinguished by "the style in which they are imagined" (1983/1991, 6). One further point that Anderson makes is that this act of imagining can not be done by individuals alone but only through the mediation of some form of mass communication that produces awareness of commonality and shared (mass) culture. Anderson's argument that the act of imagining a bounded totality beyond immediate experience of place can only be achieved through some form of mass communication has been very influential, although it is by no means new. It can be traced back at least to an 1898 essay *Opinion and conversation*, in which Gabriel Tarde emphasised the role of mass communication in fostering a sense of awareness of belonging to a shared community. He saw the periodical press, and newspapers in particular,<sup>185</sup> as instrumental in forming awareness of the nation as a political community, due to its ritual, periodical re-creation of nation as an addressee of news. Similar emphasis on the role of mass communication in creating awareness of a political community can be found in 19<sup>th</sup>- and early 20<sup>th</sup>-century writings on politics and public opinion (see Splichal 1999) and was later explicated by Jürgen Habermas' *Structural transformations of the public sphere* (1962/1991). Although Habermas does not speak of nation but of a more abstract political category, the public, both *ethnos* and *demos*, are distinctly modern conceptualisations. Even though the emergence of nations can not be reduced solely to its political dimension, it has certainly been one of its most potent crystallising factors.<sup>186</sup> It is worth noting that *demos* was an exclusivist concept in at least two dimensions – that of *ethnos* and that of social class – and often, these two would overlap. Craig Calhoun explicitly points to the fact that the idea of a nation is intertwined with the rise of the modern concepts of public and democratic forms of government: "The idea of a nation was invoked early on not just against neighbouring peoples, but on behalf of "the people" against kings and emperors" (Calhoun 1994, 2). In his view, nations are by-products and nationalisms the negative side effects of the democratisation of states. Similarly, Keane sees nationalism as "the child of democratic pluralism" (1995, 191).

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<sup>185</sup> Tarde singles out the press, railways and the telegraph as the three factors that jointly contributed to the building of the awareness of *public* as a spiritually interconnected collectivity bounded by the (national) state through the power of the periodical press. (1898/1969)

<sup>186</sup> Ernest Gellner, for example, argued (1983) that it was principally economic conditions that led to the development of the phenomena of nations. However, the development of capitalism is – like that of nation – crucially linked to the development of communication, particularly of the periodic press (cf. Habermas 1962/1991).

The tentative definition of nation outlined above conceives nation not only as an imagined "community of belonging" but also as a "community of destiny". The notion of "community of destiny" that I take from Otto Bauer implies that members of a nation share the imagining not only of their present but also their past and future conditions. "Community of destiny does not mean just subjection to a common fate, but rather common experience of the same fate in constant communication and ongoing interaction with one another" (Bauer 1907/1996, 51). Thus for Bauer, the constitutive element of the nation is not so much shared destiny but its constant communication through "a process of becoming [a nation], whose nature is governed by the [cultural and economic] conditions under which people struggle for their necessities of life and maintain themselves" (Bauer 1907/1996, 56; my insertion). National identification produces the notion of nation as an enduring, unitary being and binds individuals with past and future generations, providing them with a feeling of solidarity and a sense of a place in the world (as space) and time (as history).<sup>187</sup> As Renan put it, nation is great solidarity constituted by sentiment which "implies past, but is summed up in the present [...] by a clearly expressed desire to live a common life" (1882/2001, 19). But Renan also did not fail to point out that such a feeling of shared history rests not so much on collective recollection of the past but on its selective amnesia.<sup>188</sup> Extending Renan's argument, Gellner (1994, 192) wrote that nations are constructed either through induced oblivion or created memory.

#### **5.2.4 Cogitation and concluding notes on national identity**

What emerges from what I have said above is an understanding of national identity as a multidimensional and perplexed process of identification that produces a sense of belonging, of solidarity with a particular collectivity. The function of national identity as a foundation of collective belonging and solidarity is to supply a sort of ontological security to individuals and empower them with a sense of confidence to speak and act (Keane, 1995). Smith, among others, clearly shows that, although functions of national identity are territorial, economic and political, national identity also "fulfil[s] more intimate functions for individuals and communities", such as "socialization of the members as 'nationals' and 'citizens'" (Smith 1991, 8), by providing a repertoire of shared values, symbols and traditions, as well as defining and

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<sup>187</sup> Similar conceptualisation permeates Smith's (1991, 15) definition of nation as a blend of "territorial" and "genealogical" components.

<sup>188</sup> A century later, Hobsbawm reiterates the warning, claiming that we should read the popular assertion that the distinctive feature of every nation is its past or history, together with Renan's famous dictum that getting its history wrong has always been a part of being a nation. (1992, 3)

locating individuals in the world: "It is through a shared, unique culture that we are enabled to 'know who we are' in a contemporary world" (Ibid., 16-17).

Eloquently summarised by John Keane, national identity is:

a particular form of collective identity in which, despite their routine lack of physical contact, people consider themselves bound together because they speak a language or a dialect of common language; inhabit or are closely familiar with a defined territory, and experience its ecosystem with some affection; and because they share a variety of customs, including a measure of memories of the historical past, which is consequently experienced in the present tense as pride in the nation's achievements and, where necessary, an obligation to feel ashamed of the nation's failings. (1995, 186)

The notion of culture is pivotal to the definition of national identity as a specific socio-historical manifestation of ethnicity. According to Barth, ethnic groups emerge as culture-bearing units through the articulation of difference – shared culture and its traits are the product of group differentiation, "rather than a primary and definitional characteristic of ethnic group organization" (1959/1998a, 11). The "limited set of cultural features" provides a basic structural grid around which the inherently dual process of national identification is formed as a discourse of sameness and difference, of inclusion and exclusion. By claiming that shared culture is generated *in* and *by* the process of ethnic boundary maintenance, one acknowledges that the definition of "us" at individual and collective levels is a product of a history of relationships with significant others. As Barth put it, it is precisely the production of difference through external others that produces the consciousness of similarity (1959/1998a, b).

In conclusion, there are two more points that I would like to stress before I proceed to a delineation of Slovene national identity. As outlined in my tentative definition, nation is simultaneously subject and object of national identity, just as national identity is simultaneously an individual and a collective phenomenon. However, the relationship between the two is by no means equal. Although the sum of individuals that forms a nation can and does construct national identity through personalised "narrations of nation" (Bhabha 1990), it is important to acknowledge that the mechanisms and articulation points of national

identity are always pre-given or pre-existing to the individuals. For, as Sommers and Gibson stress:

People construct identities (however multiple and changing) by locating themselves or being located within a repertoire of emplotted stories. [...] [P]eople are guided to act in certain ways, and not others, on the basis of the projections, expectations, and memories derived from a multiplicity but ultimately limited repertoire of available social, public, and cultural narratives. (Sommers and Gibson 1994, 39)

This pre-givenness is particularly important if we take into account that national identity is not only about the way a particular group or community communicates, draws meanings and forms knowledge, but that it also provides moral regulation and sanction (Schöpflin 2001, 28). To evoke Mircea Eliade (1959/1992), it serves to create "cosmos out of chaos" and thus defines what is acceptable, normal or desirable for that community and what is not. Ethnic (and hence national) differentiation frequently imposes complex organisation of behaviour and social relations which implies sharing of criteria for evaluation and judgement (Barth 1959/1998, 15).

The second point concerns the question of ideology. Earlier in this chapter I had argued that regardless of their mutual interdependence, it is necessary to distinguish between national identity and its particular ideological rendering in nationalism. While there is a strong link between the two – nationalism to a certain extent reinvents national identity<sup>189</sup> through the outcomes of symbolic struggles it plays out (Smith, 1991, 92) – we are nevertheless dealing with two distinctive phenomena. We need to differentiate between *nationalism* as a public ideology of identification with the state in the form of conscious sentiments of active devotion, and what Borneman (1992) termed *nationness*, a "lived experience within a state", the daily interactions and practices that produce an implicit and often unarticulated sense of belonging. This difference between national identity and nationalism is often regarded as the difference between benign and malign, destructive forms of nationhood, such as the one

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<sup>189</sup> National identity is the constitutive base of the explicitly political project of nationalism. But since nationalism draws on national identity for its symbolic struggles, national identity is inevitably affected by their outcome, or, as Keane put it, "is transformed into a parody of its former self" (1995, 192).

between patriotism and nationalism (Debeljak 2004). In short, nationalism is essentially a homogenising and classifying discourse that Verdery (1996) defines as a hegemonic struggle between different political groups to capture the alternative definition of nation as a symbol and its legitimising effects. But claiming that nationalism is ideology because it renders social relations as natural<sup>190</sup>, while concealing its own conditions of production, does not absolve national identity of its inherently political and ideological nature. As Smith points out, national identity is comprised of cultural and political identity and hence "any attempt to forge national identity is also a political action with political consequences" (1991, 99). Similarly, Billig (1995/2001, 8) stresses that to have a national identity is to possess ways of talking about nationhood, which is intrinsically an ideological (and hence political) venture.

### 5.3 Conceptualising the boundary of Slovene national identification at individual and societal levels

As outlined in the previous section, the principal function of national identity is social organisation of solidarity through defining and maintaining differentiation between ethnic groups, which thus come into being as imagined communities. Ethnicity and hence national identity as its specific socio-historical form is therefore not a matter of "empirical cultural differences", but, as Barth (1998, 6) argues, of "social organisation of cultural difference". Communities renew themselves through cultural re-production and Barth claims that the shared culture of an ethnic group is "an implication or result, rather than a primary and definitional characteristic of ethnic group organization" (Barth 1998, 11). Collectivity is the emerging product of social action. Since group belonging is articulated through practices of demarcation, Barth draws our attention to the notion of social boundaries. These serve as articulation points for creating a sense of belonging, of self-awareness of a community, and he famously presses for critical investigation of "the ethnic *boundary* that defines the group, not the cultural stuff that it encloses" (Ibid., 15; original emphasis).

Boundary is constitutive for identity because the latter emerges in the interaction of ascription and classification across a certain boundary, through a process of defining identity from within and from without. The impression of (internal) sameness of identity of a group is thus

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<sup>190</sup>By this I mean the dual process of naturalising the existence of a particular nation, as well as the division of the world as a system of nation-states.

the result of perceived (external) dissimilarities with other groups. From the Barthian perspective, the differences between groups do not depend on the absence of social interaction but emerge and are maintained precisely through cross-boundary interaction. Thus the uniqueness of a particular group or community depends on boundary maintenance, and its continuing existence through time (e.g. 'survival' of a nation) depends primarily on the group's ability to maintain its boundary and identity through the continuous (re)articulations and (re)negotiations of changing socio-historical circumstances.

Boundary is constructed and maintained by a limited repertoire of features that is not an assemblage of some "objective" differences or characteristics of the group, but a selection of those characteristics that actors themselves regard as significant. This construction, however, is not an entirely arbitrary invention, as "the constructor is always forced to use the materials at hand" (Strath 2000, 23). In the case of national identities, these characteristics are never free inventions but stem from an "ethnic basis" – from community, territory or history conveyed through shared memories, myths and traditions (cf. Malešević 2002, 159). These may vary not only between groups but also for a particular group through time and social context – some appear to be more important than others, especially in particular places and at particular times.

Arguing from a slightly different perspective,<sup>191</sup> Anthony Cohen claims that boundaries are not just social but also symbolical constructs (1982; 1985). This symbolic dimension operates on two levels – on one level, we have symbols of community, while on another level, community itself becomes a symbol. In other words, community is constructed *through* and *as* a symbol. Thus, in the process of collective identity formation, we are dealing with a shared symbolic domain on the one hand, and, on the other, with participation in a shared symbolic discourse of community membership that symbolises the boundary and hence inclusion in and exclusion from this community. My investigation of national identity is primarily concerned with questions of a shared symbolic universe, of symbols used to mark the boundary of nation as a community and hence to construct national identity. It rests on a proposition that national identity is essentially marked out through an array of symbols.

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<sup>191</sup> On difference between Cohen's and Barth's concept of community see Jenkins (1996, chapter 11).

Various authors list a diverse repertoire of selected features and characteristics that serve the social organisation of difference by demarcating the boundary of communities. They range from language, religion, geography, shared myths of origin or history (Smith 1990), rituals, symbols, customs and folk traditions (Jenkins 1996, Billig 1995/2001, Pecora 2001), to material artefacts (documents, monuments, songs, flags), consumer items such as clothes, food, cigarettes and products (Schöpflin 2001) and "banal" everyday practices, such as the way of washing dishes (Jenkins 1997) or weather forecasting (Billig 1995/2001). Although some of these features are symbols in its own right, all of them acquire a symbolic dimension as they are selected for the construction of social boundary and hence become symbolisations of that community.

Even a cursory look at this list, however, reveals that these are not phenomena of the same order. I have argued above that it is possible to distinguish between public and private experiences and projects of national identification. Borneman's distinction between *nationalism* and *nationness* is not without parallels. Jenkins (1997, 159), for example, points to a number of authors that distinguish between public (state or institutional; planned; about policies) and private or personal (cultural, lived; unplanned; about practices) expressions of national belonging. Thus, Eriksen speaks of *formal* and *informal nationalisms*, Wilk of *official* or and *unofficial nationalisms*, Billig of *hot* and *banal nationalism*, and Duara of *discursive* and *symbolic meaning of nation*. These dichotomies are important for two reasons: first, they emphasise the importance of culture, or reproduction of ideology on the everyday level and through ordinary and "banal" practices, but which are, as Billig (1995/2001) shows, no less ideological or effective. And secondly, they point out the fact that there is a potential mismatch between official and individual projects of nationhood, between the discursive and symbolic meaning that resides in cultural practices, an issue that will be addressed in greater detail further below.

I shall argue that a similar demarcation can usefully be applied to the diverse repertoire of selected features and characteristics that mark the social boundary of ethnic (national) community. I propose a division between two orders or layers of boundary articulation, the *privileged discursive elements* as institutional/formal/planned/discursive and *performed symbols*, as personal/informal/unplanned/symbolic articulations of national identity. The *privileged discursive elements* and *performed symbols* correspond to the two dimensions of identity formation, the social and the individual. Although, in practice, the two levels are

closely related and intertwined, their analytical separation is in order, since the relationship between the two is by no means equal. *Privileged discursive elements* belong to a higher order, they form the basis and delineate a framework within which *performed symbols* can be reproduced, enacted and performed as meaningful acts of national identity signification in the everyday lives of citizens.

Let me provide two examples: the founding myth of Slovene statehood is the myth of Karantania as the first Slovene state (see next section), which is a *privileged discursive element*, institutionalised through the educational system, historiography and state symbols such as money. On the other hand, the heraldic print of the Black Panther worn on T-shirts and emblems by right-wing nationalist groups is a *performed symbol*, the individualised negotiation of national identity.<sup>192</sup> However, objects that become symbols of articulation of national identity need not bear any direct, visible connection to the *privileged discursive elements* and can protrude through more banal, everyday practices like culinary preferences (e.g. the type of meat or sweets one consumes or not)<sup>193</sup>, or consuming "appropriate" brands of products. Ignatieff (1994), for example, recounts a dialogue with a Serbian soldier during the Serbo-Croat war (1991-1995), who articulated the cultural aspects of the "grand narrative" of national belonging on his personal level through the brand of cigarettes he smoked.

One of the main differences between the *privileged discursive elements* and *performed symbol* level of boundary articulation and maintenance is that the former is always a conscious, explicit, institutionally-backed political programme, while the latter need not necessarily be a conscious, strategic practice. Another determining difference between the two is that the two levels operate on two different modes – while *privileged discursive elements* work towards homogenisation of national identity, *performed symbols* do not necessarily achieve this function of homogenisation but harbour a certain plurality of meanings within the demarcated area. Namely, national identity at this level is marked out by symbols which tend to defy

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<sup>192</sup> Just as a curiosity, the T-shirts with the Black Panther which are representations of extreme nationalism are sold to tourists in the arcades of one of Ljubljana's main tourist attractions as "innocent", legitimate souvenirs, along other "greetings from Ljubljana and Slovenia" paraphernalia. The range of available wearable items with the Black Panther motif ranges from baseball caps to female underwear.

<sup>193</sup> Culinary practices as markers of differentiation are mostly what Billig (1995/2001) would describe as "banal" practices of "flagging a nation", but can become very conscious practices during times when nationalism in society on the rise. Thus the consumption of pork meat as a symbol of Serbian-ness became a very salient marker of Serbian-ness during and after the war in Bosnia (1992-1995). The recent metonymic advertising slogan "Hundred percent pork", used by a meat producer from the Serbian entity, is an example of ongoing maintenance of national boundary through everyday practices of food consumption.



singular, narrowly defined meanings. Symbols are intrinsically meaning-less – they only gain meaning through social processes and are thus necessarily to a certain extent ambiguous, imprecise and multivocal. Cohen emphasises that this multivocality of shared symbols creates an illusion of homogeneity that enables heterogeneity to be preserved. As he put it: "Because ethnic identity is expressed through symbols, it is possible for this internal heterogeneity to be preserved, even while masked by common symbolic forms" (1993, 199). The uniformity of shared symbols does not necessarily indicate homogeneity of their uses by individuals. But what shared symbols do, according to Cohen, is enable members of a community to believe that they share common meanings and understandings of things that differentiate them from neighbouring communities, regardless of the actual discrepancy in their understandings (cf. Verdery 1996, 227). Neither the existence of shared social identity nor the resulting group solidarity presupposes a strong normative consensus, but they do require a certain minimum amount of coherence and stability to ensure the reproduction of community. A range of disagreements is made possible through "establishing [of] the outer boundaries of disagreement" (Schöpflin 2002, 326; cf. Jenkins 1996), which also implies that the boundary of ethnic community is not clear-cut but to a certain extent shifting and context-driven terrain (Jenkins 1997).

However, institutionalised elements for the demarcation of community boundary work in the opposite direction, towards the creation of homogeneity and stability of signs and symbols of demarcation. *Privileged discursive elements* are articulation points of national identity offered by an array of nation-state institutions. They are comprised, for example, from a canonised interpretation of history and culture that enters the public knowledge through primary socialisation and curriculums of school education; from a symbolic universe ritually enacted in the "eternal recurrence" of the calendar's cyclical time through the selection of state holidays; from myths and symbols that saturate the discourse of political representatives of the state or political parties, and which permeate celebrations and commemorations of important events for the nation; from the salience/neglect of certain topics in social sciences, arts and humanities; from narration of museum displays, etc.

The primary role of institutions is to order social life and ensure its predictability. They are "an integral part of the social construction of reality, with reference to which, and the terms of which, individuals make decisions and orient their behaviour" (Jenkins 1996, 127). They are both sources and sites of collective identification for individuals. Institutions produce the

structural limits within which national identity can be articulated and negotiated: they offer primary articulation points for the processes of national identification, and thus outline the symbolic sphere which is essential for maintaining a certain level of community stability. The power of institutions arises not only from their symbolic and legal status within the community, but also through the fact that they (re)produce social boundaries both systematically and ideologically – as natural and unquestionable. Privileged discursive elements are often imbued with a certain level of sacralisation – they frequently become essential foundations of society which "cannot be left open to investigation by Enlightenment rationality" (Schöpflin 2002, 7)<sup>194</sup>. Depending on their centrality to the national identity project, questioning of such elements can shake the foundations of a nation and endanger the stability of a given society – which is precisely what institutions attempt to secure through the hegemonic struggle for definition of meaning.

In order to summarise this discussion, I must briefly return to the notion of national identification. It has been indicated that national identification is the interplay of individual and social, a socialised consciousness that exists in the consciousness of individuals. Like other forms of social identification, it is a process of differentiation through internal and external definitions that operate through the construction of social boundaries. Such boundaries are constructed by explicit and implicit processes, through institutions and cultural practices which are not necessarily completely coherent. What I have suggested above is that we need to distinguish between these two levels. In the final analysis, the difference between *privileged discursive elements* and *performed symbols* is the difference between the "first call" and the "last call". While personal negotiations and articulations of collective belonging are national identity's final elaborations, the role of the institutional production of national identities should not be undervalued, for a number of interrelated reasons. First, national identity is an explicit project of the state and its institutions (Jenkins 1997, 15; Hobsbawm, 1989/1992, 10). Secondly, institutions make the "first call" – they set the agenda of national identification and thus limit its legitimate boundary. Although full normative consensus is not a prerequisite of national identity, the institutional "agenda" is never neutral but at least implicitly normatively evaluated – it prescribes not only "how things are done" but also how "they *should* be done".<sup>195</sup> Althusser's notion of *interpellation* (1971) can be evoked to explain my claim that institutions make "the first call". Much of the shared symbolic universe is pre-

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<sup>194</sup> Cf. Laclau and Mouffe's (1985) concept of privileged discursive points or nodes.

<sup>195</sup> In terminology of media effects studies, this would imply not just agenda setting but also framing.

given and, through this set of existing practices, institutions explicitly and implicitly *interpellate* individuals as national citizens (e.g. in schools, in times of war etc.). Individuals can to a greater or lesser degree recognise themselves in this act of hailing. Thirdly, the role of shared symbolic universe which is constructed through social boundaries is to protect the necessary degree of social stability to ensure the functioning and continuing existence of community. Much of the acts of national identification are "banal" in Billig's use of the term, being articulated through daily rituals, routines and forms of life within the institutionally provided frame.<sup>196</sup> As several authors (see Jenkins 1996, Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983/2003; or Billig (1995/2001) have noted, production of ethnic identification is too central to cultural reproduction of a given community to be allowed continuous conscious re-examination by its members, and must therefore be hidden from everyday cognition.

## 5.4 Privileged discursive elements of Slovene national identity

For the purpose of this dissertation, I will limit my investigation of Slovene national identity to what I have termed *privileged discursive elements*, to institutionally supplied identification cues.<sup>197</sup> Construction of Slovene national identity has been a very turbulent venture, which had passed through four major reinventions in little more than a century, and can be seen as a typical example of a Gramscian hegemonic struggle over the definition and interpretation of social reality. From the first national programmes of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the national independence movement in the second half of the 1980s, Slovene national identity can be seen as an ongoing struggle for the (re)definition and (re)interpretation of a fairly stable pool of privileged discursive elements. Their stability enables me to leave aside more standard chronological descriptions of the four reinventions and provide a topological overview of this pool of concepts, myths and symbols that came to symbolise the social boundary of Slovenehood and their rudimentary deconstruction instead. They include:

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<sup>196</sup> See e.g. Schneider (2001, 356).

<sup>197</sup> This decision is not arbitrary – it is founded on the consideration of the area of my investigation, i.e. visual representations of Slovene national identity in press photography. By focusing on this particular aspect of media representations, the focus on the articulation points of ethnic (i.e. national) boundary is necessarily inclined toward institutionally supplied frames. While I do subscribe to Hobsbawm's warning that nations are "dual phenomena, constructed essentially from above, but which can not be understood unless also analysed from below" (1989/1992: 10), expanding the investigation to include the *performed symbols* side and personalised articulations of social boundary (on privileged discursive points "put into action") through private and amateur photography would require a thesis of its own.

- Slovene language and literary culture as foundations of the nation;
- the myth of Karantanija as the origin of the Slovene state;
- the myth of the nation's thousand-year dream of independence;
- the imagined geo-cultural space of (Central) Europe;
- the notion of *limes* and frontier;
- the bond between religion, Slovene-ness and ruralness;
- the bond between rural land(scape) and nation.

The seven privileged discursive elements<sup>198</sup> address different aspects of Slovene national identity: the existence of a separate language justifies the claim to nation, just as the two myths ground and justify Slovenia's claim to statehood. Imagined geo-cultural space and the notion of *limes* work to establish a wider cultural (civilisational) frame of belonging, while the particular emphasis on religion (Catholicism) and ruralness tries to secure a particular characterisation of the nation. As already indicated, the seven privileged discursive elements will also serve as definitions of frames for visual analysis in Chapters 6 and 7.

#### 5.4.1 Language, literature, culture

Slovene language is the central (and least disputed) constitutive element of the Slovene nation and national identity. At least since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the existence of a distinct language was "the" *differentia specifica* that distinguished the would-be Slovenes from other ethnic groups in the region. For "ethnicity without a state", the national boundary was first and foremost a linguistic one. This was facilitated by a fairly early transformation of Slovene from vernacular into literary language in 1550 by a Protestant priest, Primož Trubar, whose literary opus consisted not only of religious writings but also included a language handbook, *Abecedarium*, from which his audience could "learn to read and write in their own language". As the consolidator of Slovene language, Trubar stands at the beginning of a long line of literati that formed and crafted Slovene national consciousness and identity. He is not only referred to as "the founder of Slovene language" and "the first Slovene writer", but often also as "the father of Slovene nation" – he was the first to explicitly use the term "Slouenci" (Slovenes) to

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<sup>198</sup> There are a number of other potent symbols and concepts which are very influential in the daily flagging of Slovene-ness, promulgated particularly through sports and popular culture production such as popular music, TV shows, literature or cinema. However, I argue, that these can be seen as discursive (re)articulations of the basic boundary-defining elements outlined above. They belong to the domain of performed symbols, to "embodied habits of social life" (Billig, 1995:8).

address his audience, thus marking the non-German speaking population of the region as a unitary social body.

During the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, the calls for the creation of a Slovene national identity as a supra-regional, national consciousness which would transform Carinthians or Styrians into Slovenes have been voiced on the grounds of linguistic claims. Grounding the national call in linguistic and not in territorial, administrative, religious or racial claims had significant consequences, the most decisive being that the so-called "national awakening" movement did not strive to realise the national programme so much in the political sphere as in the linguistic and literary spheres. This established the Slovene nation as a specific ethnic group but stopped short of any claims to full political independence. Due to the lack of its own political and economic institutions and corresponding elites, the national cause was championed by the literary elite, among which the poet France Prešeren is undoubtedly the most prominent figure. This paramount role of artists, mainly writers and poets, in constituting the nation is what Rupel (1976, 334) termed *Slovene cultural syndrome*: national emancipation *through* and *in* literature, which serves both as a substitute for political action and as the action itself. Therefore, Rupel argues, the Slovene nation had in its entirety existed only in literature, in the kingdom of ideas" (1976, 17). This syndrome was to be a persistent feature of Slovene political life: both in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, nationalisms tended to be marginalised and suppressed in the sphere of politics, but were allowed to thrive in the sphere of culture. This dislocation granted artists considerable and "real" political influence. As Andrew Wachtel clearly shows in *Making a nation, breaking a nation* (1998), the breaking-up of Yugoslavia began in the cultural sphere and was initially the work of cultural, not political elites.

The close link between nation, language and culture made the cultural sphere one of the primary battlegrounds against centralisation pressures in the two Yugoslav states (the idea of the creation of one unitary Yugoslav nation, with a unitary language and culture). Slovenia's refusal to give up its own language dates back to the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the wake of the Pan-Slavic and Illyrian movements, which opted for the creation of a single language. The idea that the protection of separate language and culture are of paramount importance to the survival of the Slovene nation was continuously fiercely advocated through various historical periods (e.g. Vidmar's 1935/1995 elaboration of "cultural problems", the famous Pirjevec-Ćosić debate in the 1960s (see e.g. Guzina 2003; Rupel 1982), the founding

of language purism committees in the 1970s etc.). It comes as no surprise that the very idea of founding an independent Slovene state as the only guarantee for the survival of the nation was first publicly voiced and promulgated in Slovene literary circles during the 1980s.<sup>199</sup>

The crucial role of literary intelligentsia for the nation's constitution, its Herderian supposition (1784-91/2001) and their Fichteian mission (1808/2001) are not peculiarly Slovene. They are a highly recognisable feature in several Central European nations of the former Habsburg empire and can be seen as a strategy typical of small "nations without states", of people without their own history (see e.g. Josef K. 1991, Hroch 1996). Wachtel ascribes this phenomenon to Eastern Europe, which he defines as "a part of the world where serious literature and those who produce it have traditionally been overvalued" (2006: 4). Their importance grew under Communism because, as nationalism was (at least nominally) eschewed from the sphere of politics, artists were needed "to pull a nation together, to make fellow citizens aware of their very nationhood by creating conditions for community" (Ibid., 14). Because their work was seen to express the very essence of nation, its soul, they were "first canonized by nation-building intellectuals, then exploited by fledgling national states<sup>200</sup>, and finally recanonized by communist regimes, [where] they were accorded the status of national heroes" (Ibid., 15). The Slovene case conforms to the process delineated by Wachtel and the absence of strong non-literati national figures in Slovenia is striking. The political climate before 1945 was too polarised by party lines to yield a universally acceptable public persona, while, during the Communist era, the only "appropriate", untainted pre-1945 prominent public figures were the nation's bards. This trend persists to this day and even the only prominent military figure in the current pantheon of Slovene national heroes, General Rudolf Maister (1874-1934), the defender of the northern Slovene border with Austria in the aftermath of the First World War, was not only a successful military commander but a lyric poet as well. The indebtedness of the project of the Slovene nation and statehood to Slovene language and language-based culture is evident today in all levels of institutional symbolic markers, from the educational curriculum and the national anthem to state holidays and money.<sup>201</sup> While the language remained the core of Slovene national identity and its

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<sup>199</sup> The notorious 51<sup>st</sup> issue of *Nova revija*.

<sup>200</sup> We should note that the states in question were mostly not true national states but, as in the case of Yugoslavia or Czechoslovakia, in fact multinational states.

<sup>201</sup> A few examples should suffice: Prešeren's poem *Zdravljica* (A Toast) became the national anthem of independent Slovenia; February 8th, the date of his death, is a national holiday called the Day of Culture, and his image appeared both on the old 1000-tolar bill and on the current 2-euro coin. Similarly, Trubar's work is commemorated by the national holiday the Day of Reformation (October 31<sup>st</sup>), and his portrait appeared on the

institutional demarcation, the importance of literati for the preservation of national idea(l)s rapidly withered with the founding of the Slovene state. Though still held on the pedestal of public respect, their "actual" political role (unless they entered the sphere of professional politics), like that of their fellow post-communist writers, has greatly diminished.

#### **5.4.2 The origin of a Slovene state**

If the language-culture nexus legitimises the existence of Slovenes as a separate nation, the myth that locates the origin of Slovene statehood in the principality of Karantanija legitimises the claim to possess an independent state. According to the myth's dominant present-day interpretation, the various forms of Slav state formations between the 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries AD on the territory of present-day Austrian Carinthia represent the first Slovene state – Karantanija. The myth purports the idea of Karantanci as the direct ancestors of present-day Slovenes and proclaims Austrian Carinthia as the "cradle of Slovenian nationhood". The myth's importance to Slovene nation-building is twofold. On the one hand, material artefacts and written accounts testify to the actual existence of an "ancient" Slav state, pushing the right to statehood to the very limits of known history – to the settlement of South Slav tribes in the area. On the other hand, the rituals of electing Karantanija's dukes<sup>202</sup> were seen to testify to the nation's ancient, almost innate democratic impulses and tradition. This ideological interpretation gained particular prominence during the period when independence was gained and during the transition from a one-party system to democratic government at the beginning of the 1990s. The more zealous interpreters even claimed that Karantanija's ritual installation and democratic arrangement between subjects served as the inspiration to one of the founding fathers of modern democracy, Thomas Jefferson, when he was writing the draft of the Declaration of Independence.<sup>203</sup>

Reports of the election of Karantanija's dukes from early medieval manuscripts and Karantanija's history were first connected with the history of Slovene provinces by 17<sup>th</sup>- and 18<sup>th</sup>-century historians Janez Vajkard Valvasor and Anton Tomaž Linhart, although their accounts did not make any political claims. The myth of Slovenia's once glorious past was

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10-tolar bill and currently adorns the 1-euro coin. The former Slovene national currency also carried the image of Ivan Cankar, one of the nation's most important writers.

<sup>202</sup> During the enthronement ritual, the new duke's suitability would be questioned by an elected representative of the free peasants.

<sup>203</sup> The implicit and sometimes explicitly voiced claim (even among professional historians) is that the fathers of modern democracy in fact learned the principles of democratic government from Slovenes.

first popularised in 19<sup>th</sup>-century literature, primarily in the work of France Prešeren, but also in that of Jovan Vesel Koseski, Anton Aškerc and others (see Grdina 2001, 13-36), who wrote of the lost freedom and independence of Slovenes by referring to Karantanija's dukes and symbolic places connected with Karantanija. The literary motif of tragic loss of freedom continued in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, where it was later complemented by "regret for the unfair loss of the ancient Slovene homeland" to Austria in the 1920 plebiscite, a territorial loss that was never to be reversed. It is present, for example, in short stories by Josip Vaentin Gruden, in drama by Metod Turnšek, and in poetry by authors as diverse as Rudolf Maister-Vojanov, Oton Župančič, Janez Menart and several others.<sup>204</sup> Although, in these works, the myth of Karantanija had no direct political claims, it was disseminated through various forms of high and popular culture and hence imprinted in the nation's collective consciousness.

The Karantanija myth became a potent symbolic articulation point for the imagining of a common (Slovene) nation long before it gained political momentum and its current interpretation. This *primordialist* rendering of history that rejects the notion of nations as fairly recent and constructed phenomena, but makes a direct claim of Slovene statehood to Karantanija,<sup>205</sup> became a standard chapter of Slovene primary and secondary school education by the 1970s. It was adopted by other state apparatuses and remains, to this day, virtually unchanged (and unchallenged) in the public discourse of state officials and mass media. As a somewhat logical consequence, the "cradle of the Slovene nation" in the Austrian province of Carinthia became a sight of "institutionalised pilgrimage" in the form of school outings and professional excursions, annual trips organised by trade unions and commercial tourist tours.

Similarly logical is the myth's trickling into visual representation, particularly in institutional communication. Its state-building status was underscored in the interior decor of the parliament building, where paintings by Gojmir Anton Kos (1938) and frescoes by Slavko Pengov (1958) depict the election of Karantanija's dukes. The Duke's stone, a capital of an Ionic column used in the ceremonies, became a potent visual symbol of Slovene statehood and the nation's history, particularly at the time of Slovene re-negotiation of statehood in the

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<sup>204</sup> See Grdina (2001, 13-36) for a detailed overview and analysis. I should, however, note that these diverse literary works share an important common feature for articulation of national identity – they either describe the "old glory" or more frequently lament on its loss, but none of them calls for the reclaiming of the "cradle of the nation". Unlike, for example, Serbian epic poems about Kosovo, they don't cultivate battle calls for the restoration of "old glory", but dwell on the melancholy of tragic loss and connect it to the tragic fate of the nation.

<sup>205</sup> More on nationalisation of Karantanija see e.g. Štih 2005a, b.



period of the country's succession from Yugoslavia. Thus in 1991, it appeared on one of the nation's most prestigious displays of its canonised symbols – money. It was one of the two symbols depicted on Slovenia's provisional banknotes – the short-lived money vouchers that had replaced the Yugoslav dinar – and, despite the controversy between Slovenia and Austria regarding its use in 1991,<sup>206</sup> the image of the Duke's stone re-appeared in 2007 on the Slovene 2-cent coin.

### 5.4.3 The nation's thousand-year dream of independence

In its current version, the myth of the thousand-year dream of independence is an offshoot of the Karantanija myth, although it does have strong roots in Slovene folk and literary culture. Like the aforementioned myth, it is grounded in an evolutionary reading of Slovene history which is upgraded with a teleological mission. According to the myth, Slovenes who have been living under a foreign yoke for centuries, often torn between different masters and exposed to constant, often forceful attempts at "denationalisation" and assimilation, have continuously yearned for a safe haven for their independent state. The myth thus positions independence as a teleological historical goal, at the same time an end and a just reward for the hardships and endurance of this historical test.

The myth of the thousand-year dream of independence permeates the public discourse in two ways – it either serves as an instrument for chronological rendering and selective emphasis of the nation's important historical events, or it can be used in a more overtly nationalistic manner as the ultimate moral criterion for judging (and condemning) past and present actions by individuals or groups.<sup>207</sup> However, such a rendering of national history and its interpretations in terms of either liberation or salvation is by no means unique to Slovenes – Velikonja (1995, 940) traces it in contemporary national myths in nearly all the former Yugoslav nations. The recurring pattern is a four-stage division of history into a golden age which is followed by military/political (but not religious/cultural) defeat to a more powerful neighbour. The long period of subordination is replaced by a 73-year Yugoslav episode (conceived as continuing subordination and exploitation) until the final liberation and fought-

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<sup>206</sup> Like other symbols and mythical places in Karantanija, the Duke's stone is in fact not in Slovene possession but is owned by the Carinthian provincial museum in Klagenfurt, and was controversially relocated to the Carinthian provincial assembly in 2005 by Carinthia's nationalist governor, Jörg Haider.

<sup>207</sup> Such is the often heard argument that certain people, such as *the erased* and former Yugoslav People's Army officers, who fought in the ten-day war against Slovenia's independence, should not be granted Slovene citizenship or social benefits because they were on the wrong side of the nation's crucial historical struggle.

out independence at the beginning of the 1990s. The notion of "final liberation" is telling in its own way as it points to the instability of national mythological self-perception: both the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in 1918 and the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia in 1945 were perceived as the nation's "final liberations" from foreign oppression.

Historically, the idea of Slovenia as an autonomous, independent national state dates only to the second half of the 1980s and even then, the idea was not widely acclaimed at first.<sup>208</sup> From the inception of the Slovene nationalist movement and its first political programme of 1848, right up to the very break-up of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Slovene elites continuously tried to negotiate a greater autonomy within, not outside, the greater multinational state formations of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy and the two Yugoslav states (Vodopivec 2001, Simoniti 1996). Thus, six days before the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy Slovene politicians advocated the idea of a "trialist" Monarchy (a separate South Slav state within the Habsburg monarchy); similarly, Vodopivec (2006, 499) quotes a 1990 opinion poll, according to which, the year before the country's secession from Yugoslavia, a majority (52%) still preferred "some kind of federation" with other Yugoslav republics (a certain "union" or "commonwealth of independent states") and only 28% were in favour of the country's immediate independence.

Although the existence of the independent Slovene state was not seen as politically viable throughout most of the nation's history, the ages-long wait for liberation is not an entirely recent and purely politically invented tradition. It was most clearly elaborated in folk poems and tales about Kralj Matjaž (King Matthias) that talk of a mighty and righteous ruler who is expected to return to free his people when he awakes from his 100-year sleep in a mountain cave.<sup>209</sup> Several other folk tales and popular literary stories, such as those by Peter Klepec or Martin Krpan, also support the perennialist notion of "the nation as a sleeping beauty", with its potent but politically dormant potential, through the portrayal of the hero's invincible but dormant physical strength.

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<sup>208</sup> The idea made its first public appearance in 1986 in the journal *Nova revija* and spurred heated debates within Yugoslavia and the League of Communists. Although much debated, the notion of a fully independent Slovenia did not gain wide public support at the time. (Vodopivec, 2006: 484)

<sup>209</sup> See for example Slovene folk tales, collected by Terseglav 2005. The motif of the story is reminiscent of the many European stories of "kings that are to return", which often employ a notion of supernatural sleep underground. From barbarian kings like Attila or Alaric to legendary King Arthur or the vanished Portuguese King Dom Sebastian, the German myths of Friderich II and Frederick Barbarossa, the Moldavian myth of Stephen the Great, the Serb myth of Kraljevič Marko, the Czech myth of Svatopluk and the Danish myth of Holger etc. (Pippidi 1995, Velikonja 1995).

#### 5.4.4 Imagined geographies of geo-cultural belonging

The fact that the question of the country's geographic location has a prestigious place among the boundary-articulating elements should come as no surprise, since Slovenia is located in the part of the continent where geographical location was and still is primarily expressed in cultural terms. The country lies in the grey zone between Europe and its dark and threatening counterpart – Asia, understood either as East (epitomised by Russia in its various expansionist state formations) or South (once embodied by the Ottoman Empire and today primarily associated with Islam and Arabs), or an amalgam of both. As Larry Wolf (1994) has vividly demonstrated, the distance between the two had since the Enlightenment been measured not in terms of miles or kilometres but on a far more fateful scale – in terms of *progress* and *civilisation*. Thus "the geographic question" is not so much a question of physical but of mental location, of cultural belonging to the mythologised entities of Europe or the Balkans in its colourful palette of predominantly negative connotations. It can therefore be described in terms of *imagined geographies*. By using Said's (1979/1994) concept, I do not imply that these geographies are either true or false but only wish to point to the fact that they are not so much "real" physical entities as they are an emerging product of the act of imagining, perceived, constructed and articulated through various discourses. Imagined geographies are therefore ideological interpretations of physical space.

This privileged discursive element locates Slovenia firmly on the European side of the aforementioned symbolic divide. The claims of the nation's Europeanness gained significant public and political momentum during the 1980s and became an essential part of Slovenia's state-building and international positioning during the 1990s, up until Slovenia joined the European Union. The claim of Slovenia's European-ness was made indirectly, appealing to the geographical and cultural concept of *Central Europe*, according to which the small nations of the Austro-Hungarian Empire have historically embodied the very essence of the modern European ideals, such as humanism and pluralism, through their interethnic tolerance and cultural cooperation.

Central Europe is a vague and shifting concept that has been used over the course of the last hundred years to denote a strategy and direction of German geopolitical expansion and colonisation (the vital role of Mitteleuropa in German securing "Drang nach Osten" and building a bridge to the Middle East), to delineate a buffer zone preventing Habsburg restoration, Hungarian and German expansionism in the interwar years (briefly

institutionalised in the Little Entente between Czechoslovakia, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and Romania) or to mark a possible "sanitary belt" against the threats presented by the Soviet Union (such as Churchill's plans for a Central European federation) (Repe 1999; Grafenauer 1991, 22). Being such a fluid concept, it included and excluded various countries and territories between the Baltic, Adriatic and Black Seas, but eventually lost its currency in the bloc divisions of the Cold War.<sup>210</sup> During the 1980s, it was, however, revived and widely adopted by Polish, Czech, Slovak and Hungarian literary elites (see e.g. Kundera's seminal 1984/1991 essay), often in the form of a lamentation over the unfortunate destiny of "small nations"<sup>211</sup> stretched between the more powerful forces of East and West, victims of history. Central Europe became perceived as a cultural and civilisational concept, a place in between that both unites and transcends the East and West, uniting their Apollonic and Dionysic forces. As Croatian writer Miroslav Krleža put it: "this part of the world is geographically located in the Centre, culturally in the West and politically in the East" (Krleža in Kiš 1991, 110). Above all, Central Europe was to be a cultural space for intercultural dialogue, for peaceful cohabitation and an enriching symbiosis of different cultures that allegedly developed a special Central European character and found its expression in cultural and artistic production, as well as in the pre-eminent role of the artist in the public life of these nations.<sup>212</sup> As György Konrad put it: "Monarchy has crumbled, we are left with Vienna and with its dead shadows – poets, writers, philosophers, painters, composers: they live with us like a real enigma" (1987, 81). The political currency of such a concept during the 1980s was twofold: it could serve as a framework for anti-Soviet struggle and as the logical outcome of its aftermath. It implied that these countries were historically an integral part of the European cultural space, to which they would naturally return after the fall of Communism by means of "redemption through capitalism, democracy, civil society, privatisation and the like" (Kideckel 1996, 30). Slovene cultural and political elites joined the bandwagon of Central Europe precisely for the latter reason but, unlike in the cases of the Czech Republic, Hungary or Poland, Slovenia had to struggle actively for the recognition of its Central Europeanism due to its Balkan "stigma". The Slovene stand on the issue is best articulated in an edited collection of volumes entitled *Srednja Evropa* (Vodopivec, 1991).

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<sup>210</sup> On the political and economical level, the idea was revived in the late 1970s in the form of regional initiatives like Alpe-Adria or Alpe-Adria-Danube and after the fall of Communism, through trade agreements like CEFTA (Central European Free Trade Agreement) or SECI (Southeast European Initiatives).

<sup>211</sup> Small nations are defined as those nations that are aware that their very existence is not secure, that it could under certain socio-historical circumstances come into question.

<sup>212</sup> This conception of Central Europe often evokes the so-called *Kaiser myth* – the golden era of the Habsburg monarchy and *fin-de-siècle* Vienna that roughly ran from 1860 to 1914. (Velikonja, 1995)

#### 5.4.5 The notion of limes and frontier

While closely connected to the concept of Central Europe, the notion of liminality is to a certain extent contrasted to it. Whereas the concept of Central Europe as a vaguely defined zone of small nations between Germany and Russia (Kundera, 1984/1991) to a large extent draws its strength from its intermediary position, the notion of liminality primarily serves to clearly demarcate the dividing line between the civilised and barbarian world and to secure the nation's position on the "proper" side of the opposing worlds. Regardless of the imagined geography to which Slovenia's physical geographic location is ascribed (Europe, Central Europe, the Balkans), the country undoubtedly belongs to the wider area where larger external forces and systems meet or collide and determine the temporary outcome of the region's history. This wider area has been and still is a point of contact between West and East, the Germanic and Slavic worlds, Europe and Asia, Christianity and Islam and Catholicism and Orthodoxy, and their ideologisations in the form of the Enlightenment and superstition, civilisation and barbarism, cultivation and violence, progress and backwardness, democracy and communism etc.

The area has since antiquity been a transitional space and is commonly referred to as a crossroads of different cultures and social or belief systems. However, institutionalised national identity projects in the region do not treat their liminal position as "crossroads", which are, as Žanić notes, neutral in their relation to the Other (2005, 36). Similarly, regional national identities rarely conceive their respective communities as "bridges" (e.g. a bridge to the Orient), which bear the positive connotation of connoisseurship and connectivity, but prefer to be distinguished, even celebrated as "bulwarks", "bastions", "final outposts" and "defence towers" of proper (Western, European, Christian) values. Furthermore, most nations of the region claim to be or have been *the* bulwark, the decisive defender of proper values. Thus the claim of having defended Europe from the Ottoman threat is voiced by Croatian, Serbian, Slovene, Austrian and Hungarian national mythologies alike. In a very similar manner, Italy was claimed to be the defender of Europe from the Slavic threat and right-wing parties in Austria such as Jörg Haider's Freedom party voice analogous claims for Austria. From the opposite angle, Bosnia was seen as a bulwark against the European threat by the Ottomans; Serbia as a defender of small nations against German (Austro-Hungarian) expansionism during the *fin-de-siècle*, only to become, a century later, in the words of

Slobodan Milošević, a defender of Europe and its values against American imperialism during the NATO intervention in Kosovo in 1999. Croatian nationalism also has this notion of double bulwark, according to which it was not only defending – or rather, has defended – Catholicism from the East (i.e. from Islam and Orthodoxy), but also from the West, that is, from the Slovene Protestant movement in the 16<sup>th</sup> century (Antić 2005; Žanić 2005).

While the claim of bulwark is held by larger and smaller nations alike, smaller nations made it central to their institutionalised identity projects, claiming it as their historical mission, their calling, which, in the cases of Serbia or Croatia, is claimed to be of divine origin. Furthermore, when the claim of historical missions is voiced by these small nations, it is often done with a sense of unjustness, namely that the defended (Europe, the West) fails to acknowledge or repay its defenders for their historical role and sacrifice. This is particularly true of national identity projects in several ex-Yugoslav states, which made this point central to their national(istic) projects.

I certainly do not wish to claim that this notion of liminality is a completely invented tradition without any historical grounding – the dividing line between the Western and Eastern Roman Empire, between Catholic and Orthodox Christianity, the ever shifting border between the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires or the Iron Curtain can all serve to prove this point. I merely wish to point out that a particular aspect of this liminal consciousness was selected and highlighted for the national identity projects. Slovene national identity resolves this liminal position not so much in terms of being a bulwark as being on the "right" side of the bulwark.<sup>213</sup> Although battles with Turks and defying Turkish raids were acclaimed by historians, folk and literary traditions alike – one need only think of a significant corpus of epic folk songs on the subject (see Terseglav 2005) or Josip Jurčič's popular story of Martin Krpan – Slovene national identity constructs Slovenes not so much as victorious defenders but as the attacked. The value of the liminality lies not in the bulwark itself as in being behind the bulwark, an integral part of what needed to be defended and whose status of cultural belonging should therefore be unquestionable. Unlike Serbian or Croatian national identity projects that dwell on the notion of the final outpost and *Antemurale Christianitatis*, the Slovene one clings to the notion of hinterland, of being indisputably on the European, Western, Christian and non-

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<sup>213</sup> Although it must be noted that the notion of the bulwark of Europe did to a certain extent reappear and materialise in practice with the introduction of the Schengen border regime in 2007.

Balkan side of the limes. It must, however, be noted that in December 2007, Slovenia became a sort of bulwark of Europe, materialised in the introduction of the Schengen border regime.

#### **5.4.6 Religion and Slovenehood as peasantry**

While the religious affiliation of the Slovene nation seems a very straightforward matter, at least judging from the evidences of material culture (the numerous churches that dot the Slovene landscape), the number of declared worshippers (57% of the population and 86% of all worshippers, according to the 2002 census) and the general socio-political status of the Roman Catholic Church in Slovene public life. However, the historic role of the Roman Catholic Church in the formation of Slovene national identity is of a somewhat more ambivalent nature.

First of all, Slovene conversion to Christianity during the 7<sup>th</sup> century came hand in hand with the loss of political independence, which became a traumatic historical question for 19<sup>th</sup>- and 20<sup>th</sup>-century national(istic) projects (see e.g. Grdina, 2001). As much as Catholic intellectuals have praised the conversion that brought the would-be Slovenes the benefits of inclusion into the civilisation and culture of the European West, conversion was an act forced from without. Thus the constitutive status of Christianity in general and Catholicism in particular is of a non-indigenous, foreign and forced religious system. This point is vividly immortalised in Prešeren's *Baptism at Savica* (*Krst pri Savici*), that describes the breaking of the last pagan resistance and the resigned conversion of their fictitious last leader, Črtomir. Although the epic was hailed in its time as pro-Catholic, the verses offer a potent critical interpretation of the events. As Žižek notes, *The Baptism* is focused precisely on the renunciation that the new political and religious reality demands: "Črtomir loses all "his worldly possessions", first freedom of his stock, than the possibility of his personal happiness, and in the end [...] even consents to the baptism to become a promoter of Christianity himself, i.e. identifying himself precisely with the source of his total defeat" (Žižek 1987, 36-37). According to Urbančič, this led to the establishment of a strong division between the public and private self among the would-be Slovenes, or what Goffman (1959/1990) would call back and frontstage identities: "On the outside, [they] fulfilled the obligations imposed by foreigners, but the source of genuine, European Christian-state "spirit" has remained alien to [them]" (quoted in Žižek 1987, 34; my insertion).

The Karantanija myth is not the only locus of Slovene national identity towards which Catholicism stands in an ambivalent (one could even risk saying anti-national) position. It was not the Catholic but the Protestant Church that championed the Slovene ethnic cause. The fierce Counter-Reformation brought the "national awakening" to a hold for more than two centuries. From the point of view of Slovene national identity, the burning of heretic books and the marginalisation of the key element of the would-be nation's specificity, the Slovene language, is one of the permanent black stains of the Roman Catholic Church. With the start of Slovene nation-building in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the church again played a somewhat reactionary role. Its insistence on unquestioning loyalty to the Habsburg crown did not stimulate the full realisation of the national cause (striving for political independence) but merely gave some support to its linguistic and cultural part. The explicit connection, the sacred union of the national cause and the Catholic Church, was fully established only in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when Catholic political parties came to dominate the Slovene political arena.

National movements in Europe were as a rule secular movements, initiated by the bourgeoisie, but Slovene lands lacked a strong, distinct, non-German class of merchants, capitalists, public servants, teachers and others who had contributed to the development of the liberal middle class and the promotion of its ideals. With the bourgeoisie still in the process of formation and liberalism enjoying little support among a predominantly peasant population, the championing of the national cause became the domain of clerical, Catholic parties and priests. With the mounting pressures of modernisation, industrialisation and Austro-German nationalism, the Catholic Church established itself as the essential bastion of Slovene-ness through political and material protection (establishment of cooperatives, loan banks etc.) of the rural population of peasants, sharecroppers and day labourers. The modernisation trends represented the paramount threat to the Church and nation, as they threatened to gradually erode and de-root the peasant population, leading to their proletarianisation, urbanisation and massive immigration. Under threat from such a vast array of social forces, the enemies of the nation/Church ranged in a colourful palette from German nationalists and capitalists to Slovene liberals and native bourgeoisie, Jewish capital<sup>214</sup> and, after the First World War, emerging communism and the perceived Bolshevik threat.

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<sup>214</sup> Anti-Semitism is a peculiar strand of Slovene nationalism, since the Jewish population on the territory of present-day Slovenia before the Second World War was rather marginal, estimated at some 4,500. Jews were driven out of present-day Slovene territory as early as 1497 and 1515 and some inhibitions on their settlement



Thus the *union sacrée* between the nation and the Catholic Church was formed precisely at the same time as Slovene national identity was to be consolidated and "Slovenes became Slovenes". During the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> and first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Slovenehood was constituted as rural and Catholic, or, in Žižek's words: "To recognise yourself as a Slovene, to respond to the call on Nation, *meant* to recognise your rootedness in peasantry and rural life (kmetstvo) (1987, 43). To paraphrase the title of Eugen Weber's 1976 book, it was not so much that peasants were turned into Slovenes but Slovenes into peasants. As the Slovene national movement developed, it became "respectably clerical and conservative, a last echo of the alliance between dynasty and peasants" (Taylor 1976, 203).

The link between Church and nation is the most contested of the privileged discursive elements for articulation of the boundary of Slovene national identity – the link between Church and nation has been contested since the early times of nation-building and was institutionally rejected during the communist era. After Slovenia's independence and its transition to multi-party democracy, the Church regained a significant amount of political influence and moral prestige and continues to act as a self-proclaimed protector of the nation's core moral values and tradition. Institutionally, the "special status" of the Church is guaranteed in laws and regulations and Catholicism is often evoked as a marker of Slovenia's historical belonging to the cultural and spiritual realm of Europe.

The visual canonisation of Slovenia's rural "nature" ranged from painting (the Slovene impressionist movement, of which Ivan Grohar's Sejalec became the iconic representation), illustrations and political caricature (e.g. the work of Maksim Gaspari, still popular as greeting cards reproductions) to documentary photography (e.g. Fran Krašovec) and advertising. Presently, it still permeates discourses as divergent as tourism promotion, economic and political advertising, or editorial illustrations in the daily press. Tourism promotion materials and monographs on Slovenia<sup>215</sup> are particularly prominent promoters of the rural character and sacred union of nation and religion (national costumes and traditional crafts, landscapes dotted

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and trade were in effect as late as 1861. Even more striking is its persistence in contemporary Slovenia, where declared anti-Semitism persists, with the Jewish community reduced to a handful (estimates vary at around 400 members) and being completely unrecognisable in public sphere (see e.g. Toš 1999) . For a short note on the anti-Semitism of Catholics in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century see Žižek, 1987.

<sup>215</sup> This is true for a variety of Slovene publications (many of them published by church-related publishing houses) as well as foreign books on Slovenia, from genre as diverse as political analysis (e.g. Cox 2005) as Lonely Planet guidebooks.

with churches on hilltops or a panoramic view of Lake Bled as the most iconic tourism-related representation of Slovenia).

#### 5.4.7 Rural land(scape) and nation

Many nations utilise topographical markers as symbols and a particular type of landscape or distinctive places can serve as powerful metonymies and triggers of associations, images and ideas (e.g. highlands and fishing villages in Scotland, fenced pastures in England, Mediterranean Provence in France, Alpine settings in Austria and Switzerland etc.). In institutional and personal national identification projects, landscape is endowed with political ideas, moral values and sacredness that testify of the nation's history, culture or rituals. National identity is frequently tied to land, and the Slovene case is not much different. The rural roots of Slovenehood were hardly ever subjected to strong critique, despite the more than century-and-a-half of political tensions and ideological struggles between the urban and rural populations. The rural landscape or way of life was frequently idealised as more "real", "true" or "genuine", even by the urban population. But unlike the link between Church and peasantry, this secular rural bonding is not so much a reference to peasantry as it is to the rural landscape. To paraphrase both Anderson and Said, *imagined communities* transform *imagined geography* into an *imagined landscape*. In *Krajina kot nacionalni simbol*, Ana Kučan (1998) explores how Slovene national identity is connected to a particular conception of rural landscape which most typically includes meadows, pastures and fields, often with a backdrop of mountains. According to Kučan, the typical Slovene landscape that serves as a symbol of national identity is not wild, untamed nature, but is as a rule tamed by human agency, represented through *kozolci* (a hay rick, a distinctively Slovene ethnographic element) or churches on top of hills.<sup>216</sup> Such typical imagery or the *imagined landscape*, which permeates tourist promotion materials and vast volumes of canonised literary works that are an integral part of education system, and which is abundant in political advertising by conservative parties, is a highly particularized rendering of Slovene-ness: it confines it to a particular region – Gorenjska. This equation has its origins in the administrative division of Habsburg

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<sup>216</sup>Lime tree (lipa) and lime tree leaves could be listed as the third of the symbols that stem from the landscape. It was a sacred tree in Slavic times under which village councils and meetings took place. They were planted in symbolic places, during medieval and modern times, for example, often near churches. They have often been planted as a commemoration or celebration of important events, such as the victory over the Turks; in present times, one such occasion was the ritual planting of lime trees in Slovene cities in 1991 when Slovenia gained its independence. In the mid-1980s, the heart-shaped lime tree leaf became a potent visual signifier of Slovene-ness as a logo of the tourism promotion campaign "Slovenia, my land", launched by the Slovene Chamber of Commerce. Although its heyday has long since passed, the lime tree logo is still used today by various companies.

empire, where the region (at the time called Kranjska/Carynthia) was ethnically the most coherently Slovene province and the first to be run by Slovene local government. As a growing administrative and economic hub, the region became a sort of "cradle of Sloveneness". Thus, at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, other visual markers of the region came to symbolise Slovenehood, such as the female *avba* headgear, while the average Slovene was dubbed "krajnski Janez" (John from Carynthia) and later just Janez.<sup>217</sup>

The Alpine setting and the mountains in particular are the undisputed institutionalised and everyday symbolical markers of Slovene national identity, regardless of the fact that they are physically limited mostly to the north-western part of the country. The country's highest peak, Triglav, is probably the most recognisable symbol to Slovenes whose "national belonging" was secured by priest Jakob Aljaž, who bought the mountain's peak in 1895, marked it with a small turret and donated it to the Slovene Alpine Society in order to preserve the "Slovene appearance of Slovene mountains". Around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Alps were the site of ideological struggle for spatial conquest (through marking paths and building shelters and cottages) between Slovene and German Alpine Societies, an equivalent of erecting "halls of culture" in the cities. Mountains are the sacralised topography of the Slovene *imagined landscape*, and mountain-climbing gained the status of secular pilgrimage, particularly the conquest of Triglav.<sup>218</sup> The use of the Alps and mountain scenery for the building and demarcation of Slovene national identity was frequent in times when the nation was renegotiating its identity, particularly at the turn of the century, during the 1920s and 1930s in the context of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes/Kingdom of Yugoslavia, during the nation's rebuilding after the Second World War and in the 1980s, during the time of national revival.<sup>219</sup> It served to symbolically connect Slovenia and Yugoslavia to the European countries of the Alpine region, such as Switzerland, France, Italy, Germany and Austria, securing it the status of a modern nation. Apart from being a recurrent motive in painting, Triglav soon entered graphic design and has since the 1930s continually appeared in various proposals and official versions of Slovenia's herald. It was also the subject of the first Slovene

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<sup>217</sup> The expression "krajnski Janez" traditionally connotes "a small farmer with a feather in his hat from the valleys and hills of Gorenjska region who may never have travelled as far as [nation's capital] Ljubljana" (Gow and Carmichael 2000, 5)

<sup>218</sup> These pilgrimages are not just individual acts, they are frequently carried out by mountaineering associations and clubs of educational institutions and companies, or organised events as the annual hike *Sto žensk na Triglav* (Hundred women on Triglav).

<sup>219</sup> Winter sports (skiing and ski jumping) in which Slovenes excelled in 1980s and early 1990s was a particularly strong rallying and articulation point for flagging the particularity of Slovene identity both within the Yugoslav context and in the aftermath of Slovene independence and struggle for achieving "international visibility".

feature film, *V kraljestvu zlatoroga* (1931). After 1991, the image of Triglav for institutionalised uses proliferated: for example it appeared in military insignia and logotypes and on stamps. It was also the dominant motif on the provisional banknotes Slovenia introduced after separating from Yugoslavia in 1991 and is used on 50-cent coins.

## 5.5 Slovene national identity and theories of nation

Although the project of Slovene national identity as delineated through the seven privileged discursive elements is distinctive in its tenor, it is by no means unique on the underlying structural level of the national project. The concluding section of the chapter will thus map the discursive construction onto the theoretical blueprint that is applicable to the construction of Slovene national identity and its emerging project – nation, seen as a "complex and rarely consistent mixture of geography, language, custom, law, religion, economy, race and collective will [...] held together by machinery of markets, media, and political will backed by force" (Pecora, 2001: 2-3).

### 5.5.1 Primordialism

The current variant of Slovene national identity as articulated through the privileged discursive points is, despite its recent origin, marked by a strong primordialist stand. As S.N. Eisenstadt (2007, 145) notes, "one of the most interesting aspects of the process of reconstruction of collective identities is the continual restructuring of primordiality". This is particularly evident in the emphasis placed on evolutionism, by which I mean the notion that nations are naturally going to evolve to the point of forming nation-states. The following quote from Ernest Gellner summarises the standpoint of Slovene cultural and political elites of the past two decades: "nations and states are destined for each other; [...] either without the other is incomplete, and constitutes a tragedy" (Gellner 1983, 6). However, national evolutionism is not confined solely to the political arena – it trickled into scientific discourse and is most clearly visible in history and sociology and studies of national. Thus, Slovene studies of national distinguish between three stages in the development of a nation: *etniija*, *narod* and *nacija*. While the first term translates as *ethnicity*, English and other languages do not distinguish between *narod* and *nacija*: the first refers to nation in its stateless stage, while *nacija* refers to a sovereign nation, simultaneously establishing the formation of the

independent state as the evolutionary and teleological goal of every nation, the point of its historical fulfilment (cf. Hribar, 2004). In history, it is not present only through the "nationalisation" of history before nations but also in the institutionalised narrative of the nation's genesis referred to as *narodno buditeljstvo* or *narodni preporod* (*national reawakening* or *national rebirth*), carried out by *narodobuditelji* (nation-awakeners), which clearly rests on the notion of "nation as a sleeping beauty",<sup>220</sup> on the primordialist notion that nations have always been there, only they had been "politically asleep, for some strange reasons, which may have included the malevolent machinations of their enemies" (Gellner 1994, 4).

### 5.5.2 Slovene national identity/nationalism and established theoretical typologies

When seen through the prism of the many typologies of nationalism, the primordality of Slovene national identity clearly positions the national project in what Smith (1991) called "the ethnic conception of a nation". Building on a somewhat problematic distinction Friderich Meinecke made between *Kulturnation* and *Staatsnation*, Smith proposes a distinction between the "Western model of national identity" – under which social solidarity is based predominantly on historical territory, legal-political community, equality of members and a common civic culture and ideology – and a "non-Western model of the nation"<sup>221</sup>, which is "first and foremost a community of common descent" (1991, 11). Such divisions tend to be problematic as a form of what Georg Schöpfunglin termed "residual Hans Kohnism" – a notion that there is a "Good Western (civic, peace loving, etc.) and a Bad Eastern nationalism (nasty, brutish and anything but short)" (2002, 4-5). While I do not intend to deny the differences in the construction of national identity, its institutionalisation and the emphasis it places on ethnicity, this does in no way mean that they are "beyond ethnicity". Conceptualising the modern nation-state as a dynamic interaction of ethnicity, citizenship and state, Schöpfunglin proposes that the difference between "Eastern" and "Western" concepts is not in "leaving ethnicity behind", but in the extent to which the states have "successfully hemmed it in by constructing state machineries and civil societies that ensure that *ethnicity is not the sole source of political power*" (2002: 6; my emphasis).

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<sup>220</sup> Maksim Gaspari's postcard *Rodna gruda* (a.k.a. *Naša lepa domovina*, 1938) is a potent visualisation of this idea.

<sup>221</sup> Note Smith's problematic use of *national identity* and *nation* as synonyms.

There are a number of other similar theoretical classifications of nations and nationalism<sup>222</sup>— I shall, however, limit myself to presenting the concept of *nationalising nationalism* (Brubaker, 1996), which sheds light on the contemporary dynamics of articulation of Slovene national identity. Writing on Central and East European nationalisms after the demise of communism, Brubaker notes three distinctive types of nationalisms: the "nationalising" nationalisms of newly independent states, the transborder nationalisms of external national homelands and the minority nationalisms within the borders of the new national states (Brubaker 1996, 4-5). Brubaker notes that the three types are not exclusive, i.e. that the new can pursue two or even all three of these projects, but the relative homogeneity of the Slovene population within the borders of the newly formed independent state (or what Brubaker calls the mismatch between cultural and political boundaries) limited the state's activities primarily to that of nationalising nationalism. According to Brubaker, nationalising nationalisms:

involve claims made in the name of the 'core nation' or nationality, defined in ethnocultural terms, and sharply distinguished from citizenry as a whole. The core nation is understood as the legitimate 'owner' of the state, which is conceived as the state of and for the core nation." (1996, 5)

Brubaker notes that, despite owning a state, the core nation conceives its dominant position as endangered (culturally, economically or demographically), and therefore launches a project of internal homogenisation. In the case of Slovenia, it is the demographic threat that was and continues to be evoked for the build-up of national identity and various nationalising, or, we could say, nationalistic projects, including acts of discrimination against perceived internal and external Others. In the resulting processes of exclusion, nationalising nationalisms rely heavily on the mobilisation of exclusivist dichotomies and binary oppositions.

### **5.5.3 Orientalising the Other**

The binary oppositions evoked by Slovene nationalising nationalism for the construction of social boundaries and hence the articulation of national identity are a very particular kind of

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<sup>222</sup> For example, Miroslav Hroch's typology (1985/2000) is informative for discursive elements of Slovene national identity that relate to the earlier stages of development of national identity, as Slovenes were a typical example of what was termed "a small nation" or "nation without a state", "nations" that during the 19<sup>th</sup> century lacked "their own nobility, political unity and continuous literary tradition" (Hroch 1996, 80). According to his classification, Slovenia assigns to the "belated" or second type of nationalism (Hroch 1996, 83), which explains the role of intellectuals and language in nation-building.

dichotomising discourse. What Slovene national identity was built on in the 1990s was a particular strand of the discourse of *Orientalism* (sometimes also known as *Balkanism*). The Balkan Orientalism is a particular type of Orientalism. Milica Bakić-Hayden (1995) writes about "nesting Orientalisms" of the former Yugoslav states, which evoke the discourse of Civilisation vs. Barbarism in their institutional and political projects of national identity. Its specificity is that it is used to articulate European-ness or Western-ness or developed-ness by states that have themselves been labelled as Balkan/Oriental, uncivilised and backward. Thus Slovenes evoke the term to differentiate themselves from Serbs (and in more isolated cases, from Croats), Croats from Serbs, Serbs from Bosnians and Albanians etc. Orientalism is a discourse of civilisational belonging and moral evaluation, and Balkanism can be seen as a "variation of the Orientalist theme", because it shares its basic underlying logic, but not all of its tropes, metaphors and affinities (cf. Bakić-Hayden 1995 and Todorova 1997). As Andre Gingrich points out, Orientalism that serves to differentiate various nations and states in the Balkans is the "frontier orientalism"<sup>223</sup> that recognises only one part of the colonial discourse of Orientalism analysed by Said (1979/1994). Frontier orientalism is preoccupied with the image of the dangerous Oriental aggressor and does not recognise that there is also a more sensual side to the Orient. Gingrich notes that while the Oriental Other does have a certain plurality of roles, including "a dangerous intruder, a humiliated opponent, or a loyal ally", he is mostly a soldier:

"Because he is a soldier, he is a single heterosexual male. Frontier orientalism is a tale of male confrontations and alliances [...] for better or for worse, [it] leaves Oriental women almost completely out of the picture. It has no repertoire of standard European, male erotic fantasies about Muslim women, for instance, as are typical for colonial orientalism." (1996: 120)

Frontier orientalism has a distinctively strong cultural component that complements its political aspects. It is, as Gingrich argues, an outcome of both "elite and folk culture", based on the historical residues of contacts with Oriental Others (e.g. the Turkish wars of the Habsburg empire). It is "a relatively coherent set of metaphors and myths that reside in the folk and public culture [...] unlike classical or colonial orientalism which can be understood as

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<sup>223</sup> Gingrich distinguishes between three types of Orientalisms: enlightened orientalism (from the brief enlightened period in German and European music and literature), classical orientalism (consumed locally in their British, French, and Italian versions), and frontier orientalism in countries that had some colonial influence in nearby Muslim lands (e.g. Austria and Spain). (1996, 100; 121)

a facet of elite culture" (1996, 119). The main implication of frontier orientalism is that it "places the home country and its population along the adjacent territorial and military borderline which is imbued with a timeless mission" (Ibid.). While Gingrich assigns frontier orientalism to the countries that had some direct colonial influence in the Muslim territories, my analysis in subsequent chapters will show that Slovene national identity can be read as a case of frontier orientalism, regardless of Slovenia's lack of actual territorial colonial possessions in the Balkan Orient.

I began this thesis by pointing to the close interrelationship of nation (both as a form of collective identification and institutional apparatus), communication and photography. Interwoven into the fabric of modernity, they bear the marks of a common historical legacy, normative accounts of society and – as I hope became clear above – conceptual shortcomings and theoretical pitfalls. I strongly believe the somewhat lengthy excursion into the theorisation of nation and national identity presented above was needed to clarify one of these shared clusters of theoretical inconsistencies and conceptual standoffs that is linked to the corresponding epistemological (and hence ideological) division into two opposing paradigms that could be termed "naturalist" and "culturalist".<sup>224</sup> As I have shown above, both national identity and photography lack a coherent, overarching set of theoretical dispositions on the objects of their study. This lack of strong consensus about theory, methods, techniques and research problems is particularly evident in the rapidly expanding body of literature on the two subjects, where the bulk of contemporary academic output comes in a myriad of case studies based on imprecise, implied or commonsense definitions of the subject. Stressing the processual nature of social identities and their individual and social dimension, the present chapter (again) resorted to discursive definition of the phenomena in question. Thus Slovene national identity was defined on the basis of seven institutionally articulated privileged discursive elements which make up the basis of analytical apparatus in the next chapter. The seven privileged discursive elements can be understood as a pool of socially shared,

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<sup>224</sup> The term "culturalist" tradition is used to avoid possible terminological confusion. The shared theoretical position is commonly referred to as *postmodern* in relation to photography and *modern* in relation to studies of nation and nationalism. The fault line between *primordialists* and *modernists* within the studies of nationalism and national identity basically corresponds to the one between *essentialists/ formalists* and *antiessentialists/postmodernists* within the writings on photography. The latter are both ideological critiques of former positions which attempt to demystify the innateness or naturalness of the phenomena in question by pointing to their social constructedness and the (ideological) role of social institutions in the process of this construction. Compare, for example, Eric Hobsbawm's concept of invented traditions of national identity (1983/1992) with John Tagg's (1988) analysis of the role 19<sup>th</sup>-century state apparatuses played in securing the dominant understanding of photography as proof, to name but two famous texts from the "culturalist" traditions.



commonly available frames that can structure news reporting of domestic and international events. As such, they are particularly pertinent for analysis of visual representations. However, before proceeding to the analysis, a final note on the subject of Slovene national identity is in order. Over the past decade, Slovene national identity has come under increased scrutiny in the form of scholarly research that focuses either on its media representations or constructions within specific mediums or institutions. The work on media representations focuses on what is perceived as a negative dimension of nationhood – nationalism and its exclusivist, derogatory rhetoric aimed at those that do not fit the dominant, primordialist construction of nation. Consequently, this body of research<sup>225</sup> focuses on marginalised groups, including people from former Yugoslav republics (both citizens and non-citizens), Bosnian war refugees, Izbrisani (Erased), illegal immigrants, the gay and lesbian community, Roma, religious "minorities" etc. and overlooks both positive media representations of the aforementioned groups as well as media representations of the dominant groups. Moreover, this research exhibits a marked preference for analysis of text.<sup>226</sup> The body of work that traces national identity in various specific mediums, institutions or cultural phenomena is more prone to analysis of the visual components used in communicating a nation, including Kučan in 1998 (landscaping and tourist promotion), Zgonik in 2002 (painting) and Zei in 1993 and 1997 (public symbols and stamps), and several have included visuals as part of broader discursive articulations of national identity (e.g. Pušnik 2004 – photographs as parts of museum exhibitions, Šaver 2005 – films and Slovene Alpine myth).<sup>227</sup> Thus, in the next chapter, the thesis steps into the territory that Roman cartographers would label *ubi leones*, a territory that is not so much *terra incognita* as it is *terra mystica*. As I have repeatedly pointed out in previous chapters, the problem here is not so much that press photography is an un(der)researched area, but that professional, scholarly and political actors routinely talk about or act upon un(der)researched – and consequently mystified – understanding of the nature, power and effects of photography.

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<sup>225</sup> See Mihelj 2005 for informative overview.

<sup>226</sup> This preference for written and spoken word continues in much of the recent research -e.g. Mihelj 2005 analyses TV news reports on illegal migration without including accompanying visual material. Similarly, Petrović's (2009) otherwise detailed discursive analysis of media representations of Western Balkans does not include a single reference to visual material.

<sup>227</sup> Pušnik 2004 also offers a valuable overview of academic investigation into national identity.

## 6 PRESS PHOTOGRAPHY AND REPRESENTATION OF NATIONAL IDENTITY: MAINTAINING BOUNDARIES THROUGH EXTERNAL OTHERS

*To forget and – I will venture to say – to get one's history wrong are essential factors in the making of a natio.* Ernest Renan, What is a nation?

*Politics is not about objective reality, but virtual reality. What happens in the political world is divorced from the real world. It exists for only the fleeting historical moment, in a magical movie of sorts, a never-ending and infinitely revisable docudrama.* Michael Kelly, David Gergen, Master of the game (From New York Times)

As I have already noted in the introduction, media studies and studies of national identities and nationalisms have a marked tendency to overlook (press) photography in the context of political communication. Both fields have a marked preference for the word/text part of news reports or political discourse extending beyond questions of visual representation – photography is, for example, routinely overlooked in texts on the (political) economy of the media and the production of news, even though the field has been subjected to even harsher pressures of market concentration, commercialisation, globalisation or deprofessionalization than word (press, radio) or moving image (TV) journalism. Thus the workings of photographic and news agencies that provide the majority of (globally) available news imagery are generally left uninvestigated.<sup>228</sup> Within studies of nationalism and national identity, this failure to address the role and uses of press photography in the process of national identification is in a way surprising, as the field has long acknowledged the centrality of its primary outlet – the periodical printed press – to the rise (e.g. Anderson 1983/1991) and routine maintenance (e.g. Billig 1995/2001) of a feeling of collective belonging to nation. Similarly, media studies and political communication tend to eschew photography regardless of their marked (and somewhat problematic) preference for researching elite media, such as the quality press. This thesis attempts to fill some of the gaps in the existing research by expanding the framing analysis to visual parts of news items and by broadening the scope of

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<sup>228</sup> While the literature on news agencies is scarce (recent work includes e.g. Boyd-Barrett and Rantanen 1998; Boyd-Barrett 2000, 2001), their photographic operation is virtually unexplored (Fahmy 2004).

the sample under investigation from exclusively topic-related news items to the context of the whole publication. This more comprehensive outline of the study is promoted not only because photographs play an important role in dramatisating the public life of an fffffity. It is rooted in the acknowledgement of a relative autonomy of visual narratives which implies that images can either support or challenge the narration and frames of textual reports. Studies that fail to address the visual component of news not only dismiss the communicative potential of images but also risk overlooking alternative, even conflicting discourses promoted through press photography – both in terms of content and implied ideology.

## 6.1 Outline of the analysis – identity through external Others

The analysis is an exploratory research into the ways in which press photography in general, and photojournalism in particular, are used in the Slovene media as aids to and markers of collective identification processes. It is a study of representations, and thus excludes empirical analysis of production and consumption, effects or uses of images. The core of my empirical work is qualitative analysis of visual news coverage of two selected events that generated large-scale public debate on Slovene national identity, by either reaffirming or challenging the established constellation of its privileged discursive elements. As noted in the section on national identity, contested events are particularly informative as identities are not fixed, but emerge as a temporary hegemonic fixation that needs to be continuously negotiated and maintained. Furthermore, this sort of dispute opens up the dominant discourse for the promotion of alternative frames and, as framing literature points out, the gradual (re)institution of dominant frames says a great deal about the nature of the dominant discourse and the relative power of social actors promoting it. Challenges to the prevailing constellation of privileged discursive elements of national identity thus open up potential for their discursive (re)articulation and the restructuring of power relations between them.

The first of the two selected events – the 2003 referendum on whether Slovenia should join the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) – investigates media reporting as a Barthian project of boundary delineation and maintenance in relation to external groups, particularly the category of external Other. Due to the absence of a straightforward political or military threat from the countries neighbouring Slovenia, boundary delineation and maintenance could not be structured in the powerful, narrowly

defined oppositional dynamics of one state/nation/political system vs. another state/nation/political system, i.e. of Us vs. concrete Them (as for example in the case of neighbouring Croatia). Instead, it was rooted in a more indirect, broader context of cultural and civilisational belonging. The pre-referendum public debate(s) served as a public re-evaluation of little over a decade of the country's political, social and economic independence, and consequently became a crystalliser of implicit and explicit definitions of the nation's external Others.

I have analysed photographic coverage of the run-up to the EU/NATO referendum in four different publications – two national daily newspapers (Delo and Dnevnik) and two weekly magazines (Mladina and Mag). The two newspapers were selected on the basis of their audience reach as well as their ownership structure and implied political leaning. In 2003, Delo was Slovenia's largest quality daily newspaper, which for years had set the standard in print news for a national audience and the journalistic community. Dnevnik was Delo's most serious rival in the heavyweight press, though its coverage was much more prone to tabloid-style journalism, evident from its layout, use of headlines and images, and its ratio of factual vs. interpretative information. The two weekly magazines were selected to supplement the photographic discourse of dailies, first of all because news coverage in magazines – both textual and visual – adheres to different standards and principles than those followed by the daily press. In terms of articles, magazines offer an opportunity for more in-depth reporting, which can be more analytical and context-oriented. In terms of visuals, magazines generally allow for more images to be printed with a single story, which gives the opportunity for a more multilayered coverage of events. Additionally, magazines tend to be more inclined to grant independence (in terms of narration) and freedom (in terms of codes and conventions) to visual reporting. Due to their focus on more in-depth and interpretative coverage of events, images published in weekly magazines can be regarded as potent crystallisers of meaning or indicators of consensus about the interpretation of a given event. Mladina and Mag were chosen because, in 2003, their editorial policies were indicative of the ideological opposition between the political left and right, with Mladina supporting the liberal and leftist option and Mag agitating on behalf of a more conservative constituency on the political right. Based on their proclaimed editorial policies, the two publications were expected to promote divergent conceptualisations of national identity – one more inclusive, citizenship-based, the other a

more essentialist, *Blut und Boden* version – and were consequently expected to be mobilising diverging frames to report the same events.

## 6.2 Notes on critical image analysis

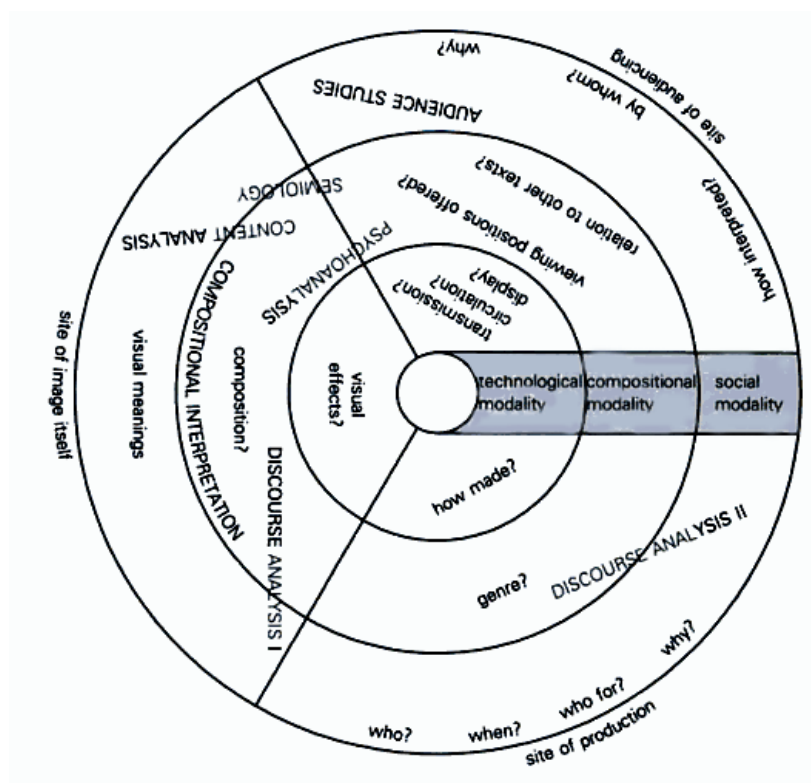
Coverage of selected events will primarily be analysed through an approach that literature describes as “deep reading” or “critical” image analysis, a somewhat eclectic approach to studying visual material. While critical image analysis is greatly indebted to semiotics, it focuses less on signs but thinks more “in terms of the cultural significance, social practices and power relations in which it [a visual] is embedded” (Rose 2001, 3). This implies “thinking about power relations that produce, are articulated through, and can be challenged by, ways of seeing and imaging” (Ibid.). Thus, instead of following the Barthesian steps of image analysis of *denotation-connotation-myth*, critical image analysis follows the steps *signs-theory-ideology*, explicitly replacing connotation with theory-derived concepts, which enables it to bypass the reductionism critique often voiced against semiotics and its relative fixity of signifiers’ meanings, focusing our attention on the power relations involved in the production of visuals. Cultural products, like photographs, are not closed, self-contained and transcendent entities but, as Wolff argues, a product “of specific historical practices on the part of identifiable social groups in given conditions, and therefore bear the imprint of the ideas, values and conditions of existence of those groups” (1981, 49).

This has important implications for the selection of the research paradigm for analysis of visual material in general and photographs in particular. As I have shown in Chapters 2 and 3, photographs are not transparent windows on the world. Ways of seeing bear the “imprints” of social ideas and groups and are structured through learned assumptions concerning Beauty, Truth, Civilisation, Taste etc. (1972, 11). Summarising major arguments on the interpretation of photographs, Clark claims that “[w]e need to insist that we *read* a photograph, not as an image, but as a *text*” (1997, 27, original emphasis). However, photographs “are texts inscribed in terms of what we may call ‘photographic discourse’, but this discourse, like any other, engages discourses beyond itself, the ‘photographic text’, like any other, is the site of a complex intertextuality, an overlapping series of previous texts ‘taken for granted’ at a particular cultural and historical conjuncture” (Burgin 1982, 144). Thus, as Wolf succinctly

phrased it, “[a]ny reading of any cultural product is an act of interpretation” (Wolff 1981, 97), and Hall bluntly explicated this in relation to visual representations: “[T]here is no single or ‘correct’ answer to the question ‘What does this image mean?’” and since “there is no law which can guarantee that things will have ‘one true meaning’ or that meanings won’t change over time, work in this area is bound to be interpretative” (1997, 9). All this suggests that qualitative methods might be more appropriate for image analysis than quantitative ones, or that the results of the latter should always be supplemented by qualitative examination of illustrative cases.

In an attempt to systematically map the applicability of various research methods and approaches to the study of images, Rose (2003) outlined three *sites* at which meanings of an image are made (site of meaning production, image itself and site of consumption) and three *modalities* or aspects of each of the three sites (technological, compositional and social modality). As is evident from Figure 6.1, the division between these categories is not clear-cut, and various methods overlap in addressing the issues raised at different modalities or sites of meaning production.

Figure 6.1: Sites, modalities and methods for interpretation of visual materials.



From: G. Rose, Visual Methodologies (2003, 30).

The approach employed in this thesis – framing analysis through critical reading of images – is a mixed method that can be located within the social modality of the site of the image itself.<sup>229</sup> It draws its rationale somewhat eclectically from semiology, discourse analysis and what Rose termed compositional interpretation, as well as from the adjoining site of production (questions of genre, origin and purpose of production etc.). Rose defines five presuppositions of critical analysis of images:

an image may have its own visual effects [...]; these effects, through the ways of seeing mobilized by the image, are crucial in the production and reproduction of visions of social difference; but these effects always intersect with the social context of its viewing and the visualities its spectators bring to their viewing.  
(2003, 15)

Two of these require additional contextualisation. One of the implications of the presupposition that “an image may have its own visual effects” is to reject the notions of images as empty signifiers whose meaning is entirely context-dependent (advocated by much of postmodernist theory of photography, which attributes meaning ascription to social institutions). It implies accepting the notion of universal meaning of basic codes of depiction which, as Messaris 1994 emphasises, originate in our everyday visual perception. These are, first of all, *vertical* and *horizontal angle* (signifying power and normality) and *frame size* (implying *proximity*, social distance or degree of identification),<sup>230</sup> though Krees and van Leeuwen (1996) expand this list to composition (vectors of movement). These universal codes concern//are related to the formal qualities of the image. Secondly, since photographic images are not transparent windows to the world but culturally coded messages, they are also a site of//for the construction and depiction of social difference: “To understand a visualisation is [...] to enquire into its provenance and into the social work it does. It is to note its principles of inclusion and exclusion, to detect the roles that it makes available [...] and to decode the hierarchies and differences that it naturalises” (Fyfe and Law 1988, 1). Thus it is important to

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<sup>229</sup> When applicable, the findings from my present analysis will be supplemented by my previous research, which will at the same time introduce more quantitative-oriented approaches to image analysis, namely content analysis.

<sup>230</sup> The use of frame size as an indicator of intimacy and implied identification is derived from Edward Hall's theory of *proxemics* (1966), which builds on interpersonal physical distance as an indicator of intimacy/distance between subjects. Standard types of frames (e.g. employed by cinema or TV) correspond to what a subject would see at a given stage of social distance (intimate, close personal, far personal, close social, far social and public). It is worth noting that this criterion has been a standard feature of the cinema industry, for example, way before it became outlined as an analytical tool for visual analysis. (E. Hall, 1966/1990)

consider what (and how)<sup>231</sup> we are allowed or made to see on the one hand, and note significant absences, people, objects, places or social relations we are not allowed to see on the other. Visuals are "intimately bound into social power relations" (Rose 2003, 9), which, according to Haraway (1991), produce specific visions or hierarchies of social difference (in terms of class, race, gender etc.), while itself claiming not to be part of that hierarchy and thus to be universal. As Clarke explicates:

Critical visual analysis' emphasis to looks beyond the appearance and "read between the lines" of an image in search of "hidden" or "implied" meanings is thus not derived from the idea of overt manipulation by photographers but draws on the idea that images might be revealing meanings that photographers might not have wanted to communicate, or assumptions they were not consciously aware of having, claiming that the image is "as much a reflection of the [social and personal] 'I' of the photographer as it is of the 'eye' of the camera" (Clarke 1997, 33; my insertion).

Critical image analysis of press images thus focuses on: (1) image content, properties and its immediate context, (2) the wider social context of image production, presentation and use, and (3) propositions put forward by the theoretical framework of analysis. Elements related to the first of the three points could be summarised in the following basic overview of image characteristics, presented in Figure 6.2 below.

**Figure 6.2: Major areas of critical image analysis**

Elements of analysis	Indicators	Key literature
<b>Formal Qualities of the Image</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- vertical angle</li> <li>- horizontal angle</li> <li>- size of frame</li> <li>- focus, depth of field</li> <li>- composition</li> <li>- colour/tone</li> </ul>	see e.g. Lacey 1998, Kress & van Leeuwen 1996; van Leeuwen and Jewitt 2001; Messaris 1994

<sup>231</sup> Or, as Berger (1972) put it – it is important to consider the kind of seeing the image invites, how it positions you as a viewer in relation to the depicted content.



	- lighting	
<b>Style of Presentation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- genre-specific codes</li> <li>- visual symbolism</li> <li>- conventionality, visual clichés, stereotypes</li> </ul>	see e.g. Schwartz 1991; Huxford 2001; van Leeuwen and Jewitt 2001;
<b>Content of Image</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- depicted people, places or objects</li> <li>- non-verbal communication (gestures, body posture, spatial behaviour, body contact, clothes and appearance)</li> <li>- mise-en-scène (setting)</li> <li>- significant inclusions or exclusions</li> <li>- depicted activities</li> <li>- topics</li> </ul>	see e.g. Lacey 1998; van Leeuwen and Jewitt 2001; Lutz and Collins 1993
<b>Relation to Text</b>	- relation to caption, article and headline (anchoring, relay) in terms of topicality (un/related), actuality (current/archive), use (for its own narrative, supply new information, verify text, illustration)	see e.g. Barthes 1977; Wright 1999; Kress & van Leeuwen 1996
<b>Relation to immediate Context</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- size of a photograph</li> <li>- placement of a photograph within the page</li> <li>- placement of a photograph within the publication</li> <li>- number of photographs</li> <li>- relation to other articles or editorial content, advertisements or rubrics on adjoining pages</li> <li>- type of news</li> <li>- type of publication</li> </ul>	see e.g. Kress & van Leeuwen 1996; Proser 1998; Deacon et. al. 1999

In my case, the theoretical propositions that contextualise the characteristics of images have already been put forward in the chapters dedicated to theories of collective identification,

national ideology and framing analysis. Reese has noted (2003; cf. Tewksbury and Scheufele 2008) that one of the main challenges of framing research is the operationalisation of frames, for they are related to symbols, latent meanings and the triggering of associative chains. Most frequently, textual frames are located through some sort of discursive analysis or theory-inspired catalogues of key terms, phrases, symbols and concepts that are later used as variables and indicators for quantitative content analysis. In this qualitative approach to image analysis, potential frames will not be catalogued in advance but developed in the process of analysis, whose main goal is to identify the presence or absence of privileged discursive elements of Slovene national identity as frames of reported events. The privileged discursive elements of national identity outlined in Chapter 5 thus serve as a pool of potential frames (cf. Entman 1993, 53) that could be used in the reporting of selected events and implied symbolic struggles to define reality and supply interpretation of these events.

### 6.3 Cultural Belonging and Eternal Others: EU/NATO referendum debate(s)

Slovene membership of the EU and NATO had been on the public agenda since the early 1990s and, although both were set as official foreign policy goals, they came to the fore of public debate only within the closing stages of the accession processes. During 2002, discussions of the benefits and dangers of joining the two organisations became increasingly frequent and salient, outlining the two opposing camps, their public representatives and their basic arguments. The present analysis focuses on the first three months of 2003, when debates about joining the EU and NATO culminated in and received their formal closure with the March 23 referendum. The rudimentary timeline presented below (Figure 6.3) offers a basic overview of major events that enclosed the debates or were proclaimed to have influenced the outcome of the voting.

**Figure 6.3: Timeline of major events.**

<b>January 2003</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Search for political consensus on the two referendums; US diplomatic offensive for the invasion of Iraq; disagreements between US and European solutions to Iraq (led by France and Germany)</li> <li>• Fluctuating support for NATO, large number of undecided voters</li> <li>• Speculation on the need to reintroduce mandatory military service (14<sup>th</sup>) and its extension to women (21<sup>st</sup>)</li> <li>• US Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld speaks of “old” and “new” Europe (22<sup>nd</sup>)</li> <li>• Dates of the two referendums are set (31<sup>st</sup>)</li> </ul>
<b>February 2003</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Critiques of announced “information” campaign</li> <li>• Slovenia signs Vilnius letter (Vilnius declaration) supporting US policy towards Iraq</li> <li>• US Secretary of State Colin Powell presents evidence to United Nations Security Council (5<sup>th</sup>)</li> <li>• deepening of crisis within NATO regarding Iraq, growing rift between US and its allies and the EU</li> <li>• Diminished support for NATO (25<sup>th</sup>)</li> </ul>
<b>March 2003</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indecisive Slovene policy towards US and the possible invasion of Iraq</li> <li>• Official start of government campaign for EU and NATO (5<sup>th</sup>), focusing on visits by NATO and EU member-states’ representatives</li> <li>• Serbian Prime Minister Zoran Đinđić is assassinated in Belgrade (12<sup>th</sup>)</li> <li>• Opinion polls show majority of voters support both integrations (15<sup>th</sup>)</li> <li>• US and its allies invade Iraq (20<sup>th</sup>)</li> <li>• Referendum day - Slovenes vote to join EU and NATO (23<sup>rd</sup>)</li> </ul>

Public debate on Slovene accession to the EU and NATO was firmly couched within the rhetoric universe of nation and its cultural belonging. The referendum was formally and symbolically a point of reflection – an evaluation of the road travelled since 1991 and a decision on the country’s appropriate future course. This reflection, however, turned out to be only a partial one. From the outset, the debate(s) focused on whether to NATO, while debates on EU accession were marginalised. Moreover, debate(s) soon turned out to be strictly instrumental – they were not aimed so much at reaching a consensus on fundamental questions of cultural and political belonging through rational debate as they were a project of persuasive communication aimed at convincing the somewhat substantial body of undecided voters to make a one-off decision – casting of the appropriate referendum vote. Throughout the analysed period, the differences of opinion between the two opposing camps were unbridgeable and their proponents on occasion spent more time denigrating and (personally) discrediting their opponents than presenting solid arguments and factual data to support their case. Emotional appeals (e.g. inciting fear) were also frequently part of the debate(s). It is important to note that the pre-referendum debate(s) were waged against the backdrop of US preparations to invade Iraq and, at times, the two topics became inseparable. On the other hand, the referendum itself often served as a mere backdrop for criticism of the ruling coalition and its prominent officials by journalists and opposition parties. Overall, there were

eleven frames of referendum debate(s) present in the analysed publications (see Figure 6.4 for outline). As a rule, more than one single frame was used in the debate(s) and parties involved often combined up to six or seven of the major frames to substantiate their position on the issue. Thus it is hard to talk about a single dominant frame for the referendum issues; what is discernible, however, are fairly coherent groupings of these frames into three meta-arguments, or what framing literature would call meta-frames: (1) (not) joining the EU and NATO as an issue of rational, strategic choice; (2) (not) joining the two organisations as an expression of desired civilisational belonging, seen through the Manichean prism of struggle between the forces of good and evil (i.e. between democracy and totalitarianism, including communism); (3) (not) performing the watchdog function and protecting an easily manipulated public from malicious deeds or individuals.

**Figure 6.4: Textual news frames (combined for Delo, Dnevnik, Mladina and Mag).**

	NEWS FRAME	SUBFRAMES (main topics)	META FRAMES
1.	<b>SECURITY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- in need of protection from stronger countries due to small size</li> <li>- changed, globalised threats</li> <li>- securing the survival of the nation (protecting it for future generations)</li> </ul>	<b>RATIONAL, STRATEGIC CHOICE</b>
2.	<b>COSTS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- pro-NATO: lower costs for defence, more money for social programmes, education etc.</li> <li>- anti-NATO: higher or unclear costs</li> <li>- economic benefits</li> </ul>	
3.	<b>INTERNATIONAL INFLUENCE AND PRESTIGE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- acquiring more influence and prestige within international affairs</li> <li>- being "at the table" makes it possible to influence, being outside means being decided for</li> <li>- leverage against powerful neighbours</li> <li>- joining the club of successful states</li> </ul>	
4.	<b>DEMOCRACY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- inherently democratic institution, protecting basic values of democracy</li> <li>- will be treated as equal partner</li> <li>- internationalisation as guarantee for democratic practices in Slovenia</li> <li>- anti-NATO as remnants of communism and Yugoslavism</li> <li>- criminal nature of communist continuity</li> <li>- Athenian origin of EU</li> </ul>	<b>CIVILISATIONAL BELONGING AND STRUGGLE BETWEEN FORCES OF GOOD AND FORCES OF EVIL</b>
5.	<b>CULTURAL BELONGING</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- who does Slovenia wish to be associated with?</li> <li>- European values, returning home</li> <li>- logical conclusion of transition process</li> <li>- Balkans as powder keg</li> <li>- Europe vs. Orient (both as South and East)</li> </ul>	

6.	<b>PIVOTAL MOMENT</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- historical turning point</li> <li>- similarity to 1991</li> <li>- new chapter of nation's history</li> </ul>	
7.	<b>ANTIMILITARISM</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- NATO and US in particular as global aggressor</li> <li>- Slovene soldiers dying abroad for protection of foreign interests</li> <li>- unacceptability of military solutions to political problems</li> <li>- economic interests behind use of military force</li> <li>- nuclear weapons</li> </ul>	
8.	<b>ALTERNATIVE VISION</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- neutrality and independence</li> <li>- demilitarisation</li> </ul>	
9.	<b>GOVERNMENT CRITICISM</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- servility, pressures of superpowers (US)</li> <li>- indecisiveness, nonexistent (firm) foreign policy</li> <li>- incompetence of individual politicians</li> <li>- allegiance to EU or US</li> <li>- unnecessary referendum</li> <li>- willingness to go against popular vote</li> </ul>	<b>PROTECTION OF CITIZENS AND COMMUNITY</b>
10.	<b>PROPAGANDA</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- high costs of government propaganda</li> <li>- debates not about arguments but merely propagandist efforts of persuasion</li> <li>- visits of politicians and representatives of international organisations as propaganda</li> <li>- indecisive and belated propaganda campaign</li> </ul>	
11.	<b>IRRESPONSIBILITY AND PARTIAL INTERESTS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- (personal) discrediting of opponents</li> <li>- hypocritical, two-faced, dishonest</li> <li>- personal gains (fame-seeking, financial gains)</li> <li>- preserving established privileges and positions</li> <li>- irresponsible (and young), manipulated</li> <li>- nationalists</li> <li>- reactionary (against independence in 1991)</li> </ul>	

### 6.3.1 Delo: Textual Frames in EU/NATO debate(s)

Delo's coverage of the debates and events related to EU and NATO accession was twofold. In its weekday editions, Delo covered daily referendum-related events on a factual basis and very infrequently commented on them in its opinion sections. This event-centred reporting was complemented by extensive presentation of opposing views, opinions and arguments on the subject in its Saturday supplement (Sobotna priloga). These interpretative voices were not limited solely to newspaper staff and affiliated publicists. During February and March, for example, Delo published a six-part series on different topics regarding EU and NATO accession, in which it gave voice to a broad spectrum of (established) public intellectuals from different parts of the political spectrum.

Delo's day-to-day coverage was predominantly factual reporting and hence lacked a distinctive frame of its own. What did emerge from this elite-centred event reporting were the basic frames and arguments presented by major political actors, particularly during the last stage of reporting. Initially, Delo's coverage focused on the topic of the referendum itself – debating the necessity of consulting with “the people” and the obligation of abiding by the popular vote in case it differed from the strategic political goals set by elite politics. Within this stage, which ended with the setting of the referendum date, the debate was NATO-centric and supporters of the integration relied on (or rallied with the help of) a *rational and strategic decision metaframe*, and the *promoting cost, security and international influence* frames. From such arguments, Slovenia emerges as a vulnerable and endangered state, unable to face potential military threats (powerful neighbours), the challenges of the global era (terrorism) and the financial burden of necessary reforms of the military. Even though immediate military threat was unlikely, Slovenia was portrayed as being endangered mostly as a result of the financial aspects of its military independence – (e.g. the minister of foreign affairs relating necessary military expenses to a possible lack of funding for social welfare, education and health care), complemented by threats to restore mandatory military service (the army chief of staff) and the possibility of extending the draft to include women (speculated on by the minister of defence). Such framing of national security goes against much of the post-1991 self-mythologisation of the Slovene state. The danger posed by (more) powerful neighbours is a central predisposition of Slovene national identity, and the post-1991 narrative was built mainly on the ability of Slovenes to (continually) stand up against (stronger) aggressors, making the 1991 ten-day war of independence a prime example of the nation's willingness to stand up, fight and win against the overpowering aggressor, promoted, for example, by the privileged discursive elements of limes (6.4.5) and the thousand-year dream of independence (6.4.3). Anti-NATO views were not frequent during this period and mostly focused on the danger of Slovene soldiers (“our boys”) dying to protect foreign interests abroad, interests into which Slovenia had been driven by the servility and incompetence of their government, thus drawing on the *antimilitarism* and *government criticism* frame.

Delo's reporting on the subject, particularly in the form of opinion articles, increased dramatically after the referendum date was set, and this broadening of the public debate brought about a shift in the framing of the referendum issue. Proponents of joining NATO were involved in a two-fold rhetoric strategy that, on the one hand, presented joining the EU and NATO as essentially two sides of the same coin, while simultaneously trying to exclude

NATO from debates on the Middle East crisis (the US campaign for the invasion of Iraq). Their discourse shifted to *discrediting representatives of the anti-NATO movement* and their arguments, presenting Slovene accession as (the only) logical decision and the country's only option in terms of long-term security, alluding to the instability of the region. The so-called Balkan threat is explicitly promoted by the privileged discursive element of liminality (6.4.1), as well as implicitly advanced in that of geo-cultural belonging (6.4.4.). However, on the pages of the Saturday supplement, this position, which drew heavily on the idea of national survival and was advocated by representatives of government, church and part of the intellectual elite – was outnumbered by the opinions of the anti-NATO intellectual elite, which argued for a more nuanced analysis of Slovenia's position in international relations, *criticised* the servility of the *government* and warned of a dangerous loss of sovereignty. Accession to NATO was presented as a project of political elites at odds with the interests of civil society and by extension with the will of people. Of the 21 articles published in the six-week Slovenia-NATO op-ed section, only 7 contributors were explicitly pro-NATO. Similarly, the newspaper's regular commentators were critical of NATO, frequently linking the organisation with US imperialism and the looming threat of war in Iraq. With Minister of Foreign Affairs Dimitrij Rupel's signing of the Vilnius Letter, which expressed strong support for US policy towards Iraq, the existing arguments about strong pressure being applied by superpowers and the critique of government servility and its lack of an autonomous foreign policy gained new momentum against the backdrop of US unilateralism and willingness to bypass the UN Security Council concerning a possible invasion of Iraq. During this period, opinion polls showed a slight decrease in support for joining NATO.

The third stage of coverage was characterised by yet another shift in dominant frames. The start of the government's active pro-referendum campaign brought about an increased number of what Boorstin (1961/1992) termed pseudo events. The government campaign focused on hosting visits by foreign politicians (either countries comparable to Slovenia, such as Denmark, Hungary or its traditional allies, such as Germany) and high-profile EU and NATO representatives (Romano Prodi, Javier Solana, George Robertson, Günter Verheugen). The nature of the government's pro-NATO campaign was important on at least two levels – on the one hand, it introduced the voice of a positively valued foreign authority to the debates (perceived to be more credible than the local political elite), while, on the other, it also enabled the promotion of strong pro-NATO (and pro-EU) opinions through the factual discourse of daily news coverage. Through the creation of pseudo events, these allegedly

more credible voices were given extensive space to promote their interpretation of events and topics, which was otherwise primarily confined to the domain of mostly anti-NATO columnists and commentators. The shift of framing brought about through international participation in the pre-referendum debates was increased emphasis on the *civilisational belonging* metaframe, through which Slovenia was given an option to, once and for all, secure its “place at the table” (George Robertson) within the European family of nations, and avoid being stuck on the doorstep of the menacing Balkans. This framing of the referendum decision clearly played on the privileged discursive elements of geo-cultural belonging (6.4.4), limes (6.4.5.) and the thousand-year dream of independence (6.4.3). Foreign guests emphasised the referendum being a historical turning-point, and the Slovene political elite drew frequent comparisons with the 1990 plebiscite and the 1991 declaration of independence. Joining the two organisations was thus presented as the conclusion or logical continuation of independence, for, as former President Milan Kučan emphasised, the events of 1991 were not “confined solely to the act of exiting Yugoslavia”. Slovenia is a “small but crucial country situated in a crucial area” (Robertson), “without which Europe would not be complete” (Solana). It was given a “big”, “fantastic” opportunity (Prodi), and “a chance of a lifetime” (Robertson) to become an integral part of the West. But, as some of the guests did not fail to emphasise enough, such invitations do not come by every year. The opportunity was thus a “historic one”. This sense of urgency and insecurity was accentuated by the use of the Balkans as a negative frame of reference. Thus Robertson spoke of NATO as the organisation that had brought stability to the region (emphasising Slovenia’s indebtedness to NATO for its intervention in Bosnia). The dangerous Balkans sub-frame gained unexpected momentum with the assassination of Serbian Prime Minister Zoran Đinđić and, a week before the referendum, former president Kučan expressed his support for joining NATO, which was to be taken as a security guarantee, by saying that “it is our only option, since there are guns being shot just behind our backs”. Becoming “a part of the developed world” was only possible through negation of its perceived opposite – the dangerous Balkan powder keg. Rejecting NATO would not only imply not sitting at Robertson’s “main table of successful countries”, but would at the same time reduce Slovenia’s status to that of “Belarus or Turkmenistan” (Šinkovec). Another continuously present metaframe was the horserace frame, and opinion polls were at times reported almost daily (e.g. on March 11, 12, 15, 19 and 20). A week before the referendum, polls projected success for both referendum questions. During the last week, the focus of Delo’s reporting shifted from the referendum debate(s) to the US-



led invasion of Iraq, and ended by proclaiming the referendum results as “the end of one road”, “the beginning of a new adventure” and “an enthusiastic leap into a divided Europe”.

### **6.3.2 Delo: Visual Frames in the EU/NATO debate(s)**

Delo’s visual coverage is characteristic of the quality press and the newspaper’s position as a national medium of record. In its daily news coverage, Delo fairly strictly adheres to and promotes the standards of photojournalism described in Chapter 3. Delo mostly relies on the power of the single photograph to convey the essence of an event and only rarely resorts to publishing two or more photographs of the same event (in which case they indicate the importance attributed to the event). Juxtapositions of contrasting images are exceptional rather than standard practice, and were not used during the analysed period.

Similarly, image captions do not serve to challenge the meaning of photographs and images that contrast the accompanying articles are avoided. Transparency of photographic recording is maintained through refraining from overt image manipulation (e.g. editorial illustrations are graphic art, not photomontages), avoiding the use of overtly symbolic, puzzling or ambiguous images, or using photographs for humoristic purposes.<sup>232</sup> The sense of objective visual reporting (passive recordings, windows on the world) is further constructed and maintained through layout (images are printed without borders or frames, cut-outs are not used), framing (images taken mostly from mid-distance, supporting the eyewitness claim; not using photographs with strong horizontal angles or tilts) and avoiding what Becker (1996) termed “meta pictures” – the publication of photographs where other reporters are included in the image, thus revealing the newsmaking process. Though other (word) journalists are occasionally included in photographs, photographers are normally not part of news pictures (unless the focus is explicitly on media attention).

In weekday editions, Delo primarily used photographs to supplement text. Photographs offered visual confirmation of text and captions – they neither provided new/additional information nor narrated the event in a way that would be in contrast to the written account – and image captions were descriptive and factual. Uncaptioned and interpretative images remained confined to the Saturday supplement and opinion sections. Delo’s interpretation of

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<sup>232</sup> E.g. Dnevnik’s or Mag’s publishing of special sections in which the imagined dialogue is scripted to factual photographs for humoristic purposes.

news values offers a fairly limited selection of current affairs topics and types of events which are covered, confined mostly to institutionalised politics, formal events and negative news (wars, natural disasters and major accidents). Thus its visual coverage is dominated by protocol photographs of institutional politics, either in the form of portraits, images taken at staged photo opportunities, or unposed depictions of unfolding (but organised) events. All of this was clearly evident in Delo's photographic day-to-day coverage of the pre-referendum debate(s), which was dominated by coverage of the political establishment as representatives of institutionalised politics. Of just over 70 published photographs, only 15 were not of leading Slovene and international politicians. The political process, NATO and EU are not so much concrete material but more abstract entities and, as such, their visualisation is necessarily an indirect one, and the media have to select a metonymic strategy to visualise such news. One of the possible strategies of visualisation is the protocol photograph, in which an image of a politician functions simultaneously as a photograph depicting a concrete individual as well as a visual metonymy, making him/her stand for the country he/she represents. The function of protocol photographs is generally not to provide new, additional or background information for the story, or to depict the climatic moment of an event – they are fairly standardised, typical and unrevealing – but to identify key actors in the political process and thus personify politics.<sup>233</sup> This is particularly evident in the fact that a substantial proportion (18) of the images of politicians were not photographs related to a certain event but small, passport-style archive photographs whose only purpose in terms of content is to identify the person (and in terms of layout, to draw attention to the article). The political process that emerged from the pages of Delo was that of sessions, meetings, consultations, talks and public addresses taken from far personal, close social or far social distance. Like the composition, events themselves were formal and, even if political actors were depicted laughing, chatting at receptions, celebrating etc., they still remained public figures – representatives of their respective institutions or states. This type of news coverage, however, offers little room for promotion of distinctive interpretative frames. Protocol news photographs are important because they attribute symbolic status to depicted political actors. While all the photographs of Slovene and international politicians in referendum-related articles were neutral in the sense that they were formal and not derogatory depictions, there is one markable difference in terms of the symbolic status attributed to depicted political actors. During the third stage of pre-referendum debate(s), when Delo's reporting focused on visits

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<sup>233</sup> As such, they need not adhere to the journalistic norm of actuality – they can, and often are, archive photographs.

by important EU and NATO politicians, Slovene politicians were transformed from active into passive political actors. When they appeared alongside international guests, they were by rule depicted as inactive and passive. These photographs gave visual proof to the critique that the government propaganda campaign – in need of credible propagators – had turned to the international community for help. In nine photographs published during that period, international politicians are repeatedly depicted while speaking, whereas Slovene representatives, such as Minister of Foreign Affairs Dimitrij Rupel or Prime Minister Anton Rop, are (merely) listening to their counterparts. The difference between the two parties is further emphasised through the depiction of gesticulation – it is international politicians that are depicted with evocative hand gestures, such as the pointing of index finger. In all of these cases, it is Slovenes who are at the receiving end of the arguments. Even when Slovene hosts are not depicted, international politicians are gesticulating to an imagined Slovene public. Only four photographs from the two weeks of the “intensive information campaign” depict Slovene politicians on equal terms with their guests.

The world of institutional politics is contrasted with an almost invisible civil society. Only twelve photographs related to “the people” and their organisations were published in the three months of pre-referendum debates, three of which were of activist Marta Gregorič receiving an award as Slovene (woman) of the year 2002. Apart from Gregorič and three identification photographs of anti-NATO interviewees, civil society remained more or less faceless. The three photographs from demonstrations focused not on protesters but on the placards and signs they were carrying, conveying neither their profile in terms of age, gender or social class nor their number. However, they were not represented as “problematic” parts of society, endangering or opposing state institutions such as the police or the government. No national identity frames were evoked and the first flag-waving photograph was that of the post-referendum celebrations. Although Delo’s articles spoke of parallels to the 1991 plebiscite and historical turning-points for the nation, photographs were not used to support this narrative.

Delo’s use of graphic illustration was confined to front-page daily caricature and public opinion charts. While the latter were used to communicate and support the horserace frame, interpreting events in terms of their influence on expected outcomes (e.g. the assassination of Serbian Prime Minister Zoran Đinđić), the former were often far more explicit and expressive than Delo’s restrained photographic coverage. Certain topics and subjects that were not depicted photographically were addressed visually through caricature. One of these was the

Slovene army. While the army was the main subject or beneficiary of Slovenia's joining of NATO, images depicting soldiers or military equipment were not used in relation to the debates – the Slovene military was present only in three photographs unrelated to the pre-referendum debate(s). They were present, however, in caricatures. Within caricatures drawn by Delo's staff illustrator, Slovenia is represented through the character of Kranjski Janez (Carynthian John), dressed in national costume from the Gorenjska region. In relation to Slovene national identity, Kranjski Janez is the multifaceted figure of a rural simpleton that can connote innocence, incompetence or clumsiness, commonsense wisdom or rural stubbornness, the non-urban character of the nation, a proneness to (over)consumption of alcohol etc., and ties Slovene-ness explicitly to the Gorenjska region (through costume and setting). Some of these characteristics emerge in Kočevar's caricature, as naive Janez is wooed into the EU and NATO by international and domestic politicians, or is a "hard nut to crack" for leaders of government information campaigns. Caricatures function to communicate direct critical commentary, and major events – otherwise not commented in textual and photographic coverage – are critiqued or mocked through the front-page caricature (e.g. Defence Minister Grizold with one male and one female soldier, the female soldier sporting a broom along with her military equipment).

While, in daily news coverage, photographs were subordinated to text, their use with interpretative articles on the pages of *Sobotna priloga* or in opinion sections promotes a more independent and open use of photographs. Although large photographs (generally one per article) can be fairly direct visualisations of an article's main argument, most of the time the link between text and image is associative. Such ambiguous images appear without captions, which further adds to their interpretative stand. Unlike news photographs, these photographs can be an explicit commentary on the topic, countering the written account or forcing a different interpretation on the text. Most of the photographs are straightforward records and, when they do deviate from the reportage style, they go in the way of (classic) art photography. By this I mean aesthetisation, not overt image manipulation that would challenge the recording capabilities of the medium. Photographs in *Sobotna priloga* thus bring to the fore the ambiguity of the photographic message without jeopardising the medium's status and role of conveying truthful records of events. This ambiguity can, of course, turn against photographs – which, if the connection is too abstract, can be considered as mere illustrations, as large-colour surfaces that break up the monotony of grey type. Delo's opinion articles were mostly critical of NATO and the pro-NATO government, and there were cases where images

explicitly supported this stance. Thus, in one Saturday supplement, a large front-page photograph accompanying an article on statements about the referendum depicts a baby doll, tied by the neck to lines of barbed wire. Antimilitarism or the explicit linking of NATO with military aggression emerges through the use of Top Gun style imagery (e.g. airplanes flying off US aircraft carriers), while discussing NATO as an international, not a US-dominated organisation. Another supplement frontpage article (titled “From former Yugoslavia into New Europe”) was accompanied with a close-up photograph of chained boots (chain gang), connoting imprisonment, the violence of military organisations such as NATO or the abuse of power by its specific members, such as the US (e.g. Guantanamo). Criticism of foreign policy and the minister of foreign affairs was illustrated with a close-up of an unattractive, muddy seashore, connoting staleness. The six-part pro-contra series featuring prominent public intellectuals was also illustrated with suggestive imagery, ranging from US fighter planes to a stray dog on the road and two elephants in one of Ljubljana’s parks. Only a handful of images actually made explicit visual claims of nationhood or addressed established markers of national identity. A hayrack (kozolec), the central architectural symbol of national identity and belonging, is evoked twice. It first appears on a frontpage photograph in a Saturday supplement in the genre of art photograph. The image is interpretative or at least pensive, as the hayrack’s central pillars and roof appear to be dissolving in thin columns of smoke. The second image is an even more potent visual frame, directly linked to the frequently promoted frame/counterargument to NATO – i.e. that “our boys” will be dying abroad to protect foreign interests. The group portrait in which bodies of soldiers are intersected by horizontal lines of a hayrack structure is a fairly typical “Slovene image”, reminiscent of the popular family photography motif. The last edition of the Saturday supplement before the referendum opens up with an op-ed article (titled “Puzzle of NATO”)<sup>234</sup>, which connects the “nation’s historical choice” with a typical Slovene vista of a church on a hilltop (cf. Kučan 1998). The rural village idyll is further emphasised by foregrounded branches (silhouettes) of fruit-tree branches, and is evocative of standard (self) conceptualisations of Slovene-ness (small community, rural character, closeness to nature, Catholicism etc.).

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<sup>234</sup> This framing of uncertainty of referendum results goes against the horserace frame promoted by the newspaper a few days before.

Figure 6.5 Europeanism by association (Delo)



Slovene politicians in the company of representatives of the positively valued outside, indicating the broader civilisational belonging. Photographs depict imbalance of power, for it is the European politicians that are active, not their Slovene colleagues (who appear more as good pupils).

### 6.3.3 Dnevnik: Textual Frames in the EU/NATO debate(s)

Compared to Delo, Dnevnik's reporting on EU and NATO accession was characterised by a more interpretative approach. While Delo for the most part kept the factual day-to-day reporting separate from op-ed articles and had outsourced much of the interpretative writing to public figures and intellectuals as representatives of civil society, Dnevnik's non-interpretative day-to-day coverage was routinely accompanied by op-ed articles (or at least by caricature), thus simultaneously providing information and interpretation of a given event or statement. Since commentary was not confined to the weekend supplement, interpretative writing was mostly done by staff journalists and the newspaper's regular commentators. During the initial stage (January), Dnevnik's coverage was not dominated by a single, strong news frame. Articles presented a wider palette of arguments and frames than those of Delo and oscillated between rational choice (NATO is the logical choice of European countries; not joining would decrease Slovenia's influence in international relations), *criticism of the government* (referendum as unnecessary; compulsory military service for women), loss of sovereignty and *antimilitarism* (protection of other (US) interests; our boys dying abroad) and the government's attempt to link joining NATO with joining the EU (minister of foreign

affairs claiming the two are merely two sides of the same coin), as well as attempts to disassociate NATO from US militarism and unilateralism.

During the second stage, the *rational, strategic decision* metaframe gained prominence through debate over the uncertain costs of joining NATO, and statements by high-profile politicians who claimed that neutrality and independence were not a feasible option for Slovenia (president), that joining the two organisations would significantly increase Slovenia's influence in international relations (minister of foreign affairs) and that Slovenia's independence in 1991 would be complete only by joining NATO (prime minister). These debates also introduced the metaframe of *civilisational belonging*, as both domestic and international politicians drew heavily on the negative image of the Balkans as a (potentially) violent and backward region (Secretary-General Robertson on the role of NATO in stabilising the Balkans; the minister of foreign affairs claiming that rejecting NATO would be going back in time, returning to the (undemocratic) East and the Balkans). While government representatives were successful in framing joining NATO (and the EU) as the only option, they failed in their attempts to associate NATO with the EU and to disassociate NATO from US interests.<sup>235</sup> The main line of the *government critique* frame was the competence, or lack thereof, of individual politicians, succumbing to US pressure and questioning loyalty to the US at the time of EU accession.

The final stage secured the dominance of the *rational decision* and *civilisational belonging* metaframes. Much space was given over to the opinions of international guests, who testified about the greater political influence their countries enjoyed after joining NATO, and the accompanying economic and security gains. As Secretary-General Robertson put it – it is better to sit at the table with powerful ones than to watch that table from afar while others make decisions on your future. Extending this argument, one of Dnevnik's commentators advocated joining NATO as a first step in changing the organisation from within and in fulfilling "our dedication to peace". More importantly, these rational arguments for joining NATO were complemented by essentially irrational appeals questioning the nation's cultural and civilisational belonging. The EU's high representative for common foreign and security policy, Javier Solana, saw the referendums as a decision on "which friends you wish to live with". Within this imagined geography, the Balkans were used as a negative reference point,

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<sup>235</sup> This became particularly apparent with Slovenia's signing of the infamous Vilnius letter and Colin Powell's address to the UN Security Council, which made clear that the US was prepared to attack Iraq unilaterally.

with President Janez Drnovšek, for example, insisting “that we should not return to the Balkans” or the NATO secretary-general (referring to NATO’s intervention in Bosnia) claiming that NATO had already brought Slovenia peace, stability, and prosperity on the edge of the Balkans. Referendums appear as the only option for Slovenia to de-Balkanise itself by returning to Europe and thus confirming its allegiance to the principles of freedom and democracy. The invitation was made, but it was accompanied by a warning that this was not only a pivotal but also a unique moment in the nation’s history. There would be no renewed invitation, warned Secretary-General Robertson. After March 15, when referendum projections showed majority support for both accessions, the number of articles dedicated to the topic significantly decreased and the focus shifted to the approaching US-led invasion of Iraq. While Dnevnik retained its *antimilitarism* frame, it gradually shifted away from NATO to a more narrowly defined critique of the US administration.

#### **6.3.4 Dnevnik: Visual Frames in the EU/NATO debate(s)**

In 2003, Dnevnik’s visual coverage was close to a tabloid style of photography and newspaper design. This was evident in the layout of the newspaper’s front page, which functioned as an extended table of contents: three to six boxes of text with bold headlines introduced the most important topics of the day, complemented with up to three photographs and editorial caricature. Photographs were often taken from a closer social distance than those of Delo, bringing the readers closer to the depicted subjects, and were frequently used for their emotional appeal. Dnevnik’s visual coverage was less focused on the major actors of institutional politics, and photographs tended to relate to topics instead of to concrete political actors. Because of this “topical” approach, Dnevnik (in 2003) used a number of archive and even stock photographs to illustrate the textual news. The practice of using stock photographs as illustrations without any news value was generally not confined to sections such as jobs, but occasionally spilt over to current affairs sections (e.g. a major article on pensions featured a large (staged) stock photograph of three doctors with suggestive hand gestures). However, most of the topic-oriented photographs tended to be documentary images taken by Dnevnik’s staff photographers. Apart from such obvious aberrations, published photographs in Dnevnik adhered to basic photojournalistic “codes of objectivity” (Schwartz 1992), especially in terms of composition, avoidance of extreme angles, selective focus or horizontal angles, which all



purport photojournalism's transparency paradigm (being a window onto the world) .<sup>236</sup> As with Delo, photographs of the newsmaking process (Becker's meta pictures) were generally excluded. In terms of the "creative" use of visuals, during the analysed period Dnevnik did resort to (1) visual symbolism (using placards, (traffic) signs and symbols<sup>237</sup>), (2) the practice of publishing not one single but two images with major news articles, and (3) the interpretative use of photographs. Visual juxtapositions became frequent, as the US-led coalition invaded Iraq and photographs were used to counter one, universal narrative, depict two different aspects, realities or groups involved in the events (e.g. US vs. refugees). Dnevnik also put great emphasis on interpretative visuals through the use of editorial caricature, publishing between one and three per issue. Other graphics, such as charts of public opinion polls<sup>238</sup> and agency-supplied graphic art, were also used prominently.

None of the four major news frames present(ed) on the pages of Dnevnik was explicitly and unambiguously supported through the newspaper's use of press photographs. While textual articles were critical of government pro-referendum activities and neutral news reports were accompanied with critical op-ed pieces, photographs only occasionally offered visual support for this critical stance. Compared to Delo, photographs of politicians were far more informal and depicted them at a different stage of the policy-making process – not while giving public addresses or during meetings but while consulting or chatting during breaks between sessions. In general, politicians were more frequently represented in a relaxed or happy rather than serious mood, which was most clearly evident in Dnevnik's coverage of international guests visiting Slovenia during the third stage of reporting (i.e. during the government-sponsored propaganda campaign). While Delo depicted international politicians as active agitators whose mission was to convince a sceptical Slovene public (active international politicians as opposed to passive Slovene politicians), Dnevnik's images of the same visits and protocol events depicted both sides as visual equals. Published images were of casual moments, with the two parties joyfully talking to each other, generally oblivious of the public (with the exception of NATO Secretary-General George Robertson, they are not depicted during public addresses). For the symbolic status of Slovene politicians as (visual) equals of their Western counterparts, body language, such as the use of gestures (hands and fingers), or activity (talking or listening) was even more important than the continuous display of unposed smiles. Unlike

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<sup>236</sup> The truthful, unmediated recording paradigm as the dominant mode of the newspaper's use of photographs was supported by captions (e.g. "Reuters' photographer shows how this [poverty] really looks like").

<sup>237</sup> E.g. scales to denote the justice system.

<sup>238</sup> Often printed over background photographs.

with Delo's coverage, positively valued outside (again with the exception of the NATO secretary-general) was not featured in the debates. *Critique of government* emerged most clearly in an article on Minister of Foreign Affairs Dimitrij Rupel taking two days off when criticism of the Vilnius Letter was at its fiercest. The accompanying photograph was an archive identification portrait (head shot) depicting the minister in a suit, wearing sunglasses and a straw hat, reiterating the question voiced in the accompanying article. The photograph directly complemented the textual article and title (questioning his employment status) and was evocative in its contradiction of the formality of the suit and the informality of the straw hat, and in presenting a familiar subject in an unfamiliar way. Other images emerged as critical only in connection to accompanying captions. Other than this, visual critique of the government was very explicit in editorial caricatures, arguing against the propagandistic approach to NATO and servility to the US, its primary targets being the prime minister, the minister of foreign affairs, and the defence minister. Unlike the visual coverage in Delo, Dnevnik's caricatures kept Defence Minister Anton Grizold in the spotlight of media attention (and critique) long after photographic coverage and his active engagement in the campaign had shifted over to the president, the prime minister, and the minister of foreign affairs.

**Figure 6.6 Interpretative/evaluative uses of photographs**



Left: Archive photograph of minister of foreign affairs Dimitrij Rupel accompanying the news on his sudden short break after signing of the Vilnius letter came under strong criticism. Right: Thumbnail portrait of Dimitrij Rupel accompanying his article in Mag.

Dnevnik's visual coverage of the pre-referendum debate(s) was to a significant extent topic-oriented. The newspaper had chosen not to focus exclusively on political actors but presented images (e.g. soldiers, NATO headquarters, military equipment, leaflets featuring EU symbols etc.) that had little or no news value in terms of the related articles. Such topic-oriented coverage of events did manage to visualise the central “subject” or “beneficiary” of the debates – the Slovene army – particularly during the first two stages of reporting, when promotion of NATO through the frame of a (cost-effective) *rational decision* was high on the political agenda. On the other hand, Dnevnik for the most part failed in visualising the other interlocutor in the pre-referendum debate(s) – civil society and its representatives. Apart from a handful of small identification photographs, interview portraits and two lonely photographs from demonstrations (supporting the *anti-militarism frame*), the coverage focused more on the placards than on the crowd itself. The placards explicitly linked NATO to US militarism (the invasion of Iraq) and hence to war and aggression. In terms of the style of visual presentation, type and number of photographs, Dnevnik managed to maintain a balance between the pro-NATO and anti-NATO side, though, as mentioned above, Dnevnik's coverage did not focus explicitly on actors and public representatives, thereby personifying the two groups.

**Figure 6.7 Topical visual coverage.**



Instead of reducing the referendum issues and debates to metonymic depictions of political actors and institutionalised politics, Dnevnik frequently resorted to “topical”, illustrative photographs.

Ordinary citizens came to the fore only towards the end of the coverage – with the visit of European Commission President Romano Prodi (depicted shaking hands with locals in Nova Gorica), and the publication of the referendum results (a photograph of nighttime flag-waving celebrations, and two elderly voters behind ballot boxes). The latter photograph was juxtaposed with a photograph of government representatives cheering, champagnes glasses in hand, connoting popular support for the government project, below an overarching title of

“People’s Yes” (March 24). The photograph of night-time celebrations also served as a metonymy for and visual proof of popular support for joining the EU and NATO (March 24). Although the number of photographs depicting representatives of civil society was relatively small in itself, it was revealing of a general trend of equating civil society as young(er) and feminised in comparison to institutionalised politics, thereby promoting the possible interpretation of the conflict between the two in terms of different age- and gender-based agendas.

**Figure 6.8 Politics of co-operation (Dnevnik)**



Unlike Delo, Dnevnik’s photographs of politicians did not communicate imbalance of power relations (teacher/EU-pupil/Slovenia relationship) but presented both national and international political actors in a way that connotes equality.

In comparative terms, Dnevnik published many fewer photographs than the other three publications (just over 70 in total) and gave both political actors and civil society less (visual) prominence (a small number of identification photographs in the case of the former, a general lack of coverage in the case of the latter). Moreover, referendum-related news coverage appeared to be less prominent when compared to that of the other three publications. Photographs depicting referendum-related political actors were smaller in terms of size or placed less prominently on the page, being visually overshadowed (or overgrown) by competing events from domestic or international politics. The privileged discursive elements of national identity, which permeated many of the opinion articles, were not visualised, even though Dnevnik’s editorial policy supports the use of topical, less event-specific photographs which often include a symbolic component and would therefore be more suitable for the promotion of visual frames of national identity. Editorial caricatures also lacked a distinctive connection to elements of Slovene-ness (they focused on politicians as such, not on typical Slovenes or personified Slovenia, as in the case of Delo’s Kranjski Janez). The lack of visual references to Slovene national costumes was noticeable, as such easily recognisable visual



markers are a standard tool in political caricature. In comparison, NATO Secretary-General Robertson was routinely drawn wearing a marker of his ethnicity (a kilt), which had little to do with his role as a representative of the alliance.

### **6.3.5 Mag: Textual Frames in the EU/NATO debate(s)**

In 2003, Mag relied heavily on the use of visuals and, during the analysed period, photographs and editorial illustration based on photographs (photomontage, combination of photographs and graphic elements) predominated over other visual material. The magazine's use of photography was not limited solely to photojournalistic conventions, and its status as visual proof was regularly challenged through the use of editorial photomontage, interpretative captions and a special section in which a fictitious dialogue was scripted to go with the published image. In general, Mag's layout and use of photographs were akin to tabloid newspaper style. The magazine used a large number of photographs to cover main articles: a lead photograph that would take up to two pages would be complemented by a number of smaller photographs (e.g. a four-page article could feature up to 12 photographs). Photographs were used not for their news value but as personalisations of the political process (revealing identification, not action), and cut-outs of political figures were often used to break up or indent columns of text. For the most part, Mag used photographs not for their autonomous storytelling potential but as supplements to text – the majority of the images were small in terms of size (thus having little autonomous communicative power) and accompanied by captions that clearly anchored (or interpreted) their meaning within the overall narrative of the article.

Mag's textual coverage of the pre-referendum debate(s) was an uneasy amalgam of pro-NATO agitation and criticism of the government promoted by opposition parties. As with Mladina (see next section), the primary focus of Mag's reporting was not the presentation of arguments that supported the magazine's clear editorial stand on the issue, but discrediting opposing views. From the outset, Mag's coverage oscillated between civilisational belonging and protection of community metaframes, emphasising on the one hand issues of cultural belonging and the historical significance of the referendum decision, and providing a strong critique of government and particularly anti-NATO civil society movements on the other. Throughout the analysed period, Mag's dominant news frames were fairly stable, and reports were dominated by frames of cultural belonging and criticism of particularist interests,

supported through “crucial historical decision” frame that built on national identity and politically motivated criticism of the government. Although one of Mag’s central (stated) concerns was the inability of pro-NATO arguments to be heard through the “media flak” of the “non-plural media sphere”, Mag itself did not dedicate very much space to promoting arguments on the benefits of joining NATO. This frame gained salience only during what was previously described as the final stage of debate(s) coverage, and even then it did not function independently but only in connection to the aforementioned primary frames. Compared to the two dailies, Mag’s reporting went through only one major turning-point. Until opinion polls projected a vote in favour of the accessions, the magazine presented NATO opponents as a powerful network of conspirators enjoying the silent support of a reluctant government, the controlling media and pollsters, in their zealous brainwashing campaign to preserve their old privileges, for which they were willing to sacrifice the nation’s future. However, as soon as the polls pointed to majority support for NATO, the menacing NATO opponents (who a week before were still presented as an imminent threat to the nation’s future) were reduced to “somewhat well-organised opponents” who were swept away by a mere week of campaigning by government and international politicians.

As I have already noted above, instead of focusing on presenting the benefits of joining NATO, Mag concentrated on denigrating NATO opponents. Throughout the twelve weeks that preceded the referendum, the magazine’s most prevailing news frame was *disqualification of the anti-NATO movement*. This disqualification had two distinct levels – the magazine’s attack on anti-NATO movements came at the general level of critique of civil society, as well as on the more concrete level of personally discrediting selected leading figures in the movement. On a general level, opponents of NATO were labelled “the so called”, “self-proclaimed” civil society; opportunists who lived on state funding; irresponsible youth who rebelled for fun; members of Saddam’s clan; brainwashed fanatics; dogmatic communists, successors to the Communist Party, Tito’s army, reactionary supporters of the former Eastern Bloc who had not yet adjusted to post-communism reality; a well-organised financial and political network, supported by the mass media; salon revolutionaries; irrational opponents that could not be convinced by rational arguments; protesters without a real alternative; enemies of the nation, disloyal beneficiaries of Slovene independence, and – in a simultaneous reversal of the argument – nationalists. On the more concrete level, “the so-called civil society” consisted of social science go-getters who used public attention for personal career-building; frustrated overambitious professionals; opportunists in search of

financial gain; people who in 1991 were against Slovenia's independence; hypocritical anti-Americans and anti-globalists whose funding came from US-based, global capitalism; a self-proclaimed elite striving to maintain a closed society in order to maintain their old (communist) privileges etc. Within this sweeping wave of general denigration and discrediting of concrete individuals, moral judgements were based on the interconnected criteria of nation and democracy that permeates the institutionalised rendering of Slovene national identity.

Thus Slovene independence was evoked as the ultimate criterion for evaluation of the moral character of individuals and groups, while estimates of the nation's (long-term) wellbeing and interests served to evaluate their political programme (the possibility of "losing all these beautiful opportunities"). The Manichean division between good and bad in national terms was extended into the political division between communism and democracy, in which opponents of NATO were automatically reduced to opponents of democracy – which parties on the political right claimed has been hijacked by successors to the Communist regime.<sup>239</sup> Rejecting NATO would put Slovenia in the company of states such as Belarus, Serbia, Turkmenistan etc. Mag's two ultimate evaluative criteria do not, however, overlap without residue, as can be seen in the curious labelling of EU and NATO opponents as also being "nationalists". Similarly, Mag was at pains to promote the opposition between communism and NATO when prominent members of the old system, such as former Slovene President Milan Kučan, or the president of the Partisan veterans' association, Janez Stanovnik, expressed their public support for joining NATO.

Mag's *critique of government* did not centre on its propagandising efforts to win public support for joining NATO but, on the contrary, on the government's indecisiveness in its attempts to join the alliance. Thus columnists and interviewers lamented the government's decision to consult the people at all, claiming that the ruling elite (being the continuation of the Communist regime) was not entirely dedicated to joining the two "democratic integrations" and therefore wanted to hide its reluctance behind the outcome of the popular vote. The government's pro-NATO propaganda campaign was labelled as belated and inadequate, with columnists asking "who will take the blame if the referendum fails". Mag's coverage presented the EU and NATO referendum as part of a larger Manichean struggle between the forces of freedom and the forces of darkness, between democracy and the

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<sup>239</sup> As one of the magazine's commentators put it: "Being anti-NATO is just a cover-up for the political and ideological underground".

menacing remains of totalitarianism/communism. Opposition politicians such as Janez Janša advocated Slovenia's accession not only in terms (frame) of civilisational belonging but also essentially as the democratisation of domestic politics – internationalisation leading to the disabling of the regime of communist continuity. The *government critique* frame did not, however, apply to all members of the cabinet. The magazine stood by the ministers that were taking flak in other media. Thus Mag published a long interview with Minister of Defence Anton Grizold and openly defended Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel when he became the target of media(ted) critique in relation to the signing of the Vilnius Letter. Mag also published an article titled “Factory of negative news”, in which Rupel attacked reporting by the Slovene media.

The dominant frames described above were supplemented by those of the *strategic choice* and *civilisational belonging* metaframes. On the one hand, joining NATO was presented not merely as rational but essentially as Slovenia's only choice in terms of guaranteeing the nation's long-term security (and democracy) – arguments agitated by selected representatives of government, the magazine's regular contributors and members of the political opposition. On the other hand, the referendum was framed as yet another (and possibly final) turning-point in the nation's evolutionary development. It was frequently compared to the 1990 plebiscite and the 1991 declaration of independence, and journalists even referred to pre-referendum events as the “plebiscite front”, evoking the nation's sacred keyword and emphasising the pivotal nature of the voting. The drama of the historic turning-point was also enhanced by quoting international politicians such as NATO's secretary-general saying that this was Slovenia's “only chance”, using titles such as “Fatal invitation” (March 12) or phrases such as “the fate of the country is in the hands of” (March 5). Furthermore, the referendum decision was dramatised through the cultural belonging frame – through proclamations that a positive referendum outcome would mean “an irrevocable end to Slovenia's Yugoslav roots”, leaving “the Balkan episode behind”, “a different tomorrow”, “Slovenia being pushed into an entirely different world”, where it “will be able to breathe freely”, “equal among other European nations” while “only memories will remain of our Balkan adventures and wars” (March 21).



### 6.3.6 Mag: Visual Frames in the EU/NATO debate(s)

Mag's visual coverage of the pre-referendum debate(s) was subordinated to the textual narrative of articles and consequently focused mostly on institutionalised politics and its confrontation with civil society movements. To illustrate this, photographs were used to supply or draw attention to information that was not inherent in the published image, most often through interpretative captions and article titles. This was most evident in the photographs giving support to the disqualification of the anti-NATO movement textual frame.

As already noted above, NATO and the EU are not concrete material but abstract entities, and their visualisation is necessarily an indirect one. Mag's choice was to depict referendum-related events and topics through a focus on institutionalised political actors, who made up a vast majority (83) of the 136 published images. These photographs served to identify key actors in the political process and thus personalise politics. Photographs of politicians frequently functioned as visual metonymies (e.g. George Robertson stands for NATO as an organisation, Dimirtij Rupel for Slovene foreign policy) and, since most articles were not event- but topic-based, they could have been in many cases adequately replaced by different images (e.g. the NATO headquarters building, photographs of documents etc.).<sup>240</sup> The decision to use photographs of political actors was not only a matter of convenience, availability, convention, concern with actuality or monotony of news coverage, but a choice to personalise the issue. This is clearly evident in the fact that (1) some of the identification photographs of political actors were archive photographs, and (2) through the magazine's use of cut-outs. Cut-outs prioritise the "image" of the depicted person over the event by literally obliterating the context, often regardless of the awkwardness of the final result. The political process presented in Mag's photographs was that of negotiations, consultations, working with documents, formal appearances, public addresses and casual talks among political actors. While Mag's photographs also offered an insight into the more relaxed side of the process (politicians were frequently depicted laughing, chatting at receptions, celebrating etc.), the activities were nevertheless presented as formal – political actors were presented as public figures and their dress code connoted the formality of the occasion (none of the actors was depicted casually dressed or during leisure activities). It is also important to note that Slovene politicians were depicted as competent visual equals to their Western colleagues.

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<sup>240</sup> Symbolic photographs were, for instance, used in connection with Malta's EU referendum (photograph depicting a smiling girl standing in front of an EU flag).

On the pages of Mag, this orderly world of personalised politics was juxtaposed with “the so-called civil society”, depicted either through its most prominent public figures or through images of protesters and demonstrations. This juxtaposition was not stark but subtle – as it did not by rule feature in a single article. In a solitary example of such direct juxtaposition, Rastko Močnik, one of the primary targets of Mag’s discrediting campaign, emerged as a solitary (irrational) agitator set against the calm, uniform, rational government representatives backed by important international politicians. Identification or event-related photographs of the *anti-NATO movement* did not lend support to the *disqualification* narrative as such – but acquired this function (only) through the accompanying captions. Thus a thumbnail portrait of Marta Gregorič accompanying a short item on her selection as Delo’s Slovene of the Year was transformed into a negative image through a large caption “Agitator!”.<sup>241</sup> Similarly, a collection of photographs depicting “influential figures in the anti-NATO movement”, for example, showed a posed (and by visual codes completely positive)<sup>242</sup> portrait photograph of Mišo Alkalaj with the evaluative caption: “Mišo Alkalaj is an expert on everything, which, of course, includes NATO”.

Figure 6.9 Interpretative use of image-text. (Mag)



Left: Mag’s portrait thumbnail of photograph of Marta Gregorič that was published twice during the analysed period. Right: Delo’s portrait of Marta Gregorič.

<sup>241</sup> In the context of Mag and its openly anti-communist stand, one could even claim that the use of this particular photograph, which depicts Marta Gregorič with a (red) scarf-covered head, would further link the activist with Soviet-style 1920s – 1930s iconography of the female worker.

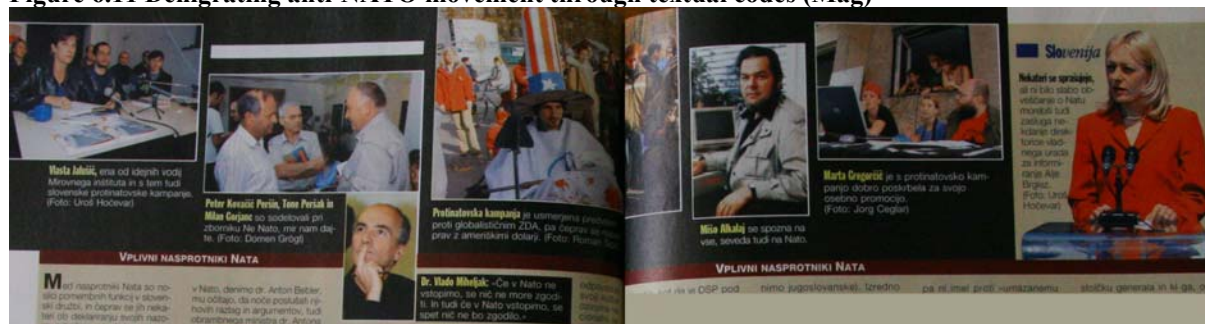
<sup>242</sup> The image is taken from low angle, depicts Alkalaj behind his work desk, neatly dressed and in an approachable posture, gazing at the viewer.

**Figure 6.10 Denigrating anti-NATO movement through visual codes (Mag)**



NATO opponents as agitators and image of disorder compared to orderly world of official politics. The low symbolic status of Rastko Močnik (right) was further emphasised by size and placement: his cut-out was the smallest image of the spread and was positioned in bottom right corner.

**Figure 6.11 Denigrating anti-NATO movement through textual codes (Mag)**



Mag relied heavily on the use of interpretative and evaluative captions of visually neutral photographs.

Bold article captions for the main articles, which worked as potent framing devices, were also frequently interpretative, such as “Once they were warriors” (with regard to so-called civil society), “Legitimate protests, though guided by puzzling compassion for Saddam Hussein”, or “The luxury of pacifism (both on anti-war/anti-NATO demonstrations), setting the evaluative tone of the debate. While Mag’s visual coverage did establish personalisation of the anti-NATO movement, they were not presented as visual equals of political elites. Due to the interpretative captioning, these photographs served more as a continuation of the personal disqualification of individual activists. Apart from prominent "agitators", civil society was visualised through photographs of anonymous protesters. Published images supported the editorial stand that protesters were mainly young and came from more extremist factions on the left of the political spectrum. The captions emphasised that their anti-NATO stand was but one facet of their general disapproval of the modern economy and politics, and they were labelled anti-globalists. Their irrationality was depicted through opposition to state



institutions, e.g. through a two-page action shot of protestors storming the police barricades in front of the US embassy in Ljubljana (which was in fact an archive photograph from 2001) and re-emphasised through titles and captions such as “Pacifists with Molotovs”. Photographs of demonstrators were taken from far social or public distance, which emphasised their numbers, but at the same time reduced them to a (manipulated) mass: in front of the demonstrators, there was almost always the solitary figure of an agitator speaking into a megaphone. Mag’s pictorial coverage thus formed a set of visual oppositions. On the one side, there was the orderly world of male-dominated official politics, backed by international support. On the other, there was, in gender terms, a more diverse group of intellectuals accompanied by a mass of young, and by extension immature and irresponsible, supporters/protesters.

Figure 6.12 Framing of protestors (Mag).



Framing of anti-NATO protestors as irresponsible and potentially threatening youth through archive images.

Figure 6.13 Framing of protestors (Mag).



Framing of anti-NATO protestors as irresponsible youth emphasised by interpretative captioning with popular culture reference – the title of the article is in fact a 1994 film title (Article title Once Were Warriors, 1994, dir. Lee Tamahori).

Although less prominently, Mag's democracy vs. totalitarianism/communism frame was also present in the magazine's photographic coverage of the pre-referendum debate(s). Here, Mag resorted to the use of symbolic photographs and photomontage, juxtaposed by archive and current affairs photographs. Thus an article on Slovenia's signing of EU accession documents in Athens – described as the civilisational event of the millennium – opened up with a large postcard-style photograph of the Acropolis. The article itself, however, questioned Slovenia's allegiance to democracy, which was considered to have been hijacked by the forces of continuity. The mythical ideal of the democracy of Ancient Athens was juxtaposed with a small photograph of the semi-mythologized birth of Slovene democracy, depicting a mass of protestors in support of the 1989 Majniška deklaracija (May declaration). In the caption, the birth of Slovene democracy was explicitly tied to the Slovene political right by reference to the journal Nova Revija. The past was similarly appropriated in an article critical of the pacifism and anti-Americanism of civil society, which concluded with three small archive photographs that linked Slovenia's independence and allegiance to democratic ideals with a pro-NATO stand. The first photograph depicted present-day opposition leader Janez Janša being released from prison in 1988, with a caption claiming Janša was incarcerated in a "Party prison", and thus blurring the line between the (Slovene) Communist Party (and its tacit

support of the pro-democratic movement) and the Yugoslav National Army (JNA), which in fact imprisoned Janša. The adjoining photograph depicted JNA tanks during the ten-day war for Slovene independence, with a caption that assured the reader that “almost everyone who in 1991 was against Slovenia, is today against NATO”. The third photograph depicted the Slovene political elite in 1992, mythologising the golden age of Slovene democracy by claiming universal allegiance to democracy as opposed to today’s divided stand(ard)s. The third example of the use of archive photographs also appropriated the nation’s sacred moment to give visual interpretation to current events. In an article that presented Slovene accession to the EU and NATO as the second phase of the nation’s two-stage teleological journey, a set of three photographs appeared as a visual confirmation of textual narration. The left one depicted former Slovene President Milan Kučan with US President George W. Bush; the photograph in the middle was the iconic image of Slovene independence – the raising of the Slovene flag at an official ceremony in front of the parliament building in Ljubljana;<sup>243</sup> the photograph on the right depicted “pacifists clashing with police in front of the US embassy during the pre-referendum campaign”. The juxtaposition of demonstrators with the sanctified moment of the nation’s historical fulfilment rendered them not only as enemies of state but also as enemies of the nation itself. The location of the clash with the police (the US embassy) was significant in itself. For Mag’s contributors, anti-Americanism has regularly served as an indicator of pro-communist views and hence undemocratic affinities.

Figure 6.14 Framing of protestors (Mag)



Historical reference from “Slovene spring” as a framing device and criteria for moral evaluation – true vs. fake democracy (the 1989 iconic image is enlarged on the right).

<sup>243</sup> The image has become the Slovene visual equivalent of Joe Rosenthal's famous Raising of the Flag over Iwo Jima.



The anti-Americanism of protesters was repeatedly visualised through their use of symbols – e.g. drawing a swastika over the Stars and Stripes or dressing up in costumes with American iconography. The swastika was also used to link anti-NATO protesters with communism via partisans. During the annual commemoration of the Battle of Dražgoše, an activist with a propelled parachute flew above the gathered crowds flying a banner on which NATO was equated with Nazism (symbolised by the swastika). The image was used twice during the analysed period in articles that were not specifically reporting on the commemoration. In another image depicting anti-NATO graffiti, the caption questioned the usefulness of a strategy that equated NATO with “fascism and assassins”, even though the word fascism was not used in the two depicted graffiti, thus maintaining the longstanding equation anti-NATO = communism = partisans = anti-Western = anti-democratic. One final strand of the visualisation of the grand narrative of the great Manichean struggle between democracy and totalitarianism/communism was the use of images of Tito. In an article that condemned “the ideological collage of dogmatic leftists”, reproaching protesters for their uncritical anti-Americanism and alluding to a dangerous reinterpretation of the nation’s history, a photomontage, presumably illustrating the ideological argument put forward by “extremists”, featured a photograph of Soviet soldiers from the Second World War next to a portrait of Tito with a cigar, topped off by an image of a tank advancing through the desert with cut-out heads of George W. Bush and Saddam Hussein. Tito and Hussein are visually linked by being placed on the same side of the collage, which visually echoes the argument put forward by the magazine a few pages later, when a caption claims protesters against the war in Iraq (largely overlapping with the anti-NATO movement) are sympathisers of the Iraqi regime. Visual equation of Tito with the forces of evil featured again two weeks later in an interview with the co-author of an exhibition titled “Between the swastika and the red star”, where the interviewer was portrayed against the backdrop of a display that featured busts of Hitler and Tito side by side. His dictatorial status was also evoked in an article on former Yugoslav loans (now public debt) to dictatorial regimes in Africa and the Middle East, and within the context of the publication’s editorial stand. In the context of Mag’s editorial policy, even a cut-out of a renowned Tito impersonator in a reportage on anti-Iraq war protests (captioned “Comrade Tito also demonstrated”) can be read as a way of labelling demonstrators as undemocratic, rather than as a visual record of celebrities supporting anti-war efforts.

Figure 6.15 Tito as a negative reference frame (Mag)



Joining NATO/EU as renouncement of totalitarian past while simultaneously rallying for the public support of the forthcoming invasion of Iraq.

Other frames which featured prominently in textual coverage did not receive their visualisation. Thus only one photograph could potentially be tied to the civilisational belonging frame – a photograph from anti-NATO demonstrations depicting two Muslim girls (wearing headscarves) as if leading the marching protesters (against a backdrop of placards). It is also worth noting that the military, being one of the main objects of the referendum, was virtually unseen in the twelve weeks that led up to the referendum. Slovene soldiers appeared in only three small photographs. Additionally, only one photograph depicted soldiers on peacekeeping missions and the image was of a good NATO – a soldier playing football with a local boy (the caption referred to six Slovene officers serving in KFOR; the soldier depicted was neither an officer nor a soldier in the Slovene army). The image appeared next to the looming figure of NATO's secretary-general (extreme low angle, large photograph), suggesting a counter image to the "our boys dying abroad for the protection of foreign interests" frame so frequently promoted by NATO opponents.



### 6.3.7 Mladina: Textual Frames in the EU/NATO debate(s)

Mladina's overall textual and visual coverage of the pre-referendum debate(s) was characterised by an explicit anti-NATO stand. The magazine's reporting was in line with its long tradition of anti-establishment campaigns and siding with politically underprivileged parts of civil society. During the analysed period, this was made explicit not only through the magazine's selective coverage of the pre-referendum debate(s), but also in the magazine's self-promotion – an advertisement for Mladina featured the magazine's adoption of the "Not NATO, give us peace" slogan of the anti-NATO campaign as the latest in line of its rebellious stands at the nation's historical turning-points, comparing the outraged Yugoslav National Army generals and politicians from over a decade earlier to those of NATO and the present-day Slovenian government. The magazine's reporting of the pre-referendum debate(s) was threefold: the bulk of the coverage came in the form of opinion and analytical articles that covered both general aspects and current mainstream political events; this was supplemented by a "chronicle of resistance" section that gave voice to an amorphous plethora of anti-NATO groups and covered events linking grassroots resistance to mainstream politics; and the third part of Mladina's coverage was a "Natophone" section<sup>244</sup> in which a weekly selection of NATO-related statements by pro-NATO officials or representatives of civil society was assembled – in order to be critiqued.

In general, Mladina did not aim at producing balanced coverage of the debate(s), and the pattern of its reporting showed that pro-NATO opinions were, with rare exceptions (e.g. an interview with Jelko Kacin), published only as the starting-points for critical commentary or outright ridicule. The magazine's dominant news frames (government criticism, propaganda and antimilitarism) were present from the beginning of the analysed sample and changed fairly little during the weeks of the coverage, and were firmly anchored in and linked to a narrative of anti-Americanism, more explicitly, to a critique of what was referred to as the imperialism of the Bush administration. Although Mladina did serve as a potent voice of grassroots anti-NATO movement, the magazine primarily focused on being an outlet for *critique of the government*. From the outset, criticism of the Slovene government and its foreign policy was couched in a critique of US imperialism, within which NATO appeared as nothing more than one instrument US had at its disposal in order to achieve its political and economic ambitions. The threat of a unilateral invasion of Iraq served as further proof of the aggressiveness of the US under Bush administration and Slovenia was criticised for its

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<sup>244</sup> Mladina's »media watch« section.

apparent willingness to side with the global aggressor. This strand of critique intensified with the growing rift between the EU and the US in relation to the Iraq crisis, and the government was accused of betraying European ideals, which were based on the democratic practice of refraining from the use of military force. The US was accused of dividing Europe, and Slovenia seemed to have, albeit somewhat reluctantly, sided with the US. Slovene politicians were accused of servility and succumbing to pressure from powerful states (initially the US, but later also France and Germany), a bad omen for Slovenia's future position within the two integrations. The critique became particularly fierce after Minister of Foreign Affairs Dimitrij Rupel signed the Vilnius Letter, and it shifted from a campaign against foreign policy in general to a personalised campaign against the minister. Rupel was presented as an incompetent and servile politician and the magazine openly called for his impeachment (cover page titles proclaiming e.g. "Looking for Minister" and "Stop Rupel"). The government criticism frame remained salient till the very end of the analysed period, particularly because the Slovene government seemed incapable (or unwilling) of siding clearly against the military invasion of Iraq. Although Slovenia stressed the need for a diplomatic solution and sided with the UN Security Council, the country's policy was not clear-cut, which led to Slovenia's much publicised inclusion into the "coalition of the willing" and its appearance on the list of recipients of financial reward in return for loyalty to the US – both "inclusions" were later officially denounced by both administrations.<sup>245</sup>

Like critique of the government, the *antimilitarism frame* worked in close connection with denouncement of US imperialism. Unlike other publications, Mladina did not draw much on the potent motif of Slovene soldiers dying abroad to protect foreign interests, but focused primarily on presenting the US and NATO as global aggressors who use military force for the promotion of their economic interests. Mladina's stand was couched within the domain of ethics and morale, emphasising the human(itarian) aspect of military interventions and the consequent toll of civilian lives. Slovenia's opposition to NATO was thus explicitly framed as an unwillingness to participate in the global military exploitation of underprivileged states and areas. Unlike the pro-NATO side, which repeatedly criticised NATO opponents as antidemocratic, pro-communist or reluctant to join the club of developed countries, Mladina

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<sup>245</sup> For example, the March 24 cover page posed the question "Are we, or are we not [supporters of the US-led invasion]?", illustrated by a photomontage of George W. Bush waving to soldiers with the pasted heads of Slovene politicians clapping beneath under a large US flag, announcing a theme that dominated the entire issue.

presented an anti-NATO referendum vote as an ethical choice about rejecting the need to link economic development, democracy and military interventionism.

Although much of Mladina's reporting revolved around criticism of the pro-NATO stand, the magazine also responded to attacks on the anti-NATO movement for not offering a clear and viable alternative to NATO. A week before the referendum, the magazine's cover page announced an alternative policy: to be peaceful, non-aligned and neutral within the European Union. Like Delo, Dnevnik and Mag, Mladina's stand on the EU was positive, and only occasionally did the magazine offer an Eurosceptic point of view (what Mladina did, however, was that it insisted on clear separation between the two integrations, one being perceived as economic and political, the other as purely military). During the first stage of reporting, Mladina also focused on the rational, strategic choice metaframe by emphasising the costs of NATO membership in increased military spending (often using the example of Poland's purchase of F16 fighters), though the emphasis later shifted towards renouncing the "it is better to be a part of the club" argument. Like the rest of the strategic choice metaframe arguments, those of civilisational belonging – which most clearly catered to the established discourse of national identity – were mostly confined to the Natophone section, where they were not presented neutrally but emerged as negative reference points. With the exception of an interview with the president of the parliamentary foreign policy committee, Jelko Kacin, during the third stage (the government campaign), neither Slovene pro-NATO officials nor high-profile international guests to Slovenia were given a direct voice on the pages of Mladina.

One of Mladina's dominant journalistic efforts was an attempt to demystify *government propaganda*. Articles frequently problematised government spending on the "information campaign" related to the two referendums, and accused the government of controlling, even monopolising the public debate(s) through the sponsoring and staging of events. Pressure on the media was also exposed (e.g. the Government Information Office acting as a co-producer of TV programmes), and the overall government strategy was considered undemocratic, its allegedly totalitarian roots emphasised with labels such as Leninist. Mladina found proof of this in what it saw as the government's recurring recourse to appeals grounded in fear, such as the reintroduction of obligatory military service or emphasising the referendum choice as a momentous and pivotal decision for the nation's future. As a part of its anti-official propaganda stand, Mladina also resorted to a mild version of personal discrediting, targeting

Gregor Krajc, at the time the newly appointed director of the Government Office of Information, by repeatedly alluding to his past role as a TV host of the children's computer game Hugo.<sup>246</sup>

### **6.3.8 Mladina: Visual Frames in the EU/NATO debate(s)**

Mladina's visual coverage of the pre-referendum debates consisted of just over 130 images, of which 30 were graphic illustrations, while the majority consisted of photographs. These numbers by themselves are slightly misleading in terms of what they say about the relative importance attributed to the two forms of visual communication or about the purpose to which the two were put (factual vs. interpretative visualisation). During the analysed period, Mladina relied heavily on symbolic visual representation of news, topics and political actors involved in the debate(s). However, much of this visual interpretation and symbolism was not created through the use of photography, but relied on graphic illustrations which dominated not only magazine covers but also most of the visual elements accompanying opinion articles. This focus on editorial illustration was partly due to the nature of Mladina's reporting on the subject, which relied heavily on commentary of the topic as a whole. Photographs were generally limited to the genres of reportage and portraiture and were used mainly with articles on current events. This division of labour originates not so much in an attempt to secure photography's realism and power of visual evidence<sup>247</sup>, but because of its limited potential<sup>248</sup> for symbolic narration when compared to illustration or caricature. Generally, those of Mladina's articles which were illustrated with photographs would be laid out with one or two large format photographs (often a whole page) or, in the case of reportage, would feature a number (four to twelve) of smaller photographs of the same event or topic in layouts where images were not used for their own communicative capacity or effect but for their contribution in visually narrating a more complex and multifaceted account of a given event or topic.

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<sup>246</sup> None of the other three publications mentioned the "past references" of the newly appointed director beyond his latest post as TV Slovenia's correspondent in Brussels.

<sup>247</sup> Although Mladina used photographs prominently as visual evidence (for example, during the period analysed, the magazine published photographs of illegally parked police vehicles, attacking the double standards of the repressive state apparatus), it did not refrain from using photographs that went "beyond referential" (Huxford 2001).

<sup>248</sup> One standard way of overcoming this limitedness of photography in terms of interpretative communication is photomontage – a technique Mladina used on its Feb 10 cover page.

Apart from two reportages (on anti-war/NATO demonstrations in Ljubljana and on Italian protesters stopping US military equipment transports by rail), Mladina's use of photographs was fairly limited, consisting mostly of protocol photography (handshakes and talks), identification portraits and snapshots from anti-NATO events. Like other publications analysed, Mladina also chose personalised instead of object- and symbol-related metonymies in order to depict the political process, which again can not be reduced solely to availability and convention. The choice to represent the political process through the faces and bodies of leading political actors is one of simultaneous personification and status acknowledgement – both of which are in line with Mladina's dominant frame of reporting the pre-referendum debate(s): the magazine's *government critique* was not directed against policy but against specific individuals who shaped and promoted the policy. Their (textual or visual) disqualification was therefore a personal one. The most vivid example of this was Mladina's critique of Slovenia's Minister of Foreign Affairs Dimitrij Rupel, which, after he signed the Vilnius Letter, turned into a campaign for his removal from office. Rupel was made a central figure of five unflattering magazine covers.<sup>249</sup> The Feb 10 cover was a stark and potent critique of Slovenia's servility to the US –with a photomontage of Rupel's and Bush's heads on a gay pornographic photograph literally visualising the phrase “ass kissing”. The Feb 17 cover depicted the minister of foreign affairs as a trigger-happy cowboy on the loose, waving two pistols, dressed in a Stars-and-Stripes vest and bow tie (titled “Stop Rupel”). The theme of servility to the US is visualised again four weeks later in a photomontage of a photograph of troops cheering George W. Bush under a large US flag, in which the faces of troops were replaced by cut-outs of leading Slovene politicians, among which Rupel was in the foreground (eagerly applauding Bush). Photographs on the inside pages of the three issues expanded on the theme through less obviously symbolic and interpretative photographs – most of which showed Rupel in the company of US politicians (archive photographs of him shaking hands with Colin Powell (titled: “Our support”), talking to George W. Bush (titled: “Stop Rupel”) or similar images from the same event). Physical closeness, non-verbal communication such as body language or facial expressions (e.g. smiles), and gestures (shaking hands) all suggested the link between the two countries. Although the photographs themselves did not offer any direct visual proof of Slovenia's (or Rupel's) servility or inferior position, it was implied through the accompanying text (captions and article titles), editorial illustrations and photographs published in other sections of the magazine (e.g. the Diareja cartoon or Rolanje

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<sup>249</sup> Rupel is central figure in 5 out of 13 Mladina's cover pages from the analysed period and included in the collage of Slovene politicians cheering to George W. Bush on sixth one.

po sceni caricature; a photograph of political graffiti in a form of wish list requesting, *inter alia*, a spine for the minister of foreign affairs), as well as the aforementioned illustrations from the magazine's cover page. Mladina also featured photographs of other Slovene politicians meeting with US politicians as demonstrations of Slovenia's allegiance to the US, implying "guilt by association" through the depiction of smiling handshakes, casual conversations and physical proximity (e.g. Jelko Kacin talking to US ambassador to Slovenia Johnny Young or Milan Kučan meeting with US congressman Hye that presented the list of coalition of countries supporting the US invasion of Iraq or Slovene Defence Minister Anton Grizold standing next to US Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld, both dressed in Slovene Army camouflage jackets).

**Figure 6.16 Conformity by association (Mladina)**



Cooperation and physical proximity as index of political conformity.

Although Mladina dedicated large amounts of space to coverage of the *anti-NATO movement*, its visual coverage did not complement the textual part of the articles. Mladina did not use the expressive potential of photographs to depict civil society movements: neither the size (mostly small images), style (bland record shots, taken mostly from far social or public distance) nor number of photographs matched the magazine's preferred textual treatment. Civil society as depicted in Mladina was mostly a faceless, anonymous mass. Unlike Mag and contrary to its coverage of institutionalised politics, Mladina did not personify NATO opponents through portraits of the most prominent public figures. Most photographs depicted civil society as largely unidentifiable demonstrators (due to the small size and large subject distance). In

depictions of protesters, Mladina's photographers and editors focused more on placards and displayed symbols than on protesters as such. Although the latter were clearly not limited to "young anti-globalists and anarchists" as in Mag (protesters were clearly of mixed age, gender and social class), they were often reduced to nothing more than display stands for symbols. Thus five out of ten photographs of reportage from anti-war protests in Ljubljana focused on the placards, slogans and banners of protesters, which were mostly pacifist and anti-American/anti-Bush.<sup>250</sup> The national frame was evoked through the article title "Slovenia says no!" and reemphasised by a placard held by a protester with part of a stanza from the Slovene national anthem,<sup>251</sup> linking contemporary civil society with the nation's essence. Mladina's coverage of the protests, however, routinely included at least one image of confrontation between police and demonstrators. Unlike Mag's coverage, where the confrontation was between groups and law-enforcement representatives securing public order and protecting property, Mladina's images depicted a confrontation between police and protestors as confrontation between individuals and repressive state apparatus.

Figure 6.17 Demonstrators and repressive state apparatus (Mladina)



Police brutality is a meta frame that is frequently evoked by Mladina.

The two other dominant frames of Mladina's reporting – *propaganda* and *alternative vision* – received fairly little visual coverage in both the form of photographs and graphic illustration. Both of them, however, did end up as magazine covers featuring Rupel. March 10 cover depicted Rupel wearing a German Second World War helmet with NATO insignia,

<sup>250</sup> Similarly, a reportage titled "Trainstopping" on Italian anti-military activists sabotaging US arms transports featured nine photographs, eight of which foregrounded their banners and placards

<sup>251</sup> God's blessing on all nations/Who long and work for that bright day/When o'er earth's habitations/No war, no strife shall hold its sway.

accompanied by the title “NATO propaganda” in Gothic script, with the subtitle “Where will 130 million Tolars go and why are only votes of support heard for this money?”. The image made explicit reference to Nazi propaganda, as well as resonating with accusations that the Bush administration was fascist and equating him with Hitler. Mladina’s framing of the government “information” campaign as pure propaganda was further emphasised on the inside pages, though, with a shift of ideological camp – the article was titled NATO-agitprop, now alluding to another political ideology. Propaganda was thus framed as a feature of totalitarian regimes in general, which by extension painted the political establishment’s support of NATO in a totalitarian hue, a strand of argumentation prominently present in the magazine since the January debates on the possibility of bypassing the will of the people should the referendum produce a No vote, and parliamentary speaker Borut Pahor’s often quoted statement that the referendum “should be carried out in such a way that it will in no way endanger Slovene accession to the EU and NATO”. Visual references to totalitarianism were also present in connection with NATO and US domination, mostly through the use of the swastika (a paraglider banner at Dražgoše, the US flag with a swastika on the US embassy railing and on Ljubljana’s castle tower), and graffiti equating NATO and the Gestapo. The subject of a feasible alternative policy to joining NATO, which was the topic of the March 17 issue, was depicted with an illustration featuring Rupel and his wife Marjetica as a pair of old hippies, set against a stark violet background and a discrete Arabic setting of silhouetted palms and minarets. The topic was not depicted photographically.

Mladina’s use of photographs revealed a marked pattern of using photographs that “goes beyond the referential” – by combining photographs that are by themselves strongly suggestive or that become interpretative when read within the context of a given issue, section or article. The contextual interplay of meanings, for example, came to the fore in the January issue, which equated joining NATO with going to war for US interests. The central visual motif – a NATO referendum ballot-box – was present on the cover of the magazine as well as in the main article of the issue (Ticket to the world of war”), which opened up with George Bush casting a vote in a ballot box. During the period analysed, photographs were routinely used as extensions or re-emphasis of the textual part of articles, and archive photographs of politicians were used instead of contemporary ones if they better illustrated (substantiated) the textual point. Thus parliamentary speaker Borut Pahor’s statement that the referendum should not endanger Slovenia’s accession to the EU and NATO was accompanied with a photograph where he was swaying a mallet, connoting the decisiveness of his stand and the final word on



the matter. Similarly, an article on then French President Jacques Chirac's critique of New Europe (including Slovenia's policy) and Dimitrij Rupel's adequacy as minister of foreign affairs was illustrated with a whole-page photograph of Chirac talking to Slovene President Janez Drnovšek, with Rupel in the background. What made the image interpretative was not only the article title ("Looking for a new minister of foreign affairs"), but the hand gesture of the French president, whose extended index finger confirmed the textual account of France demanding Slovenia have a more responsible minister of foreign affairs. Chirac was active and ordering, while Drnovšek's face was slightly grimaced and could be read as embarrassed. Rupel, the object of the discussion, stood in the background, waiting.

Figure 6.18 Personalising the debate by targeting the minister of foreign affairs



Mladina's visual framing of critique of government was not achieved through photographs but through illustrations and photomontage.

## 6.4 Cultural Belonging and External Others: The Flow of Print News and National Identity Frames Beyond the EU/NATO Debates

The analysis above has revealed a fairly limited use of visual references to privileged discursive elements of national identity in articles relating to the pre-referendum debate(s) on joining NATO and the EU. While all four publications made explicit textual claims to the discourse of national identity and drew from the pre-existing pool of metaphors and concepts provided by the privileged discursive element of Slovene national identity – either to substantiate the argument of their claim (e.g. the nation’s historical turning-point, the similarity to 1991; the danger of the Balkans etc.) or as a form of critique (our boys dying for the protection of foreign interests; loss of sovereignty) – photographic coverage in *Delo*, *Dnevnik* and *Mladina* did not match the overt “nationalising” of the pre-referendum debate. Only *Mag*’s visual referencing of the nation’s sanctified historical moments by publishing archive photographs of “the Slovene spring”, the raising of the Slovene flag during the independence celebrations and the “ten-day war” of independence represented a strong move in that direction. Coupled with the magazine’s overall editorial stand, its mythologisation of the golden age of Slovene democracy gains increased salience in the context of the magazine’s perpetual critique of communism and what is claimed to be the continuity of the old regime, and serves as a potent boundary-drawing and -maintaining mechanism through which NATO opponents become – verbally and visually, opponents of Slovene independence, statehood and nation. In terms of the Bartsian understanding of the boundary, *Mag*’s visual discourse was drawing upon that of external and internal Otherness, in which internal others were merely remnants (an old elite) or progeny (the irresponsible youth) of the residual non-European Other – either in the form of the Balkans, communism or a mixture of the two.

In the context of the magazine, communism-related visual frames are not merely political but have a distinctive national(istic) dimension. *Mag*’s utilisation of photography for visual framing also ventured furthest from the ideal of press photography as an unobtrusive, factual visual record, and the magazine repeatedly resorted to photomontage and a layout of images that was suggestive of the interpretative reading of certain photographs, and interpretative captioning of images. While the use of images to “go beyond the referential” proved to be a fairly standard feature of press photography in all four publications analysed, *Mag* was the only one to explicitly use it to promote a national(istic) interpretation of events.

However, the lack of consistent and explicit visual framing in terms of markers of national identity in Delo, Dnevnik and Mladina does not mean – as I will show in the next section – that the images in these media did not serve as vehicles for visualisations of national identity.

#### **6.4.1 Flow of Printed News and Indirect Frames of National Belonging**

I have already pointed out that the bulk of framing studies of news reporting mostly confine framing to text, and ignore the accompanying images and their independent or collaborative narrative potential. However, the majority of framing studies have another shortcoming – most of the time, the texts are analysed in a decontextualised manner. When context is taken into account, it is generally confined merely to the immediate context of hard news sections, neglecting the adjoining sections of the publications. I would argue a contrary claim, however, – that, at least in terms of visual coverage and its function for the maintenance of national identity, it is vital to look at the broader context of publication. In studying (the effects of) television programmes, Raymond Williams introduces a concept of flow which I argue might be usefully applied to the study of visual representations in printed publications. With regard to TV programmes, Williams (1975/1999, 90) concludes that:

What is being offered is not [...] a programme of discrete units with particular insertions, but a planned flow, in which the true series is not the published sequence of programme itself, but this sequence is transformed by the inclusion of another kind of sequence, so that these sequences together compose the real flow, the real ‘broadcasting’.

Admittedly, reading a magazine or a newspaper is a far less structured activity than TV viewing, as it enables selective focus and skipping of “discrete units” (pages or sections), but it is equally true that readers do experience the publication as a whole – most of them have a tendency to leaf through the issue, scanning for visual and textual cues that would raise their interest. The publications themselves feature devices akin to the TV programme trailers Williams (Ibid., 93) talks about, which are designed to sustain the flow of news within a single issue (e.g. tables of contents, short announcements on the front pages, transitions from page to page) and between different issues (announcements of forthcoming issues, letters to the editor). Applying Williams’ concept of flow to the study of printed news means extending the analytical focus from hard news to other sections of a newspaper, including advertisements, theme supplements etc. In the case of the pre-referendum debate(s), this

would imply expanding the focus from front-page news and domestic politics to include international politics, thematic sections and weekday supplements, the curiosity section and advertisements, so that, to paraphrase Williams, one can claim that only “these sections together compose the real flow, the real ‘publication’”. A similar conclusion can be reached by following Billig’s (1995/2001) argument on “banal” nationalism – if the media are central organs of community’s self-awareness project, or, as Billig has claimed, of the daily maintenance of nationalism in its most unnoticeable, banal form, one should expand the focal point of research from a limited hard news focus to adjoining, even the most “banal”, sections of the publication.<sup>252</sup>

To show the importance of these adjoining sections in delineating and maintaining the symbolic boundary of nation within the NATO/EU pre-referendum debate(s), my analysis will focus on three aspects of print news flows: international news and other general front-page news; the section on travels, trips or curiosities; and illustration photographs in supplements.

#### **6.4.2 International News as Frames of National and Cultural Belonging**

Since the media selectively cover news events from around the globe, international news sections tend to reflect not only a specific concept of news values of a given media but also testify to the self-ascribed position of the country within the global family of states. This latter function comes to the fore particularly in situations of intensified political conflicts, as was the case, for example, with the US diplomatic campaign to gain support for the invasion of Iraq, that reached its climax during the Slovene pre-referendum debate(s), and which was seen to have partly influenced the outcome of the final vote. During the period analysed, Delo’s international coverage was – especially visually – dominated by the US diplomatic campaign for the invasion of Iraq, military preparations for the invasion and anti-war protests, depicting a dispute between two institutionalised policies (EU vs. US) and discord between institutional politics and civil society, set up against the massing of military equipment.

What is significant in Delo’s reporting of the developing conflict in Iraq is that visual news coverage is confined almost exclusively to Slovenia’s projected space of cultural belonging –

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<sup>252</sup> Billig (1995/2001), for example, notes how elements that are taken for granted, such as weather maps, routinely contribute to the promotion and preservation of a sense of national belonging.

the global West. Although the country's level of official support for the US invasion of Iraq was for some time unclear, due to the government's indecisive stand on the matter, the question of cultural belonging was merely that of siding with one of the two constituent (and contending) parts of the West. As my previous studies (Tomanić Trivundža 2004, 2005) have shown,<sup>253</sup> coverage of the Iraq war in Delo was marked by a visual polarisation that can best be understood through the concept of Orientalism. Orientalism is a controversial and disputed concept, a complex battleground of intellectual ideas that cannot be addressed fully at this point. For the purpose of present debate, it will suffice to say that Orientalism can be defined as an evaluative construction of cultural difference, a system of representation through a persistent and fairly standardised pool of images, myths, archetypes and value positions<sup>254</sup> for Western understanding (and evaluation) of the Orient.<sup>255</sup> Since Orientalism is therefore a grid for assessing civilisational belonging – which by definition includes valuation and hierarchies in terms of development – it depends to a large extent on articulations of collective identity of the social collectivity performing the valuation (see e.g. the concept of “nesting” Orientalisms in Chapter 5).<sup>256</sup> My previous studies revealed a pattern of visual differentiation along a series

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<sup>253</sup> The two studies that examined the period of 14 weeks of news coverage in Delo (and Večer), covering one month of preparations, major combat operations and the first month of the aftermath. Images were coded to test Orientalism as the dominant news frame and the three hypotheses relating to irrationality, backwardness and violence subframes were confirmed. Hypothesis one: If the depicted subject is Oriental, it is more likely that he/she will be depicted as “irrational”, than if the depicted subject belongs to the category of the West. Hypothesis two: If the depicted subject is Oriental, it is more likely that he/she/it will be depicted as “backward”(or in a setting that connotes backwardness), than if the depicted subject belongs to the category of the West. Hypothesis three: If the depicted subject is Oriental, it is more likely that he/she will be depicted as “violent” than if the depicted subject belongs to the category of the West. The chi-square test of the difference between the mode of depiction according to “cultural group membership” or “civilisation divide” (i.e. West vs. Orient) was significant for Delo: “irrationality”  $\chi^2(1, n=240) = 15,84, p < .005$ ; “backwardness”  $\chi^2(1, n=71) = 31,04, p < .005$ ; “violence”  $\chi^2(1, n=71) = 3,89, p < .005$ . For details on coding and the precise definition of frames and variables, see Tomanić Trivundža (2005).

<sup>254</sup> The basic grid outlined by Said conceptualises Orient as essentially strange, violent, potentially dangerous, backward, childlike, irrational, but also exotic, mysterious and sensual, while the Occident is considered rational, virtuous, mature and normal. (1978/1994, 40–2)

<sup>255</sup> The category of Orient, however, is not a stable one. Although it is generally confined to the Middle East, its outer borders are context-dependent and can vary considerably (e.g. excluding Turkey or including Bosnia). Historically speaking, from the European perspective, the Orient's core was always located in the area of the Middle East; however, from a US perspective, the Orient more frequently meant the Far East – China and Japan.

<sup>256</sup> Put differently, there is no homogenous body of Western Orientalism, but various overlapping and diverging Orientalisms. These particular Orientalisms are of national character – they were and continue to be formed by and against the processes of collective identity formation of particular nations, and their “real” and “imagined” political, economic and cultural investments in the region (e.g. Sensenig-Dabbous's notes on the difference of Austrian and German Orientalism to that of France and the UK). Although scholars have over the past decade been increasingly focusing on “national” variations of Orientalism, Orientalism as a scientific, political and/or artistic practice remained for the most part tied to the era of 19<sup>th</sup>-century colonialism and ascribed to actual colonial powers (e.g. the United Kingdom and France) or countries with imperialist aspirations in the Middle East (e.g. Germany). Even in the analysis of present-day Orientalism, studies mostly focus on countries with real economic (often dubbed neo-colonial) pretensions in the region. But what the idea of multiple national Orientalisms suggests is that Orientalism as a representational practice can also be an indigenous practice to

of basic binaries (rationality vs. irrationality; individuality vs. mass; peacefulness vs. violence; progress vs. backwardness) identified by Said (1979/1994). The Orientalising of Iraq was a gradual process of shifting the emphasis of news coverage, marked by three phases that essentially corresponded with the advance of US and British troops. The deeper the troops advanced into Iraq, the more the Iraqis became visible. And the more they became visible, the more they became Orientalised. However, even before the attack, the division between West and Orient was clearly set. During that part of the time period included in the two studies that overlaps with that of the pre-referendum debates (one month prior to the invasion), the non-Western side of the conflict was made virtually invisible in Delo. Out of 76 photographs, only three depicted Iraqi subjects and a further two came from the region (Jordan). Instead, Delo focused on military preparations for the attack (36 percent), key political figures in the diplomatic 'war' (30 percent) and anti-war demonstrations (16 percent). Through these, the West emerged as modern, technologically advanced (military technology) and rational (political process, dialogue, peaceful demonstrations). Its representatives were depicted as individuals – even photographs of military preparations and manoeuvres depicted coalition soldiers in small groups or were taken from close social distance that stressed their individuality. They were also portrayed during leisure-time activities (e.g. playing football on an aircraft carrier), and their military hardware was depicted as highly aestheticized (expressive angles and/or lighting, crisp colours, repetitive shapes of lined vehicles etc.)

Contrary to these images of the rational, individual and developed West, and in spite of the dominance of military hardware, the Orient emerged not only as technologically undeveloped but also as potentially violent, threatening and irrational. Of the three photographs of Iraqis, one depicted schoolgirls joyously running to celebrate the premature end of the school year (contrasting female children with the adult male world of politics), and another an archive photograph of Saddam Hussein signing an agreement for the development of his nuclear programme. The third photograph depicted Iraqi soldiers in their battle gear at a rally, cheering with Kalashnikovs and shouting in support of Saddam Hussein, explicitly characterising the Iraqi army as an irrational, violent and threatening mob (cf. Van Leeuwen, 2000). Photographs published during January and the first half of February also supported these findings – the relative invisibility of the Other and Slovene identification with the global West, either in the form of institutionalised politics (meetings and cooperation with US and

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nations with no actual economic or territorial claims to the region traditionally defined as the Orient, such as Slovenia.

EU politicians) or civil society (Slovene protests as part of the global anti-war movement). In its Saturday supplement, Delo's photographic coverage of Iraq-related topics was in marked contrast to its otherwise generally critical political analysis, reports and op-ed articles. When photographs of non-Westerners were used to illustrate these articles, they openly promoted an Orientalist visual framing of the region. Thus a critical and analytical report on regional politics was juxtaposed with a large photograph of a dark, smoke-filled coffee-house, with idle middle-aged men indulging in water pipes and card games against the background of a flickering TV screen, the photograph being closer to the genre of travel photography than it was to the conventions of hard news photography. The image was a variation on a fairly standard motif and representational strategy for depicting Middle Eastern politics – not through images of politicians in question but indirectly through street or coffee-house scenes which focused on “ordinary people” following the mediated appearances of their leaders (either by watching television or reading newspapers). This puts political actors from the region in a symbolically underprivileged position, as they stand in sharp contrast to the individualised, personified and rational world of Western politics. Saddam Hussein, as the primary target of US invasion, was himself (with the exception of an archive photograph showing him swimming) not depicted directly but rather through the many regime-sponsored visualisations – in the form of murals, statues, tile works etc. The Orientalist contrasting of the developed and masculine Occident with the undeveloped, irrational and feminine Orient was explicit in an article that featured an apocalyptic image of black US attack helicopters against a background of burning oil wells and a smoke-filled horizon, juxtaposed with a smaller photograph in the second part of the article depicting a group of veiled female combatants parading with their Kalashnikovs<sup>257</sup>, collapsing the two strands of Orientalism into an image that vindicates the West's worse nightmares and prejudices. Said (1979/1994) writes about two basic facets of Orientalism, one being dangerous and barbaric, the other sensual and seductive. While the first has, since the days of the Ottoman invasions, been presented as male, the second was connected to the female sphere and fantasies about the harem and veiled women. Images of veiled female combatants, often used with articles on Iran as a way of visually denigrating the regime, collapse the two categories into that of a dangerous and by extension utterly different other, or what Laclau (1995) would term the “constitutive outside” – a radical other(ness) that has no common grounds with “the differential system from which it is excluded, and that therefore poses a constant threat to that

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<sup>257</sup> Which, because of explicit veiling, are very likely not even Iraqi but Iranian female combatants.

very system” (Torfing 1999, 124), or, in my case, to the group and its core values that form the basis of proclaimed civilisational belonging. What is significant in this regard is that the characteristics attributed to the self-group were visually suppressed, such as the explicit violence of US-led forces. Photographs depicted clean, deodorised war (cf. Griffin 2004, Fishman and Marvin 2003).

Dnevnik’s coverage of major international political topics during the period analysed displayed some of the same patterns. While Dnevnik’s coverage featured slightly more photographs from the Iraqi (or Arab) side and significantly fewer photographs of US military personnel and equipment, the other again emerges as Orientalised Other. Strong visual emphasis was placed on religion, which is linked to the potential for violence through (comparatively far more threatening) anti-American demonstrations. Dnevnik’s last photograph of Iraqis before the attack depicted them as an irrational, emotional and threatening mass – what made them even more menacing than Delo’s soldiers is the fact that they were a mixed group of civilians and uniformed men, both of whom were rallying with their weapons. Images of demonstrators from the region offered a similar blend of irrationality (emotional mass, religious elements) and potential for violence, and were occasionally used to illustrate articles with no connection to demonstrations. Religion was also used as a marker of difference and Dnevnik, for example, published a juxtaposition of an image of British soldiers giving medical aid to their wounded colleague with a photograph of praying Jordanians (the caption speaks of demonstrations in support of Iraqis, and the image is dominated by the figure of an elderly Arab in the foreground at prayer). Dnevnik also featured depiction of the political process through passive media consumption (four photographs of Arabs watching TV in public spaces and reading newspapers while smoking water-pipes). While Dnevnik carried far fewer photographs of military equipment and technology, it did publish several typical propaganda shots of departing US soldiers, cropped to intimate distance, displaying the emotions of wives and girlfriends and thereby suggesting stronger and more personal identification with the depicted individuals as representatives of US and the global West. The explicit tying of Slovenia to the family of Western nations was achieved through a reportage on worldwide anti-war protests, titled “Slovenia also marched against the war in Iraq”, where images of Slovene protests were placed side by side with those from London, New York etc., and in which protesters were visual equals (in terms of age, gender and mode of depiction) to their Western counterparts.



Mladina's visual coverage of the Iraq crisis was fairly limited. The magazine focused predominantly on Slovene protesters and human shield activists. The few photographs related to the war depicted US politicians (e.g. Colin Powell addressing the UN Security Council), a collage of different Saddam Hussein portraits on murals, wall paintings and tile works, connoting not only his iconic status but also the many transformations of his political role in international relations, complemented by a photograph of one of his giant portraits being removed from a wall. Apart from these, Mladina published only five more Iraq-related photographs: three were snapshots of a human shield expedition, while two articles featured archive photographs of civilian victims (from the 1991 Gulf War), accompanied by interpretative captions or article titles emphasising the civilian casualties of the conflict (and by extension arguing Slovenia's shared responsibility for casualties through its passive support of the war). Even after the US invasion, Mladina did not increase its visual reporting of the war, publishing only a few war-related photographs, of which only one directly depicted the reality of war – a photograph of dead bodies in a Baghdad morgue, interpretatively captioned "Victims of the liberation of Iraq." In the light of the magazine's explicit anti-war and anti-Bush administration stand, the absence of visual coverage of Iraq was surprising.

Mag, on the other hand, focused much more on Iraq-related stories, which were presented in a variety of genres and topics. The first was a personal story about Saddam Hussein's long-time lover Parisoula Lampsos, which was evocative of traditional harem stories and Oriental despots – as Lampsos was held captive for a number of years. The article featured eight photographs, two of which were of Saddam Hussein. One was a flattering (and orientalisng) black-and-white portrait of Saddam in western-style clothes smoking a cigar while resting on an Oriental carpet next to a bowl of fruits, the other a poor-quality snapshot titled "One of Saddam's last photographs". The despotism and decadence of Hussein's regime also featured in two other articles – one on "Saddam's clan", featuring nine portraits of Hussein, his family and his sons, accompanied by interpretative captions. The captions introduced a frame of spoiled children, claiming that "only the best is good enough for Uday" or "Saddam with his sons: the older Uday does what he pleases" and connected official formal portraits of the Husseins with those of luxury (sport cars, cigars) into a story of family-led state terror and decadence. In one of the largest and most centrally placed photographs, Saddam Hussein was depicted during prayer (captioned "Saddam rules the country through the secret services,

which he controls with his two sons”), highlighting the frame of other (Muslim) religion, even though the Iraqi regime had a long secular history. Saddam appeared again as a dictator in photomontage and an archival photograph accompanying an article on debts inherited from Yugoslavia’s loans to rogue states, connecting the dictatorial Iraqi regime with Slovenia’s communist past and in return establishing Tito as an equivalent dictator to Hussein (and adding weight to anti-communist rhetoric and the denigration of NATO opponents as pro-communist and by extension undemocratic). Thus both emerge as Slovenia’s “constitutive outside”, as radicalised other that at the same time constitutes limits and negates the identity of a given group. “Our” side of the identification boundary was clearly represented mainly through the depiction of US military and less through key players in the Bush administration. The photographs, depicting US soldiers, were taken from close personal and intimate distance, particularly in lead photographs, which invite strong(er) identification with the depicted subjects. Photographs of advancing soldiers, training and the US military arsenal were shot in crisp colours, carefully composed, often offering a flattering image of high-tech warfare. This was further supported by large agency-supplied infographics – graphic illustrations of military equipment, combat strategy, the 3D layout of Hussein’s bunker etc. Interestingly enough, an article titled “War for barrels” featured two images juxtaposed in Delo’s Saturday supplement – US attack helicopters against the horizon of black smoke rising from burning oil wells and a photograph of veiled marching female combatants. The latter was captioned “Saddam Hussein created a republic of fear”, a message not supported by the image itself. It is important to note that, apart from Hussein and his sons, Iraqis (with the exception of the occasional oil refinery worker) remained invisible. Even after the war started, Mag’s visual coverage focused on US soldiers and photographs of civilians or damage were toned down by being printed in small size. Apart from the Oriental despot and female combatants, Mag’s visual coverage was not that openly (derogatory) Orientalist, which has much to do with the fact that the Iraqi side was made virtually (visually) nonexistent. The photographs of US soldiers and military equipment and technology clearly demarcate the developed nature of the West. Slovenia’s “yes” to NATO made the nation’s choice in the binary explicit and, in the words of Mag’s contributors, final.

Čeprav Nato nima ničesar z vojno v Iraku, so se na protestnem shodu na Kongresnem trgu s kakimi 350 udeleženci protiameriškim pridružil tudi protinatovska gesla. (Foto: Uroš Hočevar)

**Figure 6.20 Orientalisation through images of women (Mag).**



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Figure 6.21 Orientalisation through images of women (Delo and Mag).



No longer the seductive odalisques of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Orientalist painting, the Oriental woman in press photography emerges either as a passive subject, often reduced to black silhouette, or as a dangerous Other. The published images also introduce the development frame as demarcator of cultural belonging (e.g. high tech vs. low tech).

Other news sections in the four publications offered a complementary image of “us” against the visualised Oriental Other. Of the privileged discursive elements, the visual equation of Slovenia with the Gorenjska region and mountains emerged through the Saturday supplement’s editorial use of photographs, in Mag’s portrait of mayor Bojan Šrot, as background to portraits of politicians (Bled Castle) or Dnevnik’s advice on weekend day trips. Mountaineering and winter sports such as alpine skiing and ski jumping, traditionally considered to be a Slovene domain, were prominently reported as front-page sports news, as well as in other sections of publications (presentation of ski resorts, rescue teams etc.). A ski jumping championship in Planica was a particularly potent venue for the visual promotion of national identity frames, featuring photographs of flag-waving crowds and images of accordion players, evoking the symbolic universe of popular folk music (e.g. home, rural life, mother, family, love, drinking etc.).<sup>258</sup> Religion, as one of the historical cornerstones of the national identity project, appeared sporadically through public appearances by Archbishop Franc Rode. Among the four publications, religion was most evidently picked up by Mladina, which critiqued Rode’s militant stand towards Slovenia’s Muslim religious community.

<sup>258</sup> The ski jumping championship in fact came across as a marginal part of the event.



Mladina devoted much space to covering religious issues, cautioning against “the clash of religions”, featured a four-page reportage on Zagreb’s Muslim religious centre and openly supported the building of a disputed Muslim religious centre in Ljubljana. Mladina argued for a more multicultural definition of nation, within which the Slovene Roman Catholic Church emerged (textually and visually, mainly through cover page photomontages) as reactionary, intolerant and unadjusted to the social reality of present-day Slovenia. Moreover, the rhetoric of archbishop Rode bore strong Orientalist overtones that oscillated around the civilisational belonging frame. It should also be noted that the Church itself was very active in maintaining and thus securing its sacred bond with the nation.

**Figure 6.22 Orientalisation through images of men (Delo, Dnevnik).**



Differential portrayal of military: Iraqi as irrational, faceless and low-tech mass, coalition soldiers as individualised, orderly, high-tech.

**Figure 6.23 Orientalisation through images of men (Mag).**



Individualisation of coalition (mainly US) soldiers.

Figure 6.24 Orientalisation through images of men (Mag).



Image of Kurdish fighter in the context of curiosities, including an image of a gorilla and sword bashing Bedouins. The juxtaposition of images can cause evaluative interpretations or associations.

Figure 6.25 Orientalisation through images of men (Dnevnik).



Orientalism as a system of binary oppositions, such as active vs. passive, rational vs. irrational, developed vs. undeveloped, modern vs. traditional.



Figure 6.26 Orientalisation through images of men (top Delo, bottom Dnevnik).



Orientalism as a system of binary oppositions against the scale of development. Even the use of animals can indicate the division in terms of technological progress (dolphin equipped with a camera vs. cart pulling donkey).

Figure 6.27 Intensification of Orientalist visual framing following the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime. (Dnevnik, Delo)



The military liberation of Iraq brought about visual Orientalisation of Iraqis (cf. Tomanić Trivundža 2004, 2005). Images of looting were symptomatic for the shifting framing. Images were frequently equipped with interpretative captions, such as "Iraq is controlled by Ali Baba and thousands of thieves" or "Since the fall of the regime, Iraqis have been stealing like magpies" and used images of looting individuals with articles describing the plunder committed by organised groups (e.g. archaeological museum, cf. Tomanić Trivundža 2004).

### 6.4.3 Visualising The EU/NATO Referendum: Concluding Remarks

In the case analysed, press photography emerges as a prominent purveyor of national identity frames regardless of its weak autonomy (dependence on text), limited symbolism and the constraints imposed by the “codes of objectivity” in which the prestige of the medium is grounded. On the pages of the four publications analysed, Slovenia emerges as a modern, Western-style middle-class society, characterised by relative affluence, consumerism, celebrification of culture and a focus on leisure time. Large sections of publications focus on status-related goods, such as cars (Delo, Dnevnik, Mag) or yachts (Mag), which often outweigh the extent of international hard-news coverage (Delo) or topics of the week (Mag).<sup>259</sup> The middle-class status is promulgated through images of institutionalised politics, in the selection of public intellectuals given access to the public sphere, and in the dominant conceptualisation of work. Within the sphere of economy, the production aspect is absent from visual representation, which mostly focuses on portraits of managers (e.g. there are almost no images of workers), replacing blue- with white-collar work. Leisure time is linked to cultural activities and nature (mountaineering, winter sports, day trips etc.), and Slovenes appear to be split between an urban and rural existence, with even the urban part of the population preserving close ties with nature (e.g. advice on day trips).

In terms of cultural belonging, press photographs of pre-referendum debates establish a clear link with global West, both at the level of institutionalised politics and civil society. Thus Slovene politicians were depicted as visual equals to their Western counterparts, or – as in the case of Delo – at least as competent interlocutors and good hosts. Citizens as part of civil society were also explicitly related to the West as (equal) members of global movements or representatives of the emerging global public. In articles covering pre-referendum debates, explicit visual references to privileged discursive elements of national identity were infrequent. Nevertheless, two strategies proved to be highly efficient in evoking the national identity frame: (1) the use of archive (particularly iconic) photographs related to canonised historical events, and (2) the use of interpretative captions. As Mag’s case clearly testifies, the nation’s past is not neutral but a value-laden project that can serve as a valuation criterion in terms of moral worth and status hierarchy.

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<sup>259</sup> In Mag, there were two non-political news sections which both surpassed the topic of the week article in terms of the number of pages or photographs used (the two sections were on cars and semi-nude female models).



Figure 6.28 Direct visual referencing of symbols related to national identity. (Delo)



Hayrack and churches on hilltops are a staple of visualisations of Slovene national identity in various discourses, ranging from tourist promotion to advertising (cf. Kučan 1998).

Figure 6.29 Canonised images of nation's history (Mag)



The use of canonised photographs (or images from same series of photographs and events) for framing the news, situating (and evaluating) the contemporary events into the flow of history.

However, even more importantly, the connection between nation and press photography emerged in its function as an indirect delineator of the nation's cultural belonging boundary through international news coverage. Visual news coverage of international events indicated the following characteristics, which will be examined in more detail at the end of this chapter: (1) underrepresentation of culturally different (Other) states and their representatives; (2) coverage of different types of events (negative as opposed to routine news); (3) a different mode of depiction of the same topics/actors (e.g. politicians in flesh and blood or on placards and tiles); (4) coverage according to pre-conceived (evaluative) judgements. All of these feature in visual coverage of a major contextual event (war in Iraq) within the persistent grid of binary concepts and myths that serve to constitute the deep and unbridgeable difference between "Us" and the Other (Orient). The differentiation is constituted in terms of cultural and civilisational difference according to the scale of development and progress that was first constructed during European Enlightenment<sup>260</sup> and came to dominate European politics, economy and (social) science during the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a "politics of historicism" (Chakrabarty 2000, 6). The Slovene media's embracing of pictorial Orientalism cannot be reduced to the issue of information dependency, i.e. the supply of news photographs by a handful of global, Western news agencies.<sup>261</sup> Rather, it can be fruitfully explained through the matrix of Slovene national identity. Said (1978/1994) has noted that Orientalism has two facets, one being connected to fear and danger, the other to sensuality and mystery. The Orientalist framing of the Iraq war on the pages of Delo, Dnevnik and Mag is only a partial adoption of the pool of Orientalist ideas, concepts and themes. As Gingrich has succinctly argued, one of the main differences between frontier orientalism and orientalism of the classic colonial and elite tradition is:

that 'their' oriental is an almost exclusively male person. Colonial orientalism, on the other hand, regularly represents both male and female Orientals [...] Frontier orientalism is a tale of male confrontations and alliances [...] for better or for worse, [it] leaves Oriental women almost completely out of the picture. It has no repertoire of standard European, male erotic fantasies about Muslim women, for instance, as are typical for colonial orientalism." (Gingrich 1996, 120)

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<sup>260</sup> Although the Oriental Other does not represent the furthest negative extreme on this developmental scale, it is nevertheless a position of lower cultural and hence moral value. The binary distinction between Orient and Occident is therefore not of two equal alternatives but a hierarchically structured one, in which, as Said claims, European culture set itself "off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self." (1978/1994, 3)

<sup>261</sup> More on this in the conclusion of the Chapter 8.

Unlike the “liberation” of Afghanistan two years earlier, the “liberation” of Iraq was not symbolically marked by “liberation”, i.e. the unveiling of Oriental women (cf. Fahmy 2004). The US triumph over Saddam Hussein’s regime brought just the opposite – the ‘photographic veiling’ of non-sensual Iraqi women. While the 1985 National Geographic article on Baghdad, for example, describes Iraqi women as being ‘among the most progressive in the Arab world’ (Lutz and Collins 1993, 182), not a single (non-veiled) young or middle-aged woman appeared in Delo during the two months following the US-led invasion (Tomanić Trivundža 2004). The aforementioned photograph of veiled and armed female combatants is symptomatic of frontier Orientalism, reducing the central fantasy of “colonial Orientalisms” to the non-sensual, male domain.<sup>262</sup> Equally telling is the distribution of violence and potential for aggression – which is, regardless of the military might of the West, ascribed to the Orient. US and Allied soldiers are depicted in accessible, familiar mode, their weapons aestheticised, their destructive potential almost invisible.<sup>263</sup> In the three publications that did pictorially cover the invasion of Iraq, violence from the very outset belongs to the Iraqis, and this image only intensifies as Western soldiers evolve from invading to occupation forces (Ibid.).

Overall, the matrix of Slovene national identity does appear to structure press photography, particularly through the normalisation of seeing – setting standards of acceptable sites, motifs and modes of depiction – that functions as a process of ascription and classification across the community’s imagined boundary, producing an impression of (internal) sameness of identity of a group through the visual construction of similarities and dissimilarities with outside groups. However, Barth and other theorists of collective identification point out that the outside is only a part of the identification project, and that identity emerges, to a large extent, in the symbolic exchange (and exclusion) of internal others.

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<sup>262</sup> On the whole, the 2004 study shows a remarkable absence of women in Delo’s photographs from Iraq. Female or predominantly female subjects appeared in only 10 percent of the 265 published photographs; women were also featured in four photographs that depict predominantly male figures.

<sup>263</sup> Fishman and Marvin (2003, 38) similarly found that news images (in the US press) repeatedly “camouflage the role of US soldiers as agents of violence”, layering their public depiction with active interpersonal engagement and approachability. However, the reasons behind Slovene and US production of the same type of representations vary considerably. Of the two, the Slovene case is far more surprising and informative, due to the country’s exclusion from the conflict.

## 7 PRESS PHOTOGRAPHY AND REPRESENTATION OF NATIONAL IDENTITY: NATIONAL IDENTITY AND INTERNAL OTHERS

*National symbolization includes [...] the process whereby groups within a society are rendered visible or invisible. For the project of nation-building, nonconforming elements must first be rendered visible, than assimilated or eliminated.* Katherine Verdery, Whither 'Nation' and 'Nationalism'?

*Whatever is unnamed, undepicted in images [...] will become, not merely unspoken, but unspeakable* Adriane Rich, The Dream of a Common Language

Group identification is a relational process and the previous chapter has addressed its most visible dynamics – definition of the group's self-image in opposition to external Others. However, boundary maintenance depends just as much on a process of internal Othering. This process is mostly directed against socially and economically underprivileged social groups, though the more affluent ethnic, racial or religious groups can also become targets of internal Othering, if they represent minority parts of the population (e.g. Jews in Germany, Tutsis in Rwanda). Like external Others, internal Others are not fixed categories but like national traditions – a subject of "invention" and hence at least potentially open to re-negotiation - and are linked to the relative power and prestige of social groups involved in the hegemonic struggles over interpretation of social reality. This said, internal Others are prone to petrification – they tend to be persistent and can even outlast the social group in question. A good example of this would be the Slovene anti-Semitism mentioned earlier, which persists regardless of the actual number of Jews living in Slovenia (see Chapter 5, especially section 5.6).

The analysed case deals precisely with one of Slovenia's long established internal Others – Roma – through the case of the 2006 eviction of the Strojani family. Admittedly, other groups (people from former Yugoslav republics, immigrants, Izbrisani etc.) or events could have been selected and would undoubtedly provide equally informative analytical material. The Strojani

case was selected on the grounds of the intensive and continuous media coverage of the affair from October 2006 to January 2007. The Strojan affair was also selected because the negotiation process for the resettlement of the family brought to the fore (and contested) some of the very central idea(l)s and symbols of Slovenehood, such as the myth of an idyllic rural Slovenia, the canonised figure of the suffering mother, or Slovene adherence to European ideals of tolerance and respect for other cultures.

## 7.1 The eviction and resettlement of the Strojan family

The eviction of the Roma family Strojan, which filled the pages of the daily and weekly press from late October 2006 to early January 2007, was triggered by a beating in which a local villager suffered severe injuries. Claiming that institutions (the police, the justice system) were ineffective and that the situation was intolerable (crime, threats to safety), residents of Ambrus decided to take justice into their own hands and demanded the eviction of Stojan family from their property. Scared off by the threats of violent “solutions” proposed by the local community, the Strojan’s escaped into hiding in the nearby woods. In the meantime, the local community formalised their demands through community committees and organisations, pressing the authorities in the municipality of Ivančna Gorica to act upon the matter. At this point, the case was taken up by the national media and, within a matter of days, the Strojan affair was in the forefront of public attention and domestic policy, and remained there until early January 2007. Figure 8.1 presents a rudimentary timeline of the major events.

**Figure 7.1 General timeline of events.**

October 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beating of Jože Šinkovec, Strojan family escapes into woods, villagers march to Roma settlement and are stopped by police</li> <li>• Minister of interior negotiates temporary relocation of Strojan family to former refugee camp in Postojna</li> <li>• Government sets up working team led by Minister of Education Milan Zver to negotiate re-settlement of Strojan family in cooperation with representatives of national Roma association.</li> <li>• Civil society, opposition political parties and institutions (e.g. the human rights ombudsman) voice concerns, organise protests and internationalise the affair</li> </ul>
November 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intensive search of potential resettlement location. Road blocks and village guards appear whenever potential location for resettlement of Strojan family is revealed to public</li> <li>• Intense hegemonic struggles to secure interpretation of events and calls for tolerance</li> </ul>
December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National TV show Piramida turns into platform for hate speech by nationalist MP</li> </ul>

2006	Zmago Jelinčič <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Part of Strojan family returns to Dečja vas</li> <li>• Illegally built Strojan settlement torn down by housing inspectorate</li> <li>• Villagers prevent President Janez Drnovšek's delivery of mobile homes to Strojans</li> <li>• Strojan family temporarily relocated to Roje</li> </ul>
January 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agreement reached regarding suitable relocation</li> <li>• Questions raised concerning unauthorised supervision of Strojan family by police during their stay in Postojna</li> </ul>

This schematic overview also represents the timeframe of my analysis. The Strojan affair sporadically resurfaced in the media later on in 2007, particularly in September 2007, when part of the family briefly returned to their former settlement, but the event was short-lived and quickly disappeared from media and public attention, as the permanent resettlement of the Strojan family appeared to be more or less a matter of unfinished paperwork and legal formalities concerning the replacement location.

**Figure 7.2: Major news frames (Delo, Dnevnik, Mladina, Mag).**

	NEWS FRAME	SUBFRAMES (main topics)
1.	INTOLERANCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- as one facet of general intolerance of Slovenes (national character)</li> <li>- protection of universal, inalienable basic human rights</li> <li>- deviation from core national (and European) values</li> <li>- comparisons to Nazism and racism</li> <li>- fear of Ambrus becoming "model solution"</li> <li>- historical roots of intolerance towards Roma</li> <li>- humanitarianism</li> <li>- hypocrisy</li> <li>- golden era I (more tolerant in the past)</li> </ul>
2.	GOVERNMENT CRITICISM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- inefficiency or wrong actions</li> <li>- succumbing to pressures from intolerant mob</li> <li>- end of the rule of law</li> <li>- promoting intolerance</li> </ul>
3.	INSTITUTIONAL FAILURE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- long-term failure to address basic questions</li> <li>- shifting blame between local and state institutions</li> <li>- education of Roma, especially children</li> <li>- unemployment and social benefits</li> <li>- positive examples, best practices (e.g. Prekmurje Roma)</li> <li>- inefficiency of police and justice system, preferred treatment of Roma</li> </ul>
4.	ROMA GUILT OR CULTURAL FRAME	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- culturally (absolutely) different</li> <li>- genetically different (inborn qualities)</li> <li>- Roma as outlaws and criminals (not obeying laws, violence, crime, other illegal activities...)</li> <li>- intimidating local community, criminality</li> <li>- family's police record</li> <li>- golden era II (of Miha Strojan)</li> </ul>
5.	LEGALISTIC or FORMALISTIC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- illegal settlement</li> <li>- universal applicability of law and legal sanctions</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ecology</li> <li>- driven out from "our land"</li> <li>- beating not committed by Roma</li> </ul>
6.	ACTION vs. TALK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- present government as "doers"</li> <li>- civil society, opposition and experts as mere talkers and smart guys</li> <li>- fire-fighting</li> <li>- problems inherited from previous governments (i.e. critics)</li> <li>- financial support for projects, adopting general law on rights of Roma community</li> </ul>
7.	BLAME REVERSAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- demonising of (otherwise peaceful and tolerant) villagers</li> <li>- not understanding situation in the field (urban vs. rural)</li> <li>- self-defence (couldn't stand terrorising by Stojan family any longer, had no alternative)</li> <li>- good and bad Roma</li> <li>- affair as conspiracy of leftist political parties</li> <li>- media as major contributors to intolerance</li> <li>- villagers as genuine Slovenes</li> </ul>

### 7.1.1 Delo: Textual Framing of the Stojan Affair

Delo started reporting the Stojan affair with a short note on the beating of Šinkovec on October 23, and continued reporting the topic two days after the beating took place, with an article on a meeting between local community organisations and the local authorities, at which the eviction demand was formally presented. Delo's editors immediately recognised the event as significant, positioning the photo-news item (a large photograph with an extended caption) in the most prestigious location on the front page (top left-hand corner), and alerting its readers about a second, longer article on the inside pages dedicated to domestic events. The front-page photograph was of poor quality, a harshly flash-lit night scene of a small crowd in an unclear location. It was taken by Delo's word journalist present at the scene, and was more reminiscent of a snapshot taken at a village open air festival than of the photojournalistic eyewitness account it was made to serve. Its use in terms of prominent placing and size was a further indicator of the significance attributed to the event. During the three months analysed, Delo published 69 articles and 46 photographs related to the affair or Roma-related topics in its daily editions, and 12 articles with 17 photographs in its Saturday supplement. Editorial illustrations and caricatures were infrequent (5) and almost no infographics were used to present the events (one bar chart) or their background. Textual coverage clearly revealed a heightened contestation of alternative news frames in promoting their partial interpretation of events, as well as the relative social power of the different social actors involved in the affair.

From the onset, Delo reported the events in terms of the intolerance frame, which bore strong national overtones. Ambrusians were presented as deviating from the cornerstones of national identity, such as adherence to European ideals of tolerance, freedom, equality and respect for other cultures. The threat of lynchings, the marching of the mob, the torching of a car, gun shots, chain saws, the shouting of slogans like “Kill the Gypsies” or “Death to Gypsies” and statements like “There will be a massacre, blood will be shed” challenged the dominant positive auto-stereotype of Slovenes as a kind, hard-working, peace-loving, and no-violent nation. It pointed to a dormant dark force, the dangerous and destructive side of a nation that needed to be tamed before it spread throughout the country.

For journalists, the *intolerance* shown by Slovenes was a powerful, pre-established frame which rendered intolerance towards Roma as part of a general intolerance of a large (predominantly rural) part of society. The notion of the nation’s inherent dormant intolerance has, since the mid-1990s, been repeatedly promoted by civil society, social scientists, certain media (e.g. Mladina) and critical strands in both high and popular culture.<sup>264</sup> While the media were normally seen as major contributors to the culture of intolerance (e.g. Erjavec et al. 2000, Kuzmančič 1999 etc.<sup>265</sup>), Mihelj (2005) rightly points out that the media have in recent times often adopted a somewhat partisan role as educators of the public and served as promoters of tolerance. Due to the relative salience of the frame before the Ambrus events, which offered numerous indicators to support its claims, the dormant intolerance of (some ) Slovenes quickly became the dominant frame of the Strojjan affair. It was widely supported by civil society, normative institutions like the Human rights ombudsman, leftist political parties, Roma organisations, experts and members of the Strojjan family itself. A lot of emphasis was placed in articles on the intolerable position of the Strojans, emphasising the fear and suffering experienced by some 20 children and women hiding in the woods and giving a fair amount of space to their statements and views of the events. As Minister of the Interior Dragutin Mate negotiated the temporary relocation of the Strojjan family to Postojna, most of the aforementioned actors were able to promote the adjoining frame of *government criticism*: they emphasised that the government had succumbed to the pressures of an intolerant mob, signalling the end of the rule of law in Slovenia, as the government could or would not protect the basic human rights of its citizens (the Strojans). The temporary relocation was seen as

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<sup>264</sup> E.g. in films like *Guardian of the frontier* (2000, dir. Maja Weiss) or *Suburbs* (2004, dir. Vinko Möderndorfer), the intolerance of Slovenes towards people from former Yugoslavia is a central element in the plot.

<sup>265</sup> See Mihelj 2005 for a detailed overview of such media-critical studies.



government cooperation and complicity with the wishes of the mob. The *government criticism* frame became increasingly salient during November and December, when police appeared unable to stop village guards and prevent road blocks being set up by locals who refused to accept the Strojans into their community. It reached a high point when a convoy of police vehicles was inspected by village guards before the police were allowed to pass through the illegally set-up road block.

By the end of the first week, however, government officials had introduced a series of salient counterframes. Contesting the primacy of the intolerance frame, the government's main negotiator, Minister of Education Milan Zver, argued that the intolerance of the villagers was only one of the factors to be considered, emphasising, first, the failure of state (the previous government and particularly the police) to address the problem, and secondly, the criminality of the Strojan family. In contrast to the previous government and civil society movements, the present government was portrayed as active, as a “doer”. While the government tried to resolve the crisis, the aforementioned were merely talking and acting as wise guys (“pametnjakoviči”). The *active vs. passive* frame gained increasing salience over the next two months and, although it was not frequently used by journalists as such, it made its way into the press as it was actively promoted by figures with high source value, such as the prime minister, the government's chief negotiator etc. It was sustained till the very end, and the finding of a resettlement location in January was presented as a case that proved the point. Quite early on, Romani organisations gave credit to the government for actively engaging in the search for a solution to the problem. It should be noted that the government promoted the active frame in close connection with that of the *Roma guilt/cultural* frame, the *legalistic/formalistic* frame and the *blame reversal* frame. In particular, the government, and especially Prime Minister Janez Janša, focused on *blame reversal*. Thus the Strojan affair was presented as something that had been orchestrated and supported by leftist political parties for the purpose of destabilising the government. In the process, the media were accused of unjustifiably favouring Roma and demonising villagers. By presenting intolerance as a general national trait instead of an isolated (and partly justified, or at least understandable) phenomenon, the media were harming the nation and themselves becoming a major promoter of intolerance, claimed Janša repeatedly. Furthermore, they were contributing to a smear campaign that was harming the international reputation of Slovenia. Similarly, Human rights ombudsman Matjaž Hanžek was almost declared a national traitor when he reported his “concerns” about the Ambrus events to the Council of Europe. Blame reversal was partly

supported by resorting to *formalist and legalist* claims, such as continually emphasising that the Strojan could not be an exception to the rule of law, implying that their illegally built settlement should be torn down and that they should have been prosecuted for their criminal activities. Janša, for example, denounced the Council of Europe commissioner's report on the police failing to protect rights of Roma by saying that the police had an obligation to protect only legal, not illegal property belonging to Slovene citizens. The villagers of Ambrus were also building their case on legal grounds and gradually managed to promote a competing sub-frame that the Strojan settlement was not only illegal but posed an ecological threat, as it had been built above a local drinking water reservoir. The ecology frame was later picked up by local authorities seeking to justify their refusal to accept the resettlement of the Strojan's into their municipalities.

*Long-term institutional failure* to address the basic aspects of "Roma problematics" was the most open and incoherent of the seven frames that appeared in Delo. It was frequently used by both the government and its critics. While the former used it as an explanation and an opportunity to transfer blame onto the previous government, critics of the government used it to show that the proposed solution (relocation) would not solve the basic problem of Roma non-integration. The frame was used by representatives of the Roma community, experts and journalists to draw attention to the underlying, contextual aspects of "Roma problematics", such as lack of education or unemployment. Good practices from Slovenia and abroad were presented in relation to the failure of national or local authorities. Contrary to previous cases of anti-Roma sentiment, where media reporting rested heavily on emphasis on Roma guilt, on the innate (and unbridgeable) *otherness of Roma* and their *culture*, the frame did not gain a strong footing in Delo during the period analysed (cf. Erjavec et al. 2000). Explicitly voiced by Ambrusians in the early stage of the affair, it was overpowered by (taken as evidence of) the intolerance frame, although a diluted version of the cultural difference argument could be found in some of Delo's opinion and social reportage pieces. In terms of the competing frames of Delo's coverage of the affair, intolerance was the first and by far the strongest, dominant news frame. It was partly successfully contested by the active government frame, but largely because the search for a resettlement location lasted almost three months, and thus became the subject of routine, continuous reporting dominated by official sources, in this case the promoters of the alternative frame themselves. In turn, this helped the government criticism frame achieve salience. Other frames gradually receded into the background and

were, like the state's failure, sporadically evoked when contextualising the broader social problems facing Roma.

### **7.1.2 Delo: Visual Framing of the Strojan Affair**

Delo offered extensive visual coverage of daily news from the Strojan affair, complemented with contextualisation of the affair in terms of the wider issues concerning social exclusion of Roma. In its weekday editions, Delo's use of photographs adhered to what Schwartz (1992) described as codes of photojournalistic objectivity – the transparent depiction of events that does not draw attention to the means of image production, such as selective depth of field or exaggerated horizontal angles. The status of photographs as proofs and indicators of the importance of news was evident in the publication of even poor-quality images and in the use of mostly current images directly related to the reported event. Thus, in the case of the Strojan affair, daily news images did not provide information that would supplement or diverge from textual news, but would rather assign importance to the written accounts and vouch for their veracity. This does not imply that photographs might not have symbolic connotations, but that they were primarily used for factual purposes. Daily news was as a rule visualised through one photograph per news item. In general, Delo only occasionally prints more than one image to accompany the same article, and in such cases the images generally work as two independent depictions. In those cases when events themselves are contrasting in nature or have two distinct protagonists, Delo will juxtapose two images, such as politicians and protesters at G8 meetings or, in the case analysed – demonstrators against intolerance in Ljubljana and protests in Ambrus – to emphasise the two distinctive interpretations or sides of the same event or topic. In Delo, such juxtapositions are the exception rather than the rule, as they tend to undermine the transparency paradigm of photojournalism which the newspaper is trying to uphold. Images are allowed to depart from the factuality paradigm primarily on pages devoted to commentaries, and in the Saturday supplement (*Sobotna priloga*), which for decades has also been promoting more creative, “pensive” uses of photography. The newspaper's adherence to the ideals of photojournalism and photographic realism through the editorial separation of factual and pensive representations should, however, not be taken at face value. My previous analyses of Delo's press photography (2005b, 2006) have shown that Delo frequently crosses into the domain of evaluative and interpretative reporting precisely by using what appear to be straightforward, factual accounts of events.

The most markable features of Delo's visual coverage of the Strojans affair were the prevalence of *intolerance frame* and "family-isation" of the Strojans, which resonated with one of the constitutive pillars of Slovene-ness – the iconic figure of the suffering mother. The intolerance frame featured high on Delo's visual agenda throughout the coverage analysed. During the initial stage, protesters were presented as an anonymous and potentially threatening mass. Photographs were taken from far social or public distance, obliterating the individuality of the participants; neither random protesters nor their formal representatives in local community councils (*krajevna skupnost*) were singled out, complementing their "collectivisation" in textual accounts of events. In a photograph that departed from this pattern – and showed two unnamed protesters with Ljubljana's mayor Zoran Janković from a close social distance (waist-up, clearly distinguishable facial expressions and gazes) – the close framing emphasised the intolerance of the crowd. One of the two protesters (wearing a standard green hat, characteristic of farmers or national costumes, often used in Delo's caricatures to denote Slovene-ness) was gesticulating angrily while the other looked reluctantly, even in condemnation at the mayor, whose defiant smile was in sharp contrast with the enraged locals. The caption emphasised that "the picture remains the same, only the location changes", which implies<sup>266</sup> that intolerance towards Roma was a general characteristic among (rural) Slovenes, but also made the two middle-aged men exemplary representatives of the intolerant mass. The selection of such a tightly cropped photograph captured the photojournalistic ideal of narrating the essence of an event through a single image (the conflict between the municipal authorities and the local community), but also selectively constructed and perpetuated the image of the intolerant mass. An alternative photograph taken from afar would undoubtedly have countered the message of widespread intolerance by depicting a small group rather than a crowd or mass (the accompanying article spoke of an estimated 40 protesters). Intolerance as a characteristic of rural Slovenia, which was confirmed by photographs of pro-Roma protesters in the nation's capital, as well by depictions of barricades and road blocks where tractors often stood in the foreground as obstacles. The inclusion of or focus on the police (either policemen or their vehicles) also supported the intolerance frame. They were a frequent and prominent feature of Ambrus photographs, indicating that the presence of the repressive state apparatus was needed to maintain the basic rule of law and prevent potential outbursts of intolerance. This is doubly true for images of police or riot police confronting the crowd, while photographs of village

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<sup>266</sup> Or, put more precisely, offers visual proof of that claim.

guards inspecting a police convoy on the way to Gotenica support the claims of the end of rule of law and the impotence of state institutions in sanctioning the questionable “will of the people”.

Figure 7.3 Framing of protestors as intolerant mass



The second side of the intolerance frame consisted of depictions of the human(ist) perspective of events by depicting the plight of the Strojans – first their hiding in the woods around Ivančna Gorica and later their relocation to Postojna and partial return to Ambrus. Compared to teh protestors, the Strojans were depicted from close, even intimate social distance. Photographs clearly depicted their faces, thus revealing their feelings and emotions. Vertical

angles either supported their helplessness (a good example is a high-angle photograph of Elka Strojjan sitting amid the ruins of her former home) or the status of dignified victims (a low-angle photograph of the children at Postojna refugee camp). Moreover, the Strojans were continually presented and referred to as a family – a basic unit of every society, being threatened by the intolerant collective. This framing of the Strojjan as a family has an explicit twist that resonates with the institutionalised and popularised imaginary of Slovene collective identification, focusing on the central figure of a suffering mother. Although articles made frequent reference to Mirko Strojjan as the head of the Roma family and used him as a valid news source (both in terms of frequency and being allowed to speak through its own words, i.e. publishing his statements verbatim), his face first appeared in *Delo* as late as November 16 (and even then only as a background figure), by which time an alternative frame of the Roma family had already been firmly established: that of a non-masculine, women- and children-oriented world of family. From the very beginning, Elka Strojjan (the oldest family member and mother of the Strojjan family) was the prime focus of *Delo*'s visual depiction of the Strojjan family. It is her that we see crying in front of the family's hiding place in the woods, in the foreground during European Human Rights Commissioner Thomas Hammarberg's visit to Postojna, as a central figure sitting on the floor of the refuge centre, talking to the government's chief negotiator, Minister of Education Milan Zver, the sole focus of attention as the family house was torn down by the building inspectorate, or comfortingly embracing President Janez Drnovšek. The non-masculine image of the Strojjan family starkly contradicted the claims levelled by Ambrus locals of male-oriented violence, and confirmed the victim status of Roma. While protesters were male-dominated groups, the Strojans were depicted mostly through images of women and children. Even when male members of the Strojjan family were depicted, they were usually accompanied either by women (most often Elka Strojjan) or children. This sort of gendered portrayal of the family presented women as the active part of the family: while they were depicted tending to the needs of the family, men sat around, waiting, and appeared to be incapable of firm, independent action. Hunched and looking down, their bended bodies connoted a sense of powerlessness, despair, even fatalism. When male Roma were depicted as active or (independently) equivalent to state negotiators, they were not members of the Strojjan family but Roma councillors who were part of the resettlement negotiation group.



**Figure 7.4 Focus on children (Delo).**



Delo's contextualisation of the Strojan affair through reportage and opinion or analytical articles written by experts – confined mostly to pages of *Sobotna priloga* – is (in the rare cases when photographs were published) not matched by visual representations, which seem rather to support some of the existing stereotypical representations of Roma. A photo reportage titled “Roma Republic”, which spoke of a Roma family living isolated from both Slovene and Roma communities, promoted the dubious possibility of Roma living happily (only!) through complete isolation and ghettoisation. The article drew heavily on notions of the cultural difference of Roma, and photographs with a heavy focus on Roma children, (of 7 published images, 5 depicted children playing, one was of a mother and her two children, and another one of two adult family members) visually confirmed and emphasised the happy-go-lucky stand even more than the text itself, downplaying the financial and healthcare hardship of the family. The focus on children was further emphasised through framing – they were also photographed at much closer social distance than adults. In a similar manner, an article on the exclusion of Roma from formal education showed a small group of happy Roma children playing outdoors, with a backdrop of a facade-less red brick house – an image that did not entirely match the critical stand of the article. On the other hand, images contrasting the (stereo)typical imagery of Roma (a modern and tidy Roma settlement or neatly dressed Prekmurje Roma pupils) were less prominently placed and much smaller in size.

Alternative visual frames did emerge, and continuous reporting presented the *government as active* in finding a solution to the situation. Members of the government, such as Minister

Zver and Prime Minister Janša, were depicted talking to members of the family or Roma councillors, and photographs show their equal status, mutual respect or willingness to cooperate. Thus Minister Zver was depicted listening attentively, squatting next to Elka Strojan, who was sitting on the ground at Postojna refugee centre. Although the minister's formal outfit contrasted starkly with the apparel of the two Strojan women, his gesture of going down to the same level suggested the willingness of government representatives to negotiate with the Strojans on equal terms. Furthermore, the depiction of government representatives trying to find a solution (e.g. the Minister was not portrayed through formal or archive photographs but through current on-location shots) presented the government as active and sympathetic to the Strojan case, and positioned them in contrast to the intolerant crowds, a move not supported by the textual part of the news coverage.

**Figure 7.5 Positive depiction of Roma (Delo)**



**Figure 7.6 Direct and indirect referencing of national identity as illustrations of opinionated articles (Delo)**





### 7.1.3 Dnevnik: Textual Framing of the Strojan Affair

Dnevnik picked up the story of the Ambrus uprising somewhat later than Delo did. The first article appeared only on Thursday (October 26) and was a small, text-only report tucked away on page 10 of domestic affairs. The report was formal, neutral, titled “We do not want to live in fear”, and focused mostly on the demands made by the villagers. Unlike Delo, Dnevnik initially did not give voice to Roma but to the ethnic Slovene population, and did not draw on the human aspect of the story (e.g. the information that the Strojans had escaped and were hiding in woods was mentioned only in passing). On the next day, Dnevnik continued to play down the whole affair, publishing a similar text-only piece on the inside pages. Titled “Roma promised they will change”, the article promoted a moderate version of the Roma guilt frame and spoke of a “good atmosphere” at a meeting between representatives of the local community and the Strojan family, emphasising the agreement on increased communication between the two groups and assurances given by the head of the Strojan family that stealing and intimidation would stop. Unlike Delo, where one of the focal points of the articles was that members of the Strojan family were hiding in the woods, Dnevnik carried no details on their temporary living conditions or the number of women and children hiding in the woods. Roma were described as having been “somewhat scared”, and had remained in hiding. The Saturday edition, however, brought about a radical shift in news coverage of the events, as Dnevnik dedicated a whole second page to the events at Ambrus and Roma-related issues with a leading article carrying a large, bold title “Atmosphere of lynching in Ambrus”. One of the six articles was a short interview with Mirko Strojan, giving Roma a voice and thus a chance to promote an alternative interpretation of events that emphasised that the “conflict was not caused by a Roma”. By Monday, news of the Strojan family was on the front page, introducing yet another frame – critique of the government. Dnevnik’s coverage of the first two weeks of events at Ambrus revealed a vivid contestation of frames promoted by the villagers of Ambrus, the Strojans, and journalists and contributors. By the end of the second week, however, critique of the government and the intolerance of local community crystallised as the dominant frames. While the Roma guilt frame was still present mostly in the small articles that presented the points of view of the local community (more salient than in Delo), the words vs. actions frame promoted by the government reached the pages of Dnevnik as late as the end of the third week.

As already mentioned above, *criticism of government* emerged quickly as one of the dominant frames in coverage of the Strojan affair. As in Delo, the temporary relocation of the Strojan

family to Postojna negotiated by the minister of the interior was seen as succumbing to the pressure of the mob and handling the situation in “a police manner”. Columns and op-ed articles voiced the sub+frame of the end of rule of law and accused the government of helping the intolerant crowd to achieve its primary goal – the eviction of the Strojans. The internationalisation of the Strojan affair, initiated by the human rights ombudsman’s notification of the Council of Europe, the polemics between the ombudsman and the Prime Minister, his response to Hammarberg’s report and criticism in international press reports about the affair were all used to promote the criticism of the government frame, which ranged from calls for the resignation of key government negotiators (Zver, Mate) to accusations of police brutality against protesters (both in Ljubljana and particularly in Ambrus on November 27) and village guards inspecting police vehicles at a road+block near Kočevje. In December, the criticism of government frame gradually lost much of its centrality to the intolerance frame (though it resurfaced in “end of the year” evaluation articles). The *intolerance frame* was strongly promoted by columns and op-ed articles, which made frequent comparisons to Nazi “solutions” or the Roma question. Attributions of xenophobia oscillated between the local community in Ambrus and the nation/society at large. In the latter instance, it was presented as society’s latent characteristics (intolerance and aggressiveness) that could mushroom under certain social conditions. This line of argument was similar to the one presented in Delo – intolerance towards Roma is but one facet of the nation’s dormant (though untamed) intolerance to otherness. The greater danger of the Strojan affair was that it could wake up the dormant beast in areas with similar “problems” (e.g. in Novo mesto). Increasing numbers of roadblocks and village guards were seen as a clear indicator of “our darkest fears”, as were the results of a vote in a Piramida TV show, where more than 70% of those who voted supported nationalist MP Zmago Jelinčič, who used the show as a platform for the dissemination of hate speech or the arson warning in Sostro (a tool shed at the possible resettlement location was set on fire by a disapproving local). Explicit references to racism were also frequently made.

Similarly to Delo, the *institutional failure* frame was generally confined to articles providing in-depth and background information on various aspects of Roma life, ranging from the burden of social stigma and discrimination, lack of education, or unemployability to positive representations of Roma as intellectuals and entrepreneurs. Within the reportage genre, the institutional failure or unwillingness to structurally address the underprivileged position of Roma as a minority group was primarily voiced by Roma themselves, adding the weight of

personal(ised) accounts to the views of experts, social scientists and publicists in op-ed articles. Frequently, their statements were used for article headlines or intertitles that acted as strong framing devices (e.g. “It is hard to love school if the teacher spits in your face”). A more positive reading of the institutional frame was also present within stories that – through examples of good practice in Slovenia and Italy – showed how institutional barriers can be overcome. The *Roma guilt/culture* frame was present during the initial stages of reporting, promoted mostly by villagers in Ambrus (and in the first two articles by the journalist). Its negative articulation resurfaced only sporadically, for example in complaints by the local community or in a commissioned op-ed piece by the Cukjati, the speaker of parliament. More often, the culture frame was invoked so that experts and scientists could criticise its underlying racist presuppositions. Similarly, the counter frame of *action vs. talk* promoted by the government did not receive great salience and was limited to its propagation by the prime minister. Compared to Delo, Dnevnik devoted relatively little space to statements and direct quotes from government officials. This finding is in line with framing literature that emphasises the dominant role of journalists in limiting the accessibility of frames, even in the case of high-profile news sources, such as members of government, that dominate information channels. The *legalistic or formalistic* frame was first adopted by the Strojans, who emphasised that the anger of locals was unjustly directed at Roma, since the Ambrus incident was in fact committed by Non-Roma, and later in the repeated emphasis that they were the legal owners of the land from which they had been evicted. On the other hand, Ambrusians resorted to legal discourse and formalism partly in support and partly as a replacement of the *Roma guilt* frame, demanding that the letter of the law be respected, i.e. that the settlement of the Strojan family be torn down because it was built illegally and above the source of the village’s water supply (ecology subframe). The obligation to apply the law universally was further promoted by government representatives. *Blame reversal* was mostly based on claims of exaggerated media reporting and national treason, (e.g. the dispute between the human rights ombudsman and the prime minister, coverage in the foreign press) levelled by government sources and self-defence against constant intimidation of the Strojan family.

In terms of news frames, Dnevnik’s coverage was substantially narrower than that of Delo. After an initial shift in reporting, the dominant frames became *criticism of government* and *intolerance*, supplemented by *long-term institutional failure* in addressing the Roma problem. Alternative frames, promoted mostly by government members and villagers in Ambrus, failed to establish themselves as a valid alternative to the dominant news frames. After the initial

contestation phase, they appeared only sporadically, punctuating but not fracturing the dominant discourse.

#### **7.1.4 Dnevnik: Visual Coverage of the Strojan Affair**

Compared to Delo, Dnevnik's use of photographs was less conservative and restricted to codes of objectivity and transparency, although Dnevnik made more explicit claims to unmediated, factual representation of its photographs. Dnevnik's use of photographs was closer in style to tabloids than to restrained quality papers; the size of photographs was not standardised but tended to vary with the assigned importance of the topic, and frontpage images were often simply front-page teasers, directing the attention of the reader to the inside pages where longer articles were published, often accompanied by additional visual material, such as photographs, info graphics, charts or maps. Photographs worked in explicit connection with bold headlines surrounded by white space that allowed them to dominate the layout. Furthermore, Dnevnik frequently used cut-outs of politicians and used photographs as parts of info graphics and editorial illustrations, thereby additionally framing the issue in a seemingly neutral, factual manner (i.e. the use of statistics). Over the past few years, Dnevnik has made frequent appeals to its readers in which it presented the paper as a crusader for free speech, an advocate of free public access to information, and watchdog of political sphere. During the period analysed, such claims were based on the use of press photography as irrefutable proof. Thus the November 27 front page screamed "Dnevnik's proof: Police wounded a demonstrator", and, a few weeks later, the foreign minister's wife was photographed using her husband's protocol vehicle and driver to go shopping, thereby abusing state resources. The style of both photographs (candid, telephoto lens snaps) and style of presentation (headline emphasising the act of being caught, a sequence of photographs to avoid the ambiguity of a single, decontextualised image) are reminiscent of tabloid press journalism and paparazzi style-photography. On the other hand, the use of photographs in Dnevnik frequently departs from straightforward realism into the domain of the symbolic and interpretative – thus the prime minister's decision to replace the minister of social affairs was illustrated by a photograph of the two in soccer uniforms, with a caption explaining that "Janša doesn't want Drobnič on his team anymore"; similarly, in a cut-out accompanying an article demanding Minister Mate's resignation, the photograph was not a neutral portrait as his facial expression was highly suggestive of his guilt.

**Figure 7.7 Framing police brutality/using photography as proof (Dnevnik)**



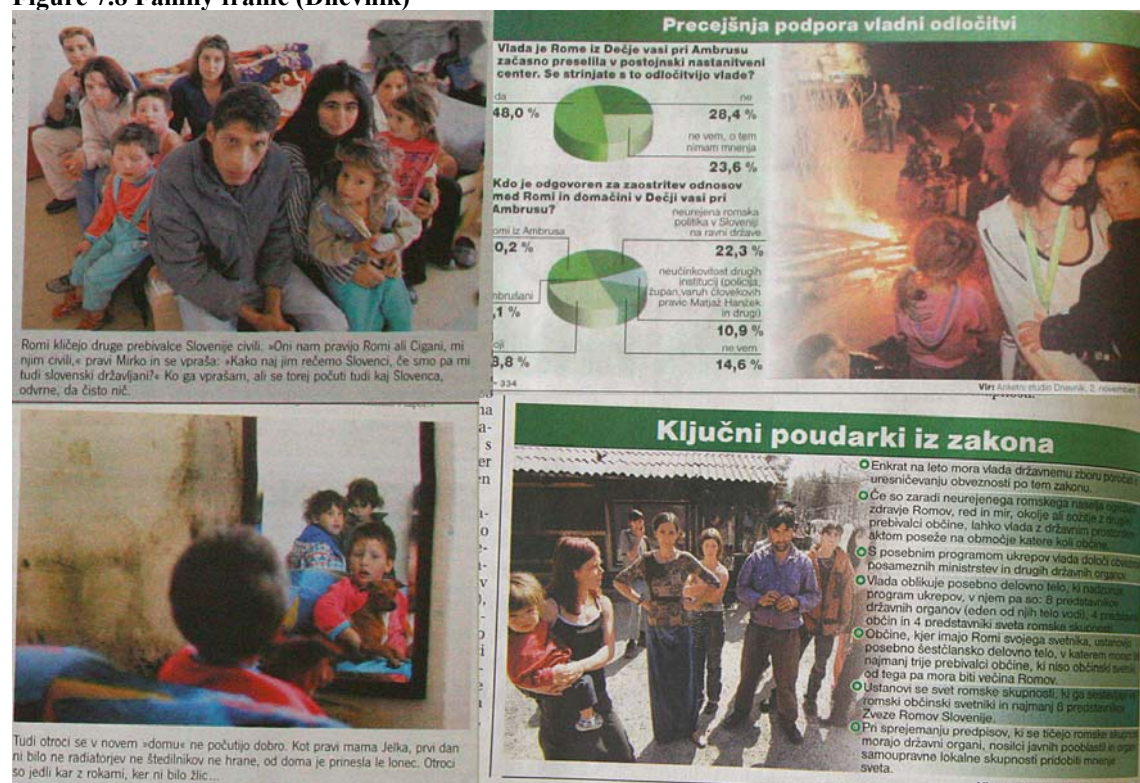
Dnevnik used photographs as eyewitness truth-claims most prominently in connection with reports of police brutality both towards anti and pro-Roma demonstrators.

As already noted above, Dnevnik's initial coverage of the affair was somewhat hesitant and, even when it changed to condemnation of intolerance, the first published images did not give much support to the headline proclaiming an "atmosphere of lynching" – a photograph of two members of mounted police depicted them casually and slowly riding through the deserted settlement. The first frame that Dnevnik's visual coverage picked up was criticism of the government– the Strojans angrily leaving Ambrus in a packed car, the police behind them supervising their departure; a night shot of Minister of Interior Dragutin Mate speaking into a microphone, depicting him as siding with the locals (who were standing close behind him); the education minister's visit to the Strojans in Postojna, which lacked the compassion of Delo's photograph, showing him within one of the rooms (his suit contrasted with the decay of the room, a fact further emphasised by the caption) – the image was juxtaposed with Elka Strojan and two other despairing female members of the family sitting outdoors by a campfire, emphasising the family's helplessness; pie charts indicating public support of government actions laid out against a photograph of a mother carrying a child in front of a



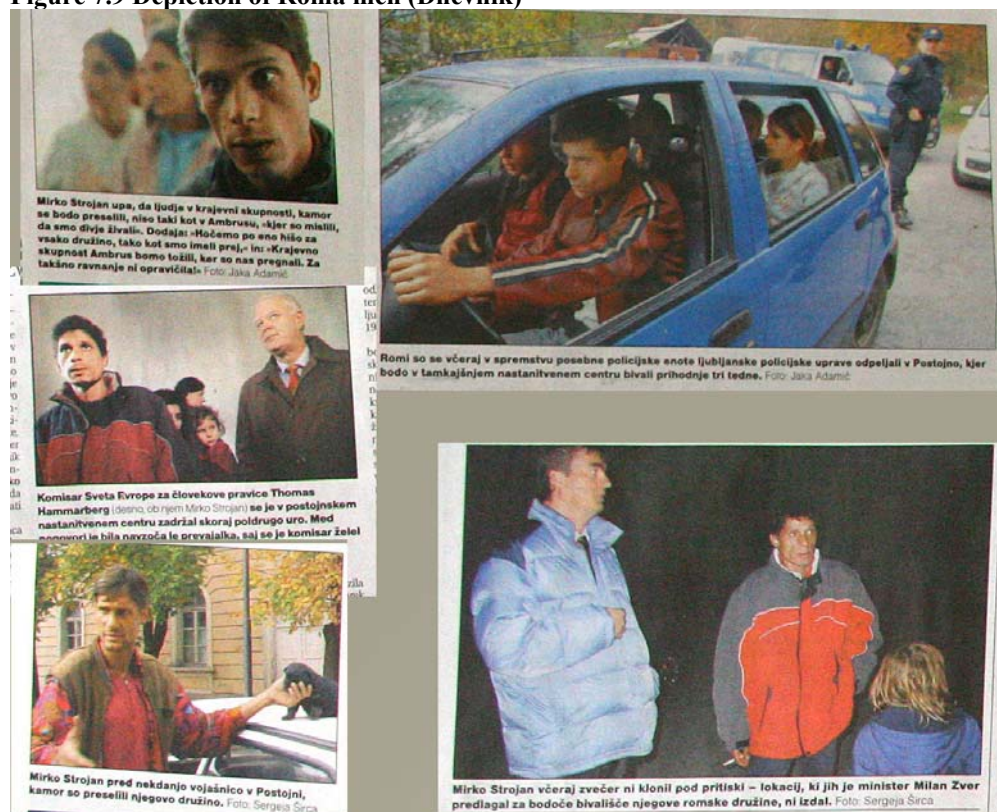
burning camp-fire; the juxtaposition of tractors forming a road block in Dolenjska woods (no police action) with riot police arresting one of the anti-xenophobia protesters (Marko Breclj) in Ljubljana. With the intervention of the riot police in Ambrus, criticism of the government reached its high point, although, this time, the criticised actions were directed against the anti-Roma side. Thus issues from November 27 and November 28 offered photographic proof of the police being responsible for the beating of one of the protesters, whose bleeding head offered a dramatic visualisation of the conflict (though greatly overstating the injury itself). Dnevnik published a series of images and analysed their content, with partial blowups, circles and arrows explaining the visual proof that countered the official report produced by the police authorities. The November 28 issue made the explicit claim that the head of the Ljubljana police supervising the intervention was dismissed based on Dnevnik's irrefutable photographic proof, emphasising the success and moral justification of the newspaper's enhanced watch dog role.

Figure 7.8 Family frame (Dnevnik)



Depicting the Strojans as family either explicitly or through foregrounding the figure of a mother (and a child).

Figure 7.9 Depiction of Roma men (Dnevnik)



In spite of the presence of family frame, Dnevnik did present a far more masculine image of Strojani's than Delo.

Although the textual frames and emphasis on *intolerance*, *contextualisation* and *criticism of the government* overlap significantly, Dnevnik's depiction of the Strojani family and protesters differed markedly from that of Delo. First, protesters were depicted less threateningly – apart from the photographs of Ambrus and the riot police (one depicting villagers as attackers, the rest as the attacked), where they are shown in large numbers and as a potentially violent mob, the majority of photographs taken at barricades and road-blocks, at local community meetings and during negotiations with local or state authorities, were taken from medium or close social distance, depicting small groups made up predominantly of males. The protesters were thus made explicitly visible, their faces discernible, their gesticulation explicit and telling of their sentiment (e.g. threatening mayor Janković or gesticulating to photographers). Although middle-aged men formed the majority of the protesters, the groups were markedly less gender-segregated than those of Delo or Mladina. The coverage of the Strojani family similarly differed from that of Delo in terms of gender. In Dnevnik, the male side of the family appeared to be the active part, particularly when negotiating with government officials, while women were more likely to be represented in the private sphere of the family and with children. Thus from the very beginning of Dnevnik's coverage, Mirko Strojani emerged not

only as the voice, but also the face of the Strojan family (depicted negotiating with Minister Zver, with Commissioner Hammarberg etc.). Similarly, images of despairing men were not as abundant and as prominently displayed as on the pages of Delo. During the second stage of the affair, particularly after part of the family returned to Ambrus in December, the image of Elka Strojan started to dominate Dnevnik's coverage, and she emerged as the feminine pole, an icon of the Strojan family and a symbol of its plight, for it was she who featured as part of the newspaper's overview of the events of 2006, sharing a slice of the front page with the Slovene president, the minister of social affairs, Saddam Hussein and activist/envoy Tomo Križnar, the last of whom was involved in efforts to end the Darfur crisis. It is worth mentioning that her image as an icon was kept alive throughout 2007 during the affair's short return to public attention, and as part of an editorial illustration on the topic of social networking (handshake theory). The iconic mother takeover was also accompanied by a shift in depiction of the Strojan's settlement in Ambrus, which then appeared as a home, a place where Elka Strojan raised farm animals, where the family gathered etc. At the same time, the presence of police indicated this to be a problematic, endangered home.

Dnevnik's contextualisation and articles about Roma beyond that of the Strojan family offered uncharacteristic imagery of Roma. The people featured in the textual part of the story were named, their portraits taken from mid or close distance. In a reportage on Roma entrepreneurs and intellectuals, their portraits were posed in the same manner as those of their Slovene counterparts. Unlike most Roma-related images, they were shot inside and those shot outdoors suggested that the exterior was solely the location of the portrait, not of their daily activities. Their dress in no way deviated from that of the majority population. A portrait of Rajko Šajnović set him within the Slovene mainstream, for not only is he a translator of Slovenia's national bard, Prešeren, into the Romani language, and therefore a man of books, the backdrop of his home is filled with Catholic religious iconography. A portrait of Roma student Samanta Baranja was taken from intimate social distance and entrepreneur Bojan Tudija, though set against a backdrop of scrap iron (the core of his business enterprise), was wearing a grey business suit. Images of children playing on the muddy yards of unfinished red brick houses and wooden barracks were absent. An article in Objektiv, Dnevnik's Saturday supplement, on successful Roma integration in Northern Italy, was likewise illustrated by a positive image of Roma youth, the two, older, neatly-dressed boys posing for a gentle, sympathetic portrait taken from close personal distance. The stereotypical images were not absent altogether – one (children playing outside, a line of drying laundry, a run-down house)



accompanied an article on the position of European Roma – but they were limited to illustrating abstract cases. When it came to concrete individuals or events, Dnevnik's portrayal of Roma was markedly positive. Apart from the iconic image of suffering mother, Dnevnik did not build heavily on other national identity-markers – although intolerance emerged as characteristic of rural Slovenia (farmers and tractors), images of fire-fighting trucks or locals celebrating were not made central to the visual narrative, as was the case with Mladina.

**Figure 7.10 Intolerant protesters (Dnevnik)**



In Dnevnik, protesters appear more often as intolerant and angry individuals than as less as a threatening mob.

**Figure 7.11 Positive images of Roma (Dnevnik)**



### 7.1.5 Mag: Textual Framing of the Strojan Affair

In 2005, when the magazine was on the verge of bankruptcy, Mag was bought by Delo's parent company Delo d.d., but kept its editorial independence and ideological profile as a right-wing weekly. The magazine's editorial independence was clearly evident in Mag's coverage of the Strojan affair, which significantly differed from that of Delo.<sup>267</sup> In the first edition of the magazine published after the Ambrus beating, Mag carried a three-page illustrated reportage on the subject. Although not the subject of front-page illustration, the affair was still recognised as a major topic of the week through a front-page headline announcing the article. The headline "Gypsy goulash in Ambrus" evoked a familiar restaurant menu item. While the modelling of headlines around quickly recognisable phrases is a frequently employed strategy in magazines, it is not a neutral activity, as it suggests certain associative paths and patterns of information storage and retrieval. Within the context of political news, neither Gypsy nor goulash are value-free terms and frequently imply messiness, non-orderliness, fraud, manipulability of voters etc. The three-page reportage was,

<sup>267</sup> In the aftermath of the 2004 general election, Delo's editorial policy experienced a "conservative turn" and Delo's acquisition of Mag was seen as an extension of these pressures (for a detailed overview see Bašić Hrvatin and Petković 2007). However, this shift did not match the openly jingoistic sympathising with the political right that characterised Mag's reporting.

considering the magazine's editorial stance, surprisingly neutral. It focused on the Stojan family and offered a vivid and multifaceted account of their hiding in the woods around Ivančna Gorica. The article presented the human(itarian) dimension of the affair, emphasising the living conditions and the number of women and children hiding in the woods. It also gave voice to representatives of the family. In terms of frames, it drew on *intolerance* (e.g. death to Gypsies slogans, torching), *institutional failure* (state and local administration hiding from problems) and *Roma guilt* frames (criminality, social benefits). There was a discrepancy between textual accounts and visual images (to be discussed in more detail below) but, in the overall structure and layout of the article, the Roma guilt frame seemed to be given slight preference over the contesting two in the textual part of the article. While the "Gypsy goulash" article was only mildly partisan, the same issue also carried an article aimed at discrediting human rights ombudsman Matjaž Hanžek, whose notification of the Council of Europe, "lawyers, government, and public agree, has smeared the reputation of the state" abroad. The article introduces two powerful alternative frames – *active government* and *political conspiracy* – the latter of which became the locus of Mag's coverage of the affair in the weeks to come. The ombudsman's warnings were interpreted as a personal crusade against the government, allegedly proving his incapacity to perform his duties. Moreover, Hanžek was not seen to be acting alone but as a part of a "coordinated attack" by the political left, whose primary aim was the destabilisation and discrediting of Janša's government, which was actively seeking a long-term solution to the Roma-related problem(s).

Over the next seven weeks, *political conspiracy* emerged as the dominant frame of Mag's reporting, intertwined with *active government*, *Roma guilt* and *blame reversal* frames. In the words of one reporter, "Ambrus is a synonym for falsified information, demagoguery, media manipulation and threats", as a problem of one Roma family became "a prime example of political manipulation" aimed at discrediting the government. The Stojan affair was, the paper claimed, abused by a well-organised left-wing conspiracy whose "supporters and provocateurs" had infiltrated all walks of public life, from civil society to the ranks of the police. Mag echoed the prime minister accusation that the media were the prime proponents of intolerance and anti-government discourse, and even the demands of the police officers' union regarding their social benefits were interpreted as part of an overarching leftist conspiracy. Mag's evaluation of the efficiency of this conspiracy was somewhat contradictory – while the general public was constantly reported to have been manipulated by partial, biased and false reporting, Mag's columnist declared that the leftist conspiracy had clearly gotten out of hand

and was spreading intolerance across the country and across the political spectrum, while at the same time he claimed that the government was still firmly in control of the situation. As already mentioned, the *active government* frame was mainly utilised to support the dominant frame of political conspiracy. The government's "fire-fighting endeavours"<sup>268</sup> were obstructed by mere talk and unproductive critique. The Janša government was presented as generally active in the field of Roma "problematics", devoting more funds to Roma-related projects than any of the preceding governments and passing a general law on the Roma minority, its positive active role being clearly acknowledged by representatives of the Roma community.

During the fourth week of Mag's (fairly scarce) reporting on the Strojjan affair, the magazine introduced its second most salient frame – *blame reversal*, which worked in close connection with the initially implied *Roma guilt* frame. In the fourth issue covering the affair, a Mag journalist claimed that the first impression of the Ambrus events as an outbreak of xenophobia was false. It was the locals who were the actual victims of the affair and they had "so many painful stories to tell that they don't know where to begin." The article was entitled "Hate speech of pacifists", reversing the claims of xenophobia levelled at Ambrusians. A week later, the magazine's leading columnist claimed that "real intolerance started after leftists and pacifists had organised protests allegedly in support of Roma" and that intolerance had by then secured a stronger footing on the left side of political spectrum than on the right. In a similar reversal of argument, Minister Zver was described as a true collateral victim of the affair. The *Blame reversal* frame drew its strength from the supplementary frame of Roma guilt. The journalist's proclamation that the first impression of the affair was wrong was followed by the bold subtitle "Nesting ground of criminal". The article gave voice to Ambrusians who repeatedly accused the Strojans of stealing, breaking into homes during funerals, intimidating old farmers, raping 70-year-old women, not paying for petrol, speeding in unregistered cars etc. The family's inherent criminality was supported by official statistics – over 700 police reports were filed between 2000 and 2006. In extension of this argument, the Slovene media were accused of biased reporting, allegedly focusing on the part of the family with no criminal past while failing to mention the criminality of the family as a whole. Moreover, the Strojans were presented as exploiters of social benefits, with Mag calculating that the whole family received between 300.000 and 400.000 SIT<sup>269</sup> in social benefits per month, which at the time was between three and four times the average salary in the

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<sup>268</sup> Mag's journalists were using the exact phrase promoted by Minister of Education Zver.

<sup>269</sup> Roughly between 1200 and 1700€.

productive sector of economy. The Strojans were presented as morally corrupt, who, like tycoons, were abusing Slovenia's imperfect legal system at the expense of society. Their criminality originates in their cultural Otherness, in "failing to gradually adopt the values of the regular family, characteristic of Western culture".

#### **7.1.6 Mag: Visual Framing of the Strojan Affair**

In 2006, Mag continued to use photographs in the same manner and for the same purposes as three years earlier. Front pages routinely carry editorial illustrations in the form of photomontage, most frequently consisting of heads of politicians more or less visibly pasted onto stock or news images. The non-factual use of photographs is extended to editorial illustrations of some articles using similar techniques to those used with front-page pieces (heads or cut-outs of politicians, combined with (stock) photographs and graphic elements), though these images are always discernible as illustrations and do not infringe on the magazine's dominant use of photographs for the transparent narrativisation of events, identification and personification of the main actors, or as visual proofs. Although Mag uses a lot of photographs with their articles (main articles can have up to a dozen images), images are rarely used for their own storytelling potential. Mag's articles generally exploit the power of photography in the lead photograph of the article, which can take up between one page and the whole first spread (and whose meaning is fixed through article title and captions), while the rest of the article is generally illustrated with a set of smaller (approx. 2-column-wide) photographs, which, due to their size have little narrative power of their own and are therefore subservient to the accompanying text (primarily in captions, but also intertitles and article). As visuals, they speak more in terms of a series of images than as each individual image on its own. In addition to this sort of series of 4 to 6 images, Mag's pages are sprinkled with small (approx. 1-column-wide) thumbnail portraits or cut-outs (normally waist-up, but also full-figure) of the main actors involved in the story (often complemented with their short statements or blurbs).

As I pointed out above, Mag's coverage of Strojan affair was not extensive. The magazine did not try to contextualise the case as part of the overall problematics of Roma in Slovenia, but framed the affair as a political conspiracy against the Janša government. There were only a handful of articles devoted to the Strojan case, of which five were longer stories while the rest were short image-text items. The overall thrust of Mag's editorial stance was to tone down the



affair. Thus, when their November 29 issue carried an image of riot police clashing with protesters in Ambrus (titled “On the wild side of the Alps”, with a caption asking whether Slovenes were really xenophobic and whether rejection of the Strojan was the stuff of political manipulation), the issue carried only one article (weekly column) on the subject. The magazine’s pictorial coverage complemented this restrained editorial stance. The published photographs depicted only actors that were directly involved in the affair, namely the Strojan family, demonstrators and political figures. Thus the visual coverage of Roma was confined to members of the Strojan family and Jožek Horvat Muc, president of the Slovene Roma association, who was a member of the relocation negotiation team.<sup>270</sup>

Image analysis showed that Mag’s coverage of the affair was characterised by image-text dissonance, which is a fairly frequent characteristic of (Slovene) visual journalism (see Tomanić Trivundža 2005, 2006). This dissonance was already apparent in the first article dedicated to the affair, where the textual account oscillated between intolerance and Roma-guilt frames, with a strong human interest component (the latter emerged as slightly privileged), while photographs offered a visual narrative that was very explicitly grounded in the intolerance frame. The lead photograph depicted members of the Strojan family in the woods, preparing food over an open fire. The foregrounding of the food complemented the article’s title, Overheated gypsy goulash. Images were sympathetic to the family’s plight and captions emphasised the humanitarian aspects of their situation, for instance emphasising the number of women and children hiding in the woods. Two of the eight images were individual environmental portraits of children. The two images depicted them as individuals (composition) and were taken from their eye level (normal vertical angle), emphasising their individuality. This visual individualisation was not matched in the accompanying text, where children remained unnamed and were captioned with text that problematised them as a “category” (Roma children), not as individuals. Similarly, three photographs depicting adult members of the Strojan family were also framed in a way that emphasised their individuality, which was complemented by captions that explicitly named them. Moreover, a cut-out of the head of the family, Mirko Strojan, depicted him in an authoritative position (a determined facial expression, the position of his arms, an extremely low vertical angle).<sup>271</sup> The plight of

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<sup>270</sup> The only photograph depicting a member of the Roma community not directly involved in the affair was an image of Mag’s reporter “at work”, and served primarily to lend credibility to the magazine (anchorage through caption, composition of image), rather than to provide additional information on the topic.

<sup>271</sup> What should be noted, though, is that one photograph depicted a member of the Strojan family currently serving a prison sentence, introducing the criminality of the *Roma-guilt* frame.

the family was further emphasised by two photographs depicting the institutionalised sanctioning of their hiding in the woods, as they were fined by the police and the municipal inspectorate for illegally camping on private property.<sup>272</sup>

Figure 7.12 Image-text dissonance I (Mag)



<sup>272</sup> Photographs serve as proofs of these sanctions. Due to uninterpretable captions, they could be read either negatively (further punishing of Roma) or positively (implementation of law and order without exceptions), though their placement within the overall visual coverage makes the first reading somewhat more likely.

The second article related to the affair – an attack on human rights ombudsman Matjaž Hanžek – displayed an even more strikingly dissonant editorial use of photographs in connection to article text. The first spread of the article was illustrated by Hanžek's cut-out and two photographs, one depicting a march by anti-Roma protesters, the other depicting members of the Strojjan family. While the article accused Hanžek of being incapable of handling cases of human rights violations, introducing the political conspiracy frame and accusing the ombudsman of overstating the case, images gave more support to the opposite interpretation. Hanžek's cut-out depicted him in a somewhat authoritative position (low angle), with his arms rest firmly crossed on his chest, signalling a decisive, even defiant position. However, the juxtaposition of photographs of protesters and the Strojjan family made a strong claim for, not against, Hanžek's criticised defiant stand. The marching protesters (not from Ambrus but Novo mesto, indicating the spreading of intolerance), were depicted as a threatening mass with the potential to turn into a mob, with the image taken at public distance and from a high angle. The photograph of the Strojans depicted them as a family – three adults were surrounded by eight children and the central figure of the image was a mother carrying a child. While the protesters were determined, marching, singing and gesticulating, the Strojans were waiting and passive, and the uncertainty of the situation implied in the image was emphasised by its juxtaposition to the aforementioned one. The foregrounded mother and child looked straight into the camera, as if demanding an answer or even action from the reader. Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) claim that content of an image can be depicted in the way that it is "offered" to the imagined viewer or that it "demands" his/her attention of action. In this case, the protesters were on "offer", while the Strojans were making a visual "demand" from the viewer.

Figure 7.13 Image-text dissonance II (Mag)





On the whole, Mag's visual coverage did not complement the magazine's explicit textual siding with the government and protesters from Ambrus. The *active government* frame had no visual counterpoint: in contrast to the visual coverage in Delo, for example, where government representatives were depicted on location, negotiating with the Strojan family etc., representatives of government were not frequently depicted in Mag at all. When they did appear, they were isolated, decontextualised cut-outs and portraits. Even more telling was the coverage of the Ambrus protesters. When compared to visualisation of the Strojan family, as a rule the protesters were presented as an anonymous mass, photographs were taken from public distance, which (in connection with the small size of the printed image) rendered their faces mostly indiscernible, preventing strong identification. While articles drew on *Roma-guilt*, Ambrusians emerged mostly as an anonymous mass (only four out of thirteen photographs depicted them from near or far social distance, three of which were only one column wide) defying state institutions (an inspection of the police convoy, clashes with the riot police) and prone to (over) consumption of alcohol. On the other hand, Roma were more frequently depicted, photographed either from personal or social distance, and more of their photographs were printed in large format. In terms of vertical angles, they were depicted as visual equals, more or less on the same level as the implied viewer. This was most often evident in photographs depicting Roma children, where the viewer was brought down to their eye-level/height. Only one image was used which directly provided visual support to the *Roma-guilt* frame – a photograph of a Strojan family tombstone decorated with an etching of a gun, allegedly proving their “passion for guns”.<sup>273</sup> Blame-reversal and formalism frames were similarly not depicted and the one photograph depicting the Strojan settlement (said to be endangering the village's water supply) was used to show the damage done by protesters.

**Figure 7.14 Photographs as proof (Mag)**



Left: photographs as proof of Slovene intolerance; right: photographs as proof of Strojan's criminality (family member serving prison sentence, guns as tombstone decoration).

<sup>273</sup> A similar image of the gun-decorated tombstone was widely circulated on the Internet was a part of heated anti-Roma discourse.

Unlike *Mag*'s textual reporting, the magazine's visual coverage did not explicitly draw on or problematise Slovene national identity in connection with the Strojjan affair. This does not, however, mean that visuals did not contribute to implicit visual Othering of Roma. First, there was a marked difference in gendering of the two groups. Photographs depicted protesters as male-dominated groups and blue work coats and overalls were a prominent part of the *mise en scène*. Moreover, the depicted representatives of state institutions, ranging from ministers to police officers, were all male. This male-dominated image of the dominant group was contrasted by a markedly non-masculine portrayal of Roma. The sixteen images of the Strojjan family "spoke" of women and children. Viewers were offered an insight into the woman-centred world of looking after children or preparing food. Apart from tending after family, Roma were depicted as inactive, passive and waiting for external help. Their subordinate position was further emphasised through the depiction of children, who were the focus of seven photographs. Secondly, the civilisational difference between the Roma and non-Roma populations emerged through the depiction of Roma living conditions, especially images of the family gathered around the camp-fire, which connoted their "tribalness" and evoked a familiar stock of images from the genre of travel photography. This "tribalness" was contrasted by the modern technology possessed by the majority group (e.g. cars, police equipment). In short, Slovenes are embodied by the public (male) sphere of protesters, with Roma representing its Other pole, the (female) private sphere turned public by media attention. Since *Mag*'s coverage lacked photographs depicting confrontation between Slovenes and Roma, the differentiation and pictorial articulation of national boundary was more implied than explicit, emerging, for example, from juxtaposition of two or more images. The one case where the differentiation was explicitly visualised in one image (ironically, but also tellingly), came from a series of interview photographs with the president of the Slovene Roma association. Although the interview presented Jožek Horvat Muc visually as an equal to other interviewers in *Mag*, the depiction departed from *Mag*'s standard use of a series of photographs of the interviewee talking and gesticulating in one small detail. It included a small photograph from Muc's office wall that displayed two wall decorations – one was a plaque with the Slovene state herald, the other a copper plaque depicting a Roma violin player, evoking not only one of the popular stereotypic images and social roles of Roma but, to a significant extent, the dividedness and hierarchy of the two worlds.

Figure 7.15 Depiction of protestors (Mag)



Depiction of protestors as unthreatening individuals and groups (with emphasis on police brutality).

Figure 7.16 Blame reversal (Mag)



Visualising the opposition between state (institutions) and pro-Roma demonstrators; interpretative captioning serves the blame reversal function ("Hate speech of pacifists").

### 7.1.7 Mladina: Textual Framing of the Strojan Affair

Mladina introduced the Strojan affair on October 28 through a two-page reportage titled “[hit] on the head with a pole”, focusing on the background behind the events in Ambrus. The title, evoking a popular phrase (and communication strategy), was ambivalent, as it could be understood to refer to the beating of Šinkovec or to a possible attack by villagers on the Strojan family. Although the article allowed the introduction of alternative discourses and frames, such as the *Roma guilt* frame (the violence of the Strojans), the *legalist-formalist frame* (environmental concerns – the drinking water reservoir) promoted by Ambrusians and the *long-term institutional failure to address Roma issues* (municipal authorities blaming state institutions), the magazine’s adoption of the *intolerance* frame was evident in its emphasis on the recent local history of attacks against Roma (a shooting and a bomb attack in the vicinity), all of which started with the end of the mythical era of peaceful coexistence during the “reign” of “iron chief Miha” Strojan, who was respected by both locals and family (“even the dogs would stop barking as he spoke”). The *intolerance* frame was further supported by statements from the Strojan family, who argued through the alternative legalist-formalist frame, emphasising that the beating that had triggered the revolt by Ambrusians was not committed by a Roma and that they had been chased away from land which they legally owned. The following week’s issue picked up on the *intolerance* frame and almost inextricably intertwined it with that of *government critique*, which became Mladina’s major news frames in covering the Stojan affair, supported by long-term institutional failure. Mladina’s tripartite analysis of the causes of the Ambrus affair echoed that of Minister Zver, although guilt was attributed to different actors. The Roma were seen to be innocent and, while intolerance among the villagers was recognised as a significant factor, Mladina attributed the greatest share of the guilt to the government.

Mladina’s *intolerance frame* was broader than that of Delo and Dnevnik and its implications deemed more severe – for intolerance is not linked solely to the isolated characteristics of a local community or a dormant national trait, but an underlying rationale of the political option that came to power in 2004, thus acquiring institutional status and power. Intolerance is an omnipresent, latent national trait, and experts openly warned of the danger that the Strojan case might turn into a “model solution” for resolving frictions between the majority population and Roma communities. Mladina’s journalists were describing the events with terms such as “discrimination”, “racism”, “final solution”, even “ethnic cleansing”, and international assessments of the situation (foreign press and human rights protection

institutions, such as the Council of Europe and Amnesty International reports) were often cited as objective evaluation of this heated domestic affair. Anti-Roma sentiment was contextualised not only in historical pogroms against Roma (Nazism), but was explicitly nested within discourse on nation and national identity, between imagined European ideals and parochial nationalism. Protesters were reported to have sung the national anthem in reply to the interior minister's assurance that the Strojjan family would not return to Ambrus, and celebrated their victory with dance and drinking, while the local singing choir was reported to have kept up the spirits of demonstrators by singing folk songs, and several communities used fire alarm sirens to gather village guards and fire-trucks to erect road-blocks during the search for an alternative location for the settlement of the Strojans. Volunteer fire brigades are one of the central community institutions in the Slovene countryside, closely linked to national folklore (annual fundraising parties, folk music etc.), and stand as a proof of the community's (and by extension the nation's) capacity of self-reliance, self-organisation and independence. Alerts warning of alien intruders were reminiscent of the much praised system of communication and defence during two centuries of sporadic Ottoman incursions and the popular uprising, as a revolt among common (rural) people, bore overtones of the organised peasant uprisings (aimed at restoring older, more just social conditions) that took place in roughly the same period as the aforementioned incursions. The use of the term "village guards" is also a potent signifier of the nation's recent history: its linking to collaboration with the Nazi regime implying strong pejorative connotations. National(ist) framing of intolerance was further illustrated through Prime Minister Janša's statement at the anti-Roma protests in Ljubljana in 2004, that "Roma are endangering the very substance of the [Slovene] nation". Ambrusians dismissed critiques of xenophobia and deviation from European ideals of tolerance as a consequence of journalists and fellow citizens being abstracted from the "real" experience of living in the country(side) and mere intellectualising. A telling example was a speech delivered to road-block protesters by Slovene Miss Hawaiian Tropic, who commented on Commissioner Hammarberg's report by saying that "we do not want that kind of Europe." Much like Delo and Dnevnik, Mladina's *intolerance* frame presented anti-Roma sentiment as one facet of general Slovene national characteristics – intolerance to (ethnic, racial, sexual) difference, which consequently leads to its othering. The Strojjan affair was thus seen as a symptom of a broader malign social condition, and one in a series of sporadic outbreaks of xenophobia and intolerance among the dominant population.<sup>274</sup>

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<sup>274</sup> In January 2007, a further proof substantiating this argument was offered by another incident in the popular revolt against difference – when the local community in Slovenska Bistrica physically prevented an AIDS



The *critique of government* frame emphasised the lurking danger of Slovenia turning into a totalitarian state: state institutions were seen as giving in to the demands of an intolerant mob, de facto carrying out their wishes (the relocation of the Strojans to Postojna) and thus becoming an accomplice in “ethnic cleansing” (November 4); moreover, prominent members of government, so this frame proposes, have a past record of propagating anti-Roma sentiment, ranging from the prime minister to the speaker of parliament and members of committees working on Roma-related projects, such as Minister Zver’s proposed segregation of primary school pupils in Bršljin. Mladina insisted on personal accountability, often in the self-referential discourse of the medium that actively advocates protection of basic human rights and a culture of tolerance. The December 2 front page, for example, displayed the title “Mate go home”, evoking the political and freedom of speech struggles from the period of the nation’s fermenting, when Mladina was the prime medium for Slovenia’s growing political emancipation. It<sup>275</sup> was one in a series of clashes between Mladina and the Yugoslav National Army that led to the imprisonment of the so-called “četverica”<sup>276</sup>, triggering one of the central events in Slovenia’s independence – the forming of the committee for protection of human rights, backed by popular support and public protests. And it was precisely fundamental human rights that were seen to be endangered by acts of government, led by the most prominent member of “četverica”. Prime Minister Janez Janša was the central focus of the critique of government, followed by ministers Mate and Zver.

The *institutional failure* frame was promoted without explicit references as to who was responsible for the long-term failure to address Roma issues. Mladina invested in contextualising the Strojan affair as a part of the wider problems of failed integration and social security of Roma in Slovenia, mainly through the genres of social reportage, op-ed articles and columns by its regular commentators which regularly emphasised the humanitarian aspect of their living conditions (unimaginable in 21<sup>st</sup>-century Europe) and social exclusion (education, unemployment etc.) Through such contextualisation, Mladina kept Roma issues on the public agenda for about a month longer than Delo or Dnevnik, with articles on the topic regularly appearing in the magazine as late as the second half of February.

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patient from returning to his apartment.

<sup>275</sup> The title of a notorious 1988 editorial was “Mamula go home”, accusing the Yugoslav federal secretary of defence, Admiral Branko Mamula, of illegal arms trading with Ethiopia. (see Leksikon YU mitologije)

<sup>276</sup> The famous “četverica” were army officer Ivan Borštner and three journalists from Mladina - David Tasič, Franci Zavrl and Janez Janša.

Mladina's early adoption of and strong focus on intolerance and critique of government frames rendered contesting frames promoted by local communities of protesters or the government as unimportant, or just another proof of the intolerance argument. Thus the Roma guilt frame and blame reversal, so forcefully promoted by Mag, are reduced in Mladina to an indicator of intolerance. Instead of relying on police statistics or similar quantifiable criteria, statements by Ambrus villagers framed the criminality of the Strojans in evaluative, moral terms, claiming that, for example, they had been breaking into homes while people were attending funerals and stealing church gutters to be sold for scrap copper. While villagers insisted that their protests were merely expressions of accumulated frustrations and reactions to Roma violence, they were not given excessive space to illustrate the violent acts allegedly committed by the Roma community and documented by state institutions. Rather, it was the violent character of the protesters to which the magazine drew public attention (verbal threats, brandishing of chainsaws etc.), summed up in a statement by one of the Strojans children hiding in the woods, who was "afraid of being killed." . Similarly, claims of cultural difference (often pre-dating the Strojans affair) were articulated as indicators of xenophobia, problematising the idea of "civilisation" within historical references to totalitarianism.

#### **7.1.8 Mladina: Visual Coverage of the Strojans Affair**

Compared to Mag, Mladina's use of photographs is more restricted to the codes and conventions of photographic realism. Photographs are generally limited to genres of reportage and portraiture. Symbolic editorial illustrations are not created through photography but belong to hand and computer graphics, illustrations and drawings. The illustration-based cover has for over three decades served as one of the magazine's most distinguishable features and core brand values. These interpretative illustrations (covers) are only infrequently replaced by a photograph or a photomontage. On the inside pages, Mladina uses fewer photographs than Mag, but these are significantly larger in size (most are at least half a page wide). As such, individual images carry greater weight and have greater storytelling – and by extension, framing – potential. Their primary status in the magazine is that of visual proof, and editors often rely on archive photographs to prove a point or draw attention to a given article. Moreover, the magazine has a tradition of promoting documentary photography and photojournalism by frequently publishing in-depth photo reportage pieces by established Slovene and international photographers. Although it should be emphasised once again that photographs might not be Mladina's strongest tool for evaluative and interpretative visual

reporting, as editorial illustrations (e.g. caricature, graphics) are prominently used in addressing contemporary political issues, analysis shows that Mladina's use of photographs as proofs can have a strong symbolic dimension and implied evaluative or normative connotations.

Mladina started its reporting of the Strojan affair with a two-page reportage from Ambrus, featuring three large- and medium-sized photographs that served as orientation points of the affair. The lead photograph served as an "establishing shot" and depicted the central part of the Strojan settlement. What set it somewhat apart from being merely another fairly typical image of a Romani settlement (a house, a caravan and some scrap material in the muddy yard) was the complete absence of people and animals, rendering the settlement truly an object of dispute. The two adjoining photographs depicted representatives of the two parties involved in the dispute – a posed group portrait of formal representatives of Ambrus's local community body (*krajevna skupnost*) and a smaller unposed photograph of two of the Strojan brothers (Miha and Mirko). While the captions under first two were purely factual, the caption under the Strojan brothers' photograph described them as the people who "had to abandon their home". Although the caption could be seen as purely descriptive, the use of the word "home" has a strong resonance when it comes to Slovene national identity. While textual reportage gave much weight to Mladina's dominant frames, such as intolerance, photographs appear to have been making a somewhat contradictory claim. The juxtaposition of images of Ambrusians and Strojans was a peculiar one – formal representatives of the Ambrus community were presented in a posed portrait reminiscent of those seen in corporate brochures, a medium shot which clearly depicted the six representatives, their faces identifiable, their posture relaxed and their smiles discernible. In stark opposition to the light (both in terms of atmosphere and brightness/tonal value) photograph of the Ambrusians, the photograph of the Strojan brothers was a night shot, the two figures lit by flash and lacking any discernable background apart from the blackness of the night. Their posture featured none of the relaxedness and self-confidence of local community representatives, and their faces indicated their tiredness. The juxtaposition of these two images thus introduced a set of oppositions between the two groups: light vs. darkness; neatly dressed and tidy vs. untidy (unshaven, dirty clothes), relaxed and confident vs. tired and helpless; casual vs. under spotlight; majority vs. minority; inside (urbanised) vs. outdoor (nature), most of which generally serve as a starting-point for the logic of discrimination. This set of images acted as a potent marker/visualiser of boundaries between the two groups, marked not only by their



appearances but also by materialisation of the idea of home (the Strojan settlement). On the pages of the next edition, however, this initial visual ambiguity gave way to the use of photographs as evidence and attention-focusing devices, used to support intolerance and critique of government frames.

**Figure 7.17 Image-text dissonance during the first week (Mladina)**



**Figure 7.18 Dignified group portrait from the second week (Mladina)**



The November 4 front page carried an illustration on which a seated mother, holding a child and surrounded by five more children, was placed on a graphic black and red background (fire); above their heads was a menacing red outline of three stylised Ku Klux Klan hoods, forming an outline of one of Slovenia's prime symbols – Mount Triglav. The outline was reminiscent of a much criticised winning logo of Slovenia. In combination with the title “Humane relocation”, it was a potent metaphor of the looming intolerance of Slovenia. Inside, a page-and-a-third was given over to a photograph of Ambrusians marching against Roma (their raised fists and screaming faces were quite recognisably a reaction to the presence of press), potentially violent mass) juxtaposed with the article headline “Human relocation”. The same issue carried a chronological overview of events, illustrated by five photographs titled “To kill”, which was a fragment from a statement by one of the Strojani children, reprinted in whole across the first page, in which “tiny Elvis” said he would look after his brother since he was afraid villagers would come to kill them. This graphically emphasised statement found an echo in two photographs, one depicting two children asleep on the ground by the camp-fire, the other a villager with a threateningly raised baton, captioned “Salute to the horde: Kill, kill the Gypsy” (both posture and rallying cry reminiscent of sports fans). A week later, the intolerance frame reappeared in a symbolic photograph of three giant dark shadows looming over the tiny figure of one of Strojani's children, standing in front of the graffiti-sprayed wall of Postojna refugee centre. The next edition carried photographs of village guards and barricades (a cut-down tree, a fire-fighting truck with placards, a fire-fighting truck blocking the road), and a group of far-right youth demonstrating in support of the Ambrusians. Archive images from anti-Roma demonstrations in 2004 were also used to draw attention to the fact that, according to the magazine, the acting prime minister had been an active promoter of intolerance just before he came to power in 2004. Two photographs from the demonstrations were published – one in which he was shown demonstrating side by side with representatives of the Ambrus local community council; the second one depicted him speaking into a megaphone at the same demonstrations. The second image was very symbolic and interpretative – the megaphone dominated the lower third of the frame and obscured much of Janša's face, turning him into an almost inhuman agitator of intolerance. What was noticeable in Mladina's coverage of anti-Roma protestors and their supporters (Ambrus protestors, formal representatives of local community, local politicians, right-wing youth, Miss Hawaiian Tropic etc.) is that they were made explicitly visible – the photographs were framed at near social or intimate distance (medium shots and close-ups) or printed large enough for the individual faces to be discernible. The critique of critique frame found its visual correlation in



the aforementioned archive photographs of Janez Janša at the anti-Roma demonstrations in 2004, photographs depicting Minister Dragutin Mate (depicted as an authoritative commander of police siding with locals in Ambrus, or laughing over a glass of champagne at a garden party when accused of overstepping his authority), and police during demonstrations in support of Roma (a photograph depicting the arrest of Marko Breclj suggesting excessive use of force; a line of riot police guarding the parliament building).

**Figure 7.19 Protesters as intolerant mob (Mladina)**



**Figure 7.20 Family frame, emphasis on children (Mladina)**



Mladina's interpretation of the Strojčan affair in terms of causes and victims was clearly visible in the amount of coverage given to the Roma family and in the magazine's effort to contextualise the Strojčan affair within the wider topic of Roma's social status in Slovenia. Although Mladina achieved this contextualisation mainly through textual articles and opinion pieces, the magazine did publish a five-page photo reportage on the appalling living conditions facing Roma in Dobruška vas (which in 2005 was the scene of a bomb attack by a Slovene that killed two Roma women). Although the seven published images were mere variations on familiar (stereotypical) imagery – Roma children playing outdoors, large families, messy and muddy yards, rusting scrap iron, decaying red brick houses, a horse cart etc, the strong visual narrative was unambiguously anchored (supported) by explanatory captions. Poor hygiene, one of the central nodes of anti-Roma discourse, was reversed into an accusation of irresponsibility among local and state authorities, rather than against Roma themselves. Instead of images of ragged or dirt-covered children happily playing in the yard, Mladina's lead photograph showed a neatly dressed boy holding out a dead rat on a piece of broken pottery over an outdoor fire; the caption informed the reader that the settlement was crowded with rats and that children burnt the dead rats along with other garbage to prevent infections. In another image, a photograph of a child was used to show the consequences of living without drinking water (skin diseases caused by drinking creek water); the image was not a candid shot but was made explicitly to show (not only illustrate but also prove) the conditions caused by lack of access to clean drinking water. An environmental portrait of an unnamed Roma family in a dim interior in their barrack was a dignified portrait, emphasising the plight of the mother of eight children (she was tending a child in her hands; a wood-burning stove with large pots was included in the frame). Unlike most images of Roma



settlements, which are establishing shots of the setting, the reportage featured close-ups of windows and rundown stoves, bringing readers closer to the reality of daily life for Roma in Dobruška vas, within the frame of the long-term institutional reluctance (or refusal) to address the living conditions of some 200 Roma.<sup>277</sup>

**Figure 7.21 Positive images of Roma (Mladina)**



Contextualising the Roma issues: dignified portraits and visual proofs of deploring living conditions of Roma in Dobruška vas.

Furthermore, Mladina's framing of the Strojan affair in terms of national identity is was through two symbols. The first was the explicit use of national and EU symbols on one of the barricades erected by village guards to prevent the potential settlement of Strojan family in their community. The image appeared as "photo of the week" and depicted Slovene and EU flags hung on the barricades in Zadvor near Ljubljana. In this night scene, the fire in the

<sup>277</sup> The title of the reportage "People from houses number 35 and 41" referred to the mayor's statement that formally, there was no extensive Roma settlement in Dobruška vas as, officially, only two houses existed in that area, and so any action to improve the living conditions of the Roma was unnecessary.

background not only illuminated the semi-transparent fabric of the two flags but also exposed the dark silhouette of another potent national symbol – the kozolec (hayrack). More precisely, it was not a kozolec but the skeleton of a kozolec, and its central pillars formed dark, cross-like silhouettes against the pale orange-red sky, evoking another potent element of national identity (Catholicism) and its inherent symbolism of suffering and martyrdom. The image was not, however, about the martyrdom of local community (or the Strojani family for that matter). As the caption read, it was the symbols of democracy that were suspended above the barricades, visualising the salient textual sub-frame of dormant intolerance, lip-service democracy and endangerment of the fundamental ideals of democracy, as defined both by the norms of the Slovene state and the much cherished normative ideal of the EU. Although the terms “European union” and “European” have been repeatedly used in Slovenia as a civilisation metaphor, both in public and private discourses (cf. Velikonja 2005), the Ambrus events in Mladina came to stand for the particular dark vision of democracy promoted by right-wing political movements. Another potent framing of the village guards’ uprisings within the markers of national identity was the use of fire-fighting trucks to barricade the roads. The role of voluntary fire brigades as a central self-organised institution of rural local communities and their connection to one of the key pools of national identity imaginary (national popular folk music) has already been noted above. What should be emphasised is that, unlike other publications, Mladina explicitly used images of barricades with fire-fighting trucks, while photographs from *Delo* and *Dnevnik*, for example, showed other types of vehicles, most notably tractors.

**Figure 7.22 Visual frames of national identity (Mladina)**



In terms of gender and age distribution in Mladina’s photographs, the dominant population (Ambrusians) was presented as predominantly adult and male, and was not reduced to an



anonymous, undistinguishable mass. On the other hand, Roma were depicted predominantly through images of women and children, although the absence of adult men was not as prominent as in other publications. In the coverage of the Strojan family, male adults were present from the very beginning of the magazine's coverage of the subject, though only measuring the frequency of their depiction could overstate their attributed status. Mladina's focus on a non-masculine depiction of Roma emerged not through frequency but through the prominence given to photographs of women and children and their selection as the focus of the articles. Thus it was not Mirko Strojan (the acting head of the family) but his mother Elka who got the four-page interview in Mladina, with dignified portrait photographs that went beyond the unflattering, unposed stolen moments of photojournalism. Mladina's depiction of Roma in general, and the Strojan in particular, focuses on one of their social roles – that of family. With the exception of the Elka Strojan interview photographs, they were not depicted as individuals but as members of a larger group – a family.

**Figure 7.23 Framing the police (Mladina)**



Mladina's visual framing of the police was that of repressive state apparatus. With exception of bottom photograph, police was routinely depicted as agent of violence over Roma or pro-Roma civil society.

## 7.2 Cultural Belonging and External Others: Flow of Print News and National Identity Frames Beyond the Strojan Affair

As I argued above, media coverage of the Strojan affair produced two types of internal visual others – the Roma and intolerant Slovene local communities. Against the two negative visual markers of national identity, the four publications also presented a steady flow of images that delineated national identity and cultural belonging beyond the Ambrus affair. Unlike in the case of the EU/NATO referendum and the build-up to the invasion of Iraq, there was no major international politics event that would so thoroughly dominate news reporting during the Strojan affair. Iraq, Afghanistan and the Middle East (Palestine) were high on the news agenda, though the visual coverage they received was in marked contrast to that of 2003. While Orientalism continued to structure the selection of news photographs, particularly in relation to the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, the alternative visual frame that portrayed US forces as agents of violence was also prominent. The Orientalist frame emerged through the publication of stereotypical images with little or no news value, connoting inherent violence and irrationality on the Arab side – a child with a Kalashnikov, masked fighters displaying guns, people celebrating on top of the remains of burnt enemy vehicles etc. Apart from such visual shortcuts to evaluative interpretations, images of daily life in Iraq and Afghanistan routinely depicted Western soldiers in a far less glamorous light than three years earlier. In 2006, the US soldiers and their allies were routinely depicted as agents of violence, their guns menacingly displayed as they policed the civilians. The civilian side was made far more visible than in 2003 and also much less Orientalistically reported, particularly in Delo, which featured a series of reportages on Iraq (and on Somalia).

### 7.2.1 International News as Frames of National and Cultural Belonging

As in 2003, international news mainly focused on institutional politics, covering major protocol news (visits, meetings and summits) and routine events (e.g. elections). Published photographs were mostly (fairly decontextualised) identification portraits of the main political actors or protocol photographs and photo-op images, which were noticeably more formal than those in 2003. Both newspapers, but Dnevnik in particular, also practised publishing images that would not only supplement the text (e.g. give visual recognition to politicians) but introduce another dimension of the news story (e.g. article on political summit reported through a photograph of protesters). Photographs of the so-called “everyday life scenes” were



also used in connection with international current affairs news coverage. In terms of boundary delineation, international news served as a potent indirect demarcator of the boundary between “us” and the rest of the world in terms of the amount (e.g. frequency, continuity) and type (e.g. negativity, scope and routineness of events) of coverage. Although Latin America and parts of sub-Saharan Africa were given untypically large emphasis, most of the reports were not connected to routine politics but to (the results of) elections, which the two dailies cover fairly indiscriminately around the globe. Just as in 2003, however, there was a marked difference in the mode of depiction of election coverage in terms of cultural belonging: for countries that were considered different or culturally and politically distant, it was more likely that contesting politicians would not be depicted directly (in person) but indirectly through election posters or not be depicted at all, substituting images of politicians with anonymous voters casting votes. Even an image as clichéd as someone casting a vote was not used universally: if elections were in a country close to the Slovene cultural and political milieu, the person casting the vote would be a concrete politician; if not, it would be an anonymous voter, almost, as a rule, an elderly lady.

Another example of indirect boundary maintenance came in the form of reportages. During the period analysed, both *Delo* and *Dnevnik* published photoreportages of Romania and Bulgaria in the wake of their accession to the EU, depicting the two as countries gravitating “from a dreary unpredictable outpost of the old Soviet Empire toward the gloomy orientalist fringe of the new Europe” (Iordanova 2001, 9). The four reportages were a prime example of a discourse of Balkanism.<sup>278</sup> Balkanism speaks of the Balkans as a part of the former Eastern Bloc that – unlike the countries of Central Europe – fundamentally lies outside the cultural boundaries of Europe. Photographs significantly helped in reinforcing textual accounts that spoke of the two countries being inherently unfit for “Europe”: Romania’s relationship to the EU was described as schizophrenic, Sofia’s main street as a meeting-point of “West and East, of affluence and misery”. Three reportages were the work of staff photographers and one a compilation from a Reuters image feed. The photographs framed the two countries in terms of ruralness and undevelopedness. *Dnevnik*’s reportage on Romania opened with a large photograph of a construction worker with an unbuttoned shirt against an EU banner, *Delo*’s with a man looking out of the window of an old farmhouse with a broken picket-fence. Most of the photographs depicted Romanians and Bulgarians in a rural setting – peasants ploughing

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<sup>278</sup> See e.g. Todorova 1997, Goldsworthy 1998.

their fields with horses, herdsmen and shepherds, the interiors of farmhouses and muddy village streets. Even when industrial technology was involved, it was juxtaposed with markers of ruralness (e.g. ploughed fields in the foreground, in front of an oil refinery or shepherd in front of thermal power plant cooling towers). The few images of urban settings were reminiscent of the rural ones (e.g. the poor condition of the roads) and the two countries emerged as essentially unurban societies. Technology either connoted environmental decay, alluding to the Communist legacy,<sup>279</sup> or was depicted in terms of the main frame of undevelopedness – through reliance on manual, unskilled labour. Thus an image from a Renault factory in Romania showed no technological equipment but manual labour. None of the four reportages contains a positive image that would counter the pejorative visual narrative described above.

**Figure 7.24 Visualising Bulgaria I (Delo)**



Framing of Bulgaria as predominantly rural, undeveloped, uninviting (e.g. beach with tire marks).

<sup>279</sup> Articles also contain direct visual references to former communist regimes.



Figure 7.25 Visualising Bulgaria II (Delo)



The overall visual theme: undevelopedness. Tourist areas reduced to industrial landscapes, no material signs of progress or the use of (modern) technology. Depiction of religious ritual. The only urban photograph is captioned "Main street in Sofia. Where East meets West, where affluence meets poverty."



Figure 7.26 Visualising Romania I (Delo)



No schizophrenia in Delo's depiction of Romania. The reportage offers bleak vision of undeveloped rural areas, dilapidated farm houses, muddy roads and streets. Images of unskilled labour, portrait of an orphan.

Figure 7.27 Visualising Romania II (Dnevnik)



Much like the reportage from Delo, the one in Dnevnik does not visually support the title: none of the four photographs supports the claim of belonging to the West. Three images depict unskilled labour (even image of car manufacturing does not show the use of technology) and the remaining one that shows elements of modernity is primarily referencing Romania's communist past, hence country's belonging to "other" Europe.



In terms of flow – the wider context of the four publications – sections on trips and tourism (and food) emerged as potent visualisers of national belonging. While mainstream articles occasionally featured visual references to imagery traditionally used in Slovenia's tourism promotion (visits to the Lipica stud farm, meetings of politicians at Bled, postcard motifs of cityscapes and landscapes with articles on municipal politics, a presidential candidate dressed in traditional farmer's garb etc.), I would like instead to focus my attention on the role of sections on trips and tourism in the routine visualising of national belonging. Articles with suggestions for day-trips were routinely directing readers towards visiting hills or mountains, reinforcing the nation's traditional connection to mountaineering and hiking. Accompanying images secured not only the cult of the mountains but also the connection between nation and religion – most of the suggested places were depicted with a typical Slovenian landscape vignette of a church on top of a hill (see Kučan 1998). In general, the suggested location of the trips reinforced the particularistic rendering of Slovenia as an Alpine country, which was further emphasised in visual depiction. None of the proposed locations during the period analysed was urban or non-Alpine, and photographs of idyllic (mountain) farms and villages dotted the reports.<sup>280</sup>

This, however, is only one part of the national boundary articulation in tourism sections. These sections also carry articles on travels abroad, which are most often contributed by readers themselves. Thus we are dealing with amateur photographs which are primarily indicative of the social and cultural distance between the readers and the countries they visited. Admittedly, the mode of depiction in amateur travel photography was not structured by national identity alone, as amateurs (particularly those striving to publish their photographs) are well known for their following of travel reportage in respected magazines such as *National Geographic* or *Geo*, which tend to structure their focus to certain topics and motifs and promote specific aesthetics, together with an understanding of the permissible treatment of a subject (Lutz and Collins 1993). As Urry (1990/2006) among others points out, most of the images people take while travelling exist in their mind even before they leave home, as they emerge from a complex web of news reports, travel literature, tourist guides, travel brochures, documentary programmes, feature films, fiction literature, travelogues, postcards etc. However, what national belonging does is structure the selection of this pre-

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<sup>280</sup> Sections on food and restaurant reviews also carried images of Slovene rural culinary specialities and in *Sobotna priloga*, for example, a photographic illustration featured a man carrying a rucksack, with a *Kanjska* sausage dangling out of it. Food has recently been acknowledged as a major promoter of national values, habits and, quite literally, of tastes.

available pool of images and topics deemed worthy of depiction and, just as with the differential depiction of politicians, a symbolic boundary between “our” and “their” culture emerges where the latter is characterised by depiction of (1) the differences and exoticism (most often in terms of technological progress); (2) a strong focus on women, children and elderly people; (3) everyday life confined to public spaces (mostly market scenes); (4) an emphasis on ethnic dress; connection to nature and animals; (5) and religious rituals and places of worship. None of these is characteristic of the photographs from trips across Europe and North America. Thus Scotland was depicted through images of castles and a bagpipe player, while an adjoining article on Morocco opened with a photograph of a severed camel’s head and continued with images of bazaar and market scenes with no architectural motifs, cityscapes or monuments. Occasionally, explicit references to national identity markers were made, as in reportage on Algeria, where Slovene travellers “put their local guide on skis for the first time in his life”. Although a lot of published images are visual clichés, it is still important which clichés are selected, what kind of ideology and power relations they consciously or unconsciously project, what are the structural absences in depictions of “us” and “them”. For instance, portraits of topless African women could have been cropped at the shoulders (thus not revealing their breasts) if the intention would indeed be merely to produce a portrait of a woman. Similarly, in published articles on Middle East or Africa, photographs of children are considered mandatory, while in articles on (Western) Europe, children are missing. Although (amateur) travel photography appears under a mantle of harmlessness, casualness, even naïveté, as consisting of merely unstructured snapshots, it is equally if not more steeped in power relations and symbolic dominance as is hard news photography. On the level of the former, the counter discourse to mainstream media imagery does exist (even though it rarely reaches the mainstream media), as does some diversity of news image supply among agencies. Travel photography, on the other hand, necessarily remains in the domain of the Western observer: to paraphrase Spivak, unlike with news, the subaltern can’t speak (talk back) through travel photography.<sup>281</sup>

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<sup>281</sup> At least not on the level of discourse – people can, of course, respond to an individual image-making situation either by compliance, approval or disapproval, most often expressed through gestures, facial expression and gaze.

### 7.2.2 Visualising the Strojan Affair: Concluding Remarks

In many ways, media coverage of the Strojan affair was markedly different to previous (routine) reporting of Roma-related topics. Critical analysis of the Slovene media has repeatedly shown that, throughout the 1990s, the media routinely contributed to the promotion of a rhetoric of nationalism and intolerance, directed against underprivileged groups and social minorities, ranging from people from former Yugoslavia or Bosnian refugees to homosexuals, illegal immigrants and Roma (see overview of studies in Mihelj 2005). Roma, in particular, have been continually targeted by negative reporting, or, to put it more precisely, by being reported only in connection with negative, crime-related news. Thus, studies conclude, Roma were constructed as a “social problem”, endangering “our” social or economic order through criminality, violence, laziness and the exploitation of social benefits (e.g. Erjavec et al. 2000). Frequently, the roots of the “Roma problem” were traced to differences in culture or mentality. Such media reports resonated with a deep-seated view of the negative status of Roma in folk culture.<sup>282</sup> In general, the image of Roma as the Other (or as a constitutive outside) is generally constructed through a double-sided discourse of negative (crime, dirtiness, laziness) and positive (sensual, alluring, magic) fantasies. However, as with Orientalism, the Slovene pool of images, concepts and stereotypes focuses mostly on the negative (male) half of the pool,<sup>283</sup> ignoring the sensual side normally embodied in the seductive female, such as Georges Bizet’s *Carmen*.<sup>284</sup>

Media coverage of the Strojan affair significantly differed from previous salient outbursts of anti-Roma sentiment, like the 1997 incident in the village of Maline (see Erjavec et al. 2000). Although the event itself differed from previous cases in terms of salience, duration and the level of involvement of state institutions, the major shift was initiated by the media themselves, as they consciously abandoned the role of information providers for that of active promoters of tolerance, and took on a mission of social pedagogy, extending its watchdog

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<sup>282</sup> A few examples should suffice to illustrate the case. “Gipsy” is a frequently used swearword, and when used as adjective, has strong negative connotations (untidy, disorderly etc.). In popular phrases and sayings, for example, Roma are used to scare children (“If you don’t behave, we’ll give you to the Gypsies”) and in folk songs (until recently sung frequently in kindergartens and still appearing in children’s song books), they steal children (Let’s flee, let’s run, Gypsies are coming, in brown sacks they are carrying children.”).

<sup>283</sup> The only indisputably positive mainstream image (stereotype) of Roma is that of a musician. Next in line is the fortune-teller.

<sup>284</sup> E.g. Halgato (1994, dir. Andrej Mlakar), the only film explicitly addressing the Roma thematic in post-1991 film production, focuses on the male protagonist, with sensual female characters being Slovene, not Roma women.



function over the (intolerant) public.<sup>285</sup> In the Strojan case, this meant that the media for the most part did not report events in terms of the traditional Us (Slovenes) vs. Them (Roma) binary, in which they would have traditionally openly sided with the Slovene side,<sup>286</sup> but shifted to Them (intolerant Slovenes) vs. Them (Roma) reporting, through which the media claimed privileged status of not being only informers but also educators of the public and arbiters<sup>287</sup> of events. One of the consequences of this was the emergence of Roma as concrete individuals. Instead of abstract collectivity, the Strojans emerged as a concrete family with several representatives that were given voice, name and face (i.e. visual coverage). As Vidmar Horvat (2008) emphasises, however, this shift came at a cost.<sup>288</sup> It soon became obvious that the more positive coverage of Roma was not related to the dominant group's increased tolerance or the EU's political agenda (intercultural dialogue, respect for the rights of minorities) but to the possibility of presenting the Strojans within the established frames and privileged discursive elements of Slovene national identity.<sup>289</sup> Almost from the very beginning, textual and particularly visual coverage focused on a non-masculine image of the family – on women and children – and, although Mirko Strojan was officially chief of the family, media attention – particularly visual coverage – gradually shifted to his mother Elka. The emergence of “Mamma Jelka” as a key member of the family brought to the fore the image of the suffering mother, struggling with the hardships of life in order to secure the wellbeing of her (extended) household. Published interviews and background articles delineated a family chronology of gradual decay, triggered by the sudden death of Elka's husband Miha, which brought an end to a golden age of normal coexistence between the Strojans and the local community.<sup>290</sup> Within this narrative, Elka Strojan becomes “mamma Jelka”, the acting head of a fatherless family, striving to secure her family's future and, due to a lack of male authority, trying but failing to keep her sons out of trouble. Vidmar Horvat notes that “virtually overnight, [Elka Strojan] was transformed from a paradigmatic Gypsy woman, prone to

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<sup>285</sup> This social pedagogy role was first adopted by the Slovene media in 2001, during the public's xenophobic reaction to illegal immigrants and asylum-seekers (see Mihelj 2005 for analysis of media reporting).

<sup>286</sup> Although media reports were significantly less anti-Roma than before, reporters and commentators still frequently evoked the cultural difference frame and, as Vidmar Horvat notes, “the burden of ‘intercultural dialogue’, together with the responsibility of its failure, was [at least in the initial stage or reporting] placed on the shoulders of the disadvantaged minority. Notions of socialisation and integration were invoked but it was clear that both tasks were projected onto the Roma.” (2008, 6; my insertion)

<sup>287</sup> In the case of the Strojan family, commercial television POP TV even acted as a formal mediator. A general agreement between the government and the Strojans' legal representative was reached on TV talk show *Trenje*.

<sup>288</sup> “The condition of the acceptance was predicated upon the mother's [Elka Strojan's] ability to let go of her past identity and come closer visually to become more “like us”.” (Vidmar Horvat 2008, 14).

<sup>289</sup> From the outset, an alternative and more traditional framing of the Strojans as a “social problem” would also be possible – the large family and the emphasis on their many children could have been used to evoke the overpopulation, unmodernity and social benefits fraud frame.

<sup>290</sup> Interestingly enough, this “golden age” interpretation was promoted by the Strojans and the Ambrusians.

stealing, lying and cheating, into the embodiment of the female authority, with the capacity to competently run the fatherless family and the power to negotiate with the state” (2008, 13). Although she notes that “mamma Jelka” came to stand for “a good mother, a national subject of moral worth and reproducer of values that have been fading away” (Ibid., 10), she stops short of explicitly connecting “mamma Jelka” with a canonised national icon of the struggling mother, sanctified into national mythology by one of Slovenia’s greatest writers, Ivan Cankar (1876-1918). Far from being confined to canonised literature (which implies institutionalisation through primary and secondary school education), the icon of the struggling, suffering and self-sacrificing mother appears again and again in popular folk songs, documentary photography and feature films. Thus one of the remarkable common traits of Slovene post-independence film production is that main characters often come from a fatherless family: in well over a third of films produced between 1991 and 2001, the main character psychological profile is, regardless of his/her sex, decisively shaped by the figure of the absent father (Tomanić 2002). The syndrome of the absent father is, as Žižek (1987) convincingly argues, one of the central features of Slovene national identity construction. Žižek claims that Slovenes failed to completely internalise the imperative of universal law, as a result of an early loss of political and religious sovereignty to Franks and Christianity in the 8<sup>th</sup> century. The refusal to accept foreign domination resulted in a split between private (Slovene, particular, “home”) and public (foreign, universal). “Thus, in spite of external subordination to the Law, “home” maintained the position of the subject.” (Žižek 1987, 36) When the defining categories of “Slovenhood” were constructed during the last two decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the first two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup>, the unresolved relation was solved by replacing the paternal Ego Ideal with the maternal . Thus, claims Žižek, Mother, the very symbol of “home” and Slovenian particularity, substituted the position of Ego Ideal previously occupied by the non-internalised figure of (foreign) Father (Ibid., 39). Socialisation patterns based on the maternal Ego Ideal (lacking traditional paternal authority) lead to an inability to form and take independent, firm stands and viewpoints based on an internal moral imperative,<sup>291</sup> which is clearly seen in media coverage of the Strojjan affair. It is not her sons but “mamma Jelka” who is making the decisive moves (e.g. returning to Ambrus), who is the toughest negotiator and to whom the family’s official head and other family members turn for advice and opinion. Photographic representations tend to confirm this stand – not only is “mamma Jelka” the central figure in photographs where several family members are depicted,

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<sup>291</sup> See e.g. Godina and Hlebec 1996, 132.

she is also the active part of the family. While her sons sit around helplessly, she is preparing food, looking after children etc. Even though Elka is described as a fragile (and ill) old lady, she is not depicted as helpless<sup>292</sup> or fatalistic in spite of the hardships she is facing. However, her status as iconic mother and the accompanying social prestige comes, as already noted above, at the expense of her Roma-ness.

Figure 7.28 Elka Strojan between icon, symbol and metonymy (Delo)



Figure 7.29 Elka Strojan between icon, symbol and metonymy (Dnevnik)



<sup>292</sup> With exception of photographs taken after family house was torn down just before Christmas.



Figure 7.30 Elka Strojan between icon, symbol and metonymy (Mag)



Figure 7.31 Elka Strojan between icon, symbol and metonymy (Mladina)



The shift from negative male to positive female domain representation of the Strojans is centrally linked to the idea of home, symbolised either by physical home (house) or family fireplace (open fire) which “mamma Jelka” is constantly depicted tending to, and the necessary (partial) renunciation of Roma-ness is first of all tied to the idea of home. While Roma are generally described as nomadic, the Strojans emerge as sedentary. They own the land from which they were driven out and have never travelled around the country (thus “mamma Jelka” has never been as far as Postojna, the location of their temporary resettlement). Furthermore, they want a permanent solution to their re-settlement (to become owners of the land and house). These claims are also matched visually, not only through location shots of the Strojans’ settlement but also from a number of photographs that depict them inside their more or less permanent homes. Visual construction of anti-Roma protesters is also significant in supporting the family frame and “mamma Jelka” frame as they are – in the vast majority of cases – male or male-dominated groups. Thus the mass of male protesters (willing to use force to achieve their goal) stand in contrast to the imagery of family life, children and the somewhat fragile old lady. As do the surrogate fathers of state institutions, such as government ministers and the negotiation team, Roma councillors, or President Drnovšek as the metaphorical father of the nation. In short, we are dealing with a nationalisation of masculinity: while Roma are confined to the (feminised) sphere of domesticity and family, masculinity and hence social power remains firmly in the hands of the dominant population – both in its good (tolerant) and bad (aggressive) emanations. As the literature on national identity points out, nation and national identity are essentially masculine fantasies whose social power resides in their potential to trump other forms of collective identifications.

**Figure 7.32 Roma as sedentary (Mladina, Delo)**



Photographs of Strojans’ link them with the concept of home. Unlike “standard” Roma-related imagery (right) that depicts activities in the public space, images related to Strojans’ affair frequently take the reader into the private domain.

**Figure 7.33 Home as common fireplace (Mag, Dnevnik)**



Open fire as a centre of family life and a link to its central figure, Mama Jelka.

In short, reporting on the Strojjan affair represented a significant shift in media treatment of Roma, particularly in the register of visual reporting. Although some texts, particularly editorials and opinion pieces, still spoke of the unbridgeable differences between the dominant population and Roma, tracing the Otherness into culture rather than nature, visual coverage tended to promote a more sympathetic take on the matter – even in the case of Mag, where the dominant discourse was unsupportive of Roma. Their (more positive) inclusion in the visual register came at a price, however – the Roma were made visible in the context and under conditions of national identity and its privileged discursive elements. The Internal Other's inclusion in the public discourse was achieved at the expense of the interpretation of its social status and power through *nationalised masculinity*. As I will argue in the closing chapter of this thesis, press photography acts as a delineator of national boundary primarily through the evaluative differentiating of internal and external Others based on nationalisation of masculinity understood as social power – and interlinked concepts of social progress, development and rationality.

## 8 CONCLUSION: DAILY FLAGGING OF A NATION, VISUAL SYMBOLISM AND IMAGINED GEOGRAPHIES OF SLOVENE PRESS PHOTOGRAPHY

*It follows from this that the world looks different to different people, depending not on their personal interests, but also on the map that is drawn for them by the writers, editors and publishers of the papers they read. Perhaps the notion of a map is too confining [...] it is, more properly, an atlas of places, personages, situations and events; and to extent that men have for coping with the day's ration of problems, it is an atlas of possibilities, alternatives, choices.* Bernard Cohen, The Press and Foreign Policy

*In the increasingly stylized press, concerned for its own survival, fearful of readers' sensibilities, competing with "reality" television and surrounded by never-ending stream of well-groomed advertising, the raw, visceral, upsetting photographs are often refused, and partly as a result, never made.* Fred Ritchin, After photography

*Public photography has remained the child of hopes of positivism. Orphaned – because these hopes are now dead – it has been adopted by the opportunism of corporate capitalism.* John Berger, Another way of telling

This thesis is based on the premise that "the concepts we live by" fundamentally structure what we perceive and understand as well as how we relate to social reality, and that images are one of the central, though often overlooked mechanisms for the structuring of social perception, at the level of both individuals and groups. By defining our social realities, the "images we live by" affect not only the ways in which we perceive, think and act, but also their absences, the subjects and relations that are not or cannot be perceived, imagined and assessed.

Communication science has from its very beginnings emphasised the fact that (mass) communication is not confined solely to the acts of dissemination of information necessary for informed discussions among citizens on matters of public concern, or for their entertainment, but that the media act as powerful mechanisms of social integration, socialisation and (de)mobilisation for collective action. The analysis presented above suggested that press photography plays a vital role in cultivating a sense of national and cultural belonging through the everyday practice of news reporting. As the cases of NATO/EU pre-referendum debates clearly indicate, both word- and image-based reporting routinely draw on a pool of institutionalised and internalised markers (privileged discursive elements) of collective identity in order to make events meaningful to its audience in the form of news. This is necessarily an interpretative process in which professional values either conjugate or conflict with internalised concepts of collective belonging.

Throughout this thesis, news reports have been treated as significant expressions of the politics of belonging, and the analysis has addressed both direct and indirect expressions of this politics of belonging. National identity was shown to structure visual reporting of both domestic and international events, although the practice of visual "flagging of a nation" (Billig 1995) has proved to be mostly indirect, particularly when compared to the verbal register of news reporting to which images were often made subservient. Moreover, national identity and its "civilisation alliances" were shown to be the underlying grid that structures the selection and presentation of images beyond the hard news sections of the publications, such as sections on travel and tourism, curiosities, food, culture, technology, advertising or sports.

What the analysed cases revealed was the existence of a pattern of differentiativational visualisation that was fairly independent of the origin and professional status of the image-maker or the context of publication in which it appeared. Put differently, the results point to the existence of an underlying structural imbalance of visual representation of individuals and societies that do not belong to what Hartley (1992) has termed "Wedom" or what, following Said (1979/1994), would be defined as "our" part of *imagined geographies*. These findings are not specific to the cases analysed. They are consistent with my previous research on visual reporting in Slovene dailies (Tomanić Trivundža 2005a, 2006), which was conducted with a different methodology (quantitative content analysis, supplemented by a critical reading of selected cases), included a more longitudinal sample and in one of the cases used a comparative perspective (comparing news coverage in 1980 with that of 2004).



In what follows, I shall try to offer a systematic overview of techniques employed in routine photographic flagging of nation and consequent delineation of its boundaries through emergent *imagined geographies*. In the second part of the chapter, the role of national identity in structuring visual news reporting will be assessed within the broader debates and competing models of interpretation of structural patterns that underlie (international) news reporting. In the concluding section, the codes and conventions of photojournalism and Slovene press photography (see Figure 8.1-8.11below) will be readdressed and contextualised within the ongoing discussions on the perceived crisis of the medium.

**Figure 8.1 Ideal vs. routine (Dnevnik, Delo, Mladina)**



The bulk of the published images (below) significantly differ from professional ideal of capturing the decisive moment, of providing spontaneous depictions of unfolding events etc. Most of the published images are in fact small identification photographs of people directly related to the article (usually giving statements) and protocol news, often staged or posed photo opportunities. Frequently, the most newsworthy aspect of an event (death) remains unreported/unvisualised (cf. Zelizer 2005).

Figure 8.2 News if image/image if news (Mladina, Delo)



Although it is frequently claimed that reporting of an event is conditioned by existence of suitable images, in practice the popular equation is often reversed: if an event is seen as important, media will use or create visuals (graphic or computer illustrations, even comic book strips) in order to secure its greater public recognition. Thus publications resort to publishing frame grabs (TV stills - left), illustrations (right), poor quality photographs with poor information value (middle) or even photographs taken by non-professionals (bottom middle).

Figure 8.3 Single image news in daily press (Dnevnik)



Daily press only infrequently departs the one-image-per-news-item norm. If more than one image is used, the images generally depict two different aspects of the same event, but are not linked into cause and effect chain. Thus example the agony of the child on the bottom right photograph is not directly caused by soldier depicted in the adjoining photograph.



Figure 8.4 Use of photographs as proofs (Dnevnik, Delo, Mladina)



Although ultimately, the proof-value of photographs is always text-dependent, certain codes and conventions promote evidentiary nature of the image through the visual register. This can be achieved either through emphasising transparency (far right bottom) or by calling attention to the image as a document (far left bottom – official records; left – candid telephoto lens shots; far right top – posing). Occasionally, using photographs as proof requires intervention into the image (far left top).

Figure 8.5 Transgressing the proof value – symbolism (Delo, Dnevnik)



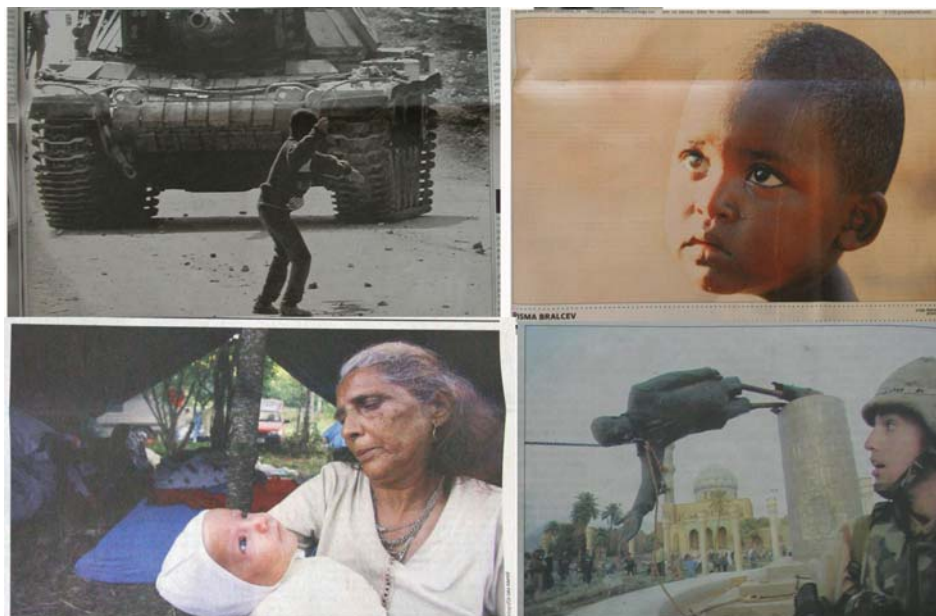
In order to capture the essence of a story/event in a single image, press photography often resorts to more or less open forms of symbolism. In particular, the medium depends strongly on the use of hand gestures and facial expressions of main subjects to convey the status of the speaker or to reinforce the tone of the article.

**Figure 8.6 Transgressing the proof value – interpretative uses (Dnevnik, Delo, Mladina)**



Photographs, particularly portraits of political actors, are often used interpretatively. Images are selected in a way that they support the dominant tone of the article and therefore enhance the message – e.g. “commissioner is worried” (top left), “Condoleezza Rice is surprised by European stand” (bottom left) etc. A more interpretative use can depict a political actor in contrast to the textual account – e.g. accusing him/her of a misdeed and depicting him/her as if ignoring or ridiculing the accusation (e.g. top far right). Additionally, interpretative uses of images can derive from the context into which a certain image is put (top right), from text present in the image (left) or from juxtaposition of elements within a frame, often involving text (e.g. election poster and sheep in right bottom image).

**Figure 8.7 Transgressing the proof value – visual symbols (Delo, Dnevnik)**



While photojournalism postulates transparency and proof-value of photography, it routinely resorts to symbolism and exploits its narrative potential in order to condense the story/event into a single and evocative image. Most great press photographs are symbolic to the extent that they abstract and dehistorise the depicted event into the commonly recognisable and shared symbolic domain (cf. Griffin 1999).



**Figure 8.8 Transgressing the proof value – symbols as visual shorthand/framing device (Dnevnik, Delo)**



Images of children are often used as metaphorical devices. Used to symbolise victimhood (left), innocence (middle), immorality (right) or proneness to violence (figure 8.6, middle), their use in communicating political news is limited to countries beyond “our” imagined geography.

**Figure 8.9 Transgressing the proof value – stereotypes as visual shorthand/framing device (Delo)**



Visual stereotypes serve as potent framing devices, drawing reader’s attention to the news item and imposing a pre-existing interpretation or judgement to the reported event. Occasionally, visual stereotypes are not matched by the textual part of articles.

**Figure 8.10 Transgressing the codes of objectivity (Delo, Dnevnik)**



In practice, (Slovene) photojournalism often departs from what was termed “codes of objectivity”. Most frequent uses that call attention to the image as an image and hence depart from transparency paradigm are: selective focus (far left), “meta pictures” that include other news makers (top left), photomontage (bottom left), obviously posed images (right) and cut-outs (far right) (cf. Schwartz 1992).

Figure 8.11 Transgressing the proof value – photomontage (Mag, Mladina)



Photomontage is frequently used (especially by weekly press) to supply editorial illustration. Their use does not seem to undermine audience's trust in the medium or provoke criticism. From the perspective of (Slovene) media use, the ethical debates presented in Chapter 3 appear highly US-centric and to a large extent overly puritan, at least as far as weekly press is concerned.

Figure 8.12 Transgressing the proof value – use of stock images (Dnevnik, Mag)



Stock images are occasionally used in selected thematic sections of publications. Generally, they stand in sharp contrast to other types of press photographs, thus drawing attention to their “artificiality”. Nevertheless, they can be potent framing devices, instilling evaluative judgements to textual parts of the articles.



Figure 8.13 Transgressing the proof value – openly symbolic images and uses (Dnevnik)



Uses of openly symbolic images or image layout/juxtaposition in daily news reporting are aberration from the norm. Image on the left was captioned “Janša [right] does not want Drobnič [left] on his team anymore”. Layout on the right is visualisation of the relationship between the two political actors – prime minister is “walking away”/“leaving behind”/“turning his back” to one of his ministers during the Strojani affair.

## 8.1 National identity and differentiatonal portrayal in news images

The analysed cases of visual coverage of the NATO/EU pre-referendum debates and the Strojjan affair indicated both the salience and the limitations of national identity in structuring news reporting through the visual framing of news. To sum up, *direct* and explicit visual references to privileged discursive elements of national identity were somewhat infrequent in the coverage of hard news. On the other hand, they were heavily used by the non-news sections of publications, particularly landscape photography, which drew on the privileged discursive element of rural landscape (particularly that of alpine Slovenia) and Catholicism. To a certain extent, references to particular recognisable symbols of nation and national identity (e.g. volunteer fire brigades) were used in reporting events connected to the Strojjan affair (e.g. in Mladina), but such depictions were infrequent in hard news coverage. They were, however, much more salient in photographs that served as illustrations to accompany opinion articles in the Saturday supplements of the two dailies, such as Delo's image of soldiers resting against a hayrack or rural landscapes with churches on hilltops.

Apart from these, two potent ways of direct referencing of national identity frames in connection with press photographs were detected: (1) *the use of archive photographs related to canonical historical events*, and (2) *the use of interpretative captions*. The use of archive images, mostly from the period of the so-called *Slovene spring* and the 1991 *Ten-day war of independence*, proved to be a highly potent framing device, through which present events or the actions of political actors could be interpreted and judged. These visual references to canonical events, consisting mostly of a handful of repeatedly used black-and-white images (e.g. the arrest of Janez Janša, demonstrations in the Zvezda park in support of "četverica", the raising of the flag during the independence ceremony, advancing Yugoslav National Army tanks) served first and foremost to situate events or the actions of individuals in the nation's historical narrative, framing their interpretation in terms of the highest moral imperative – a nation's independence. In a nationalist paraphrase of moral imperative, all deeds that do not/did not conform to the nation's teleological goal of forming an independent, sovereign nation-state are deemed morally corrupt and potentially dangerous to the community. Archive images of the nation's canonical events were used predominantly by Mag, where they would appear in two formats – either as independent illustrations inferring interpretation to the text,



or they were presented in juxtaposition with photographs of contemporary events which made the visual (evaluative) statement very explicit. Mag also used archive photographs of Tito as part of juxtapositions intended to denigrate the person or event.<sup>293</sup> Interpretative captioning, on the other hand, served to "nationalise" images that bore no explicit visual connection to the markers of national identity. Text, either in the form of image captions or headlines, served to anchor the "proper" reading of the image in reference to the nation or its history. Such explicitly interpretative captioning was also mostly used in Mag, and to a lesser extent in Mladina, drawing on popular catchphrases and references to popular culture or literature.

**Figure 8.14 Direct referencing of national identity frames I (Mag)**



Use of archive images to supply temporal depth and evaluative criteria to contemporary events through juxtaposition of images.

**Figure 8.15 Direct referencing of national identity frames II (Mag)**



Use of archive images to supply temporal depth to contemporary events or topics.

<sup>293</sup> In photographs that linked Saddam Hussein to Tito, the implied connection was reversed in that Tito's cooperation with the internationally acclaimed icon of dictatorship was made to prove Tito's dictatorial nature.

Figure 8.16 Direct referencing of national identity frames III (Mag)



Interpretative captioning of neutral photographs. (Janez Janša on referendum: it is as important as 1991).

Apart from such direct visual referencing of selective privileged discursive elements of national identity, published news photographs emerged as influential *indirect* delineators of national identity, particularly through international news reports. The role of press photography in what Billig (1995, 8) has described as the daily "flagging" of a nation – the practice of routine and continual reminding of nationhood – is by no means limited to representations of domestic events. International news reports potently contribute to the project of Barthian articulation of a nation's boundary, precisely by outlining what Said (1979/1994) has termed *imagined geographies*. *Imagined* or *imaginative geographies* are discursively constructed perceptions of space which function both as building blocks of identity and as means of and justifications for symbolic, economic or political control and the subordination of certain territories and areas. For Said, space and subjectivity are mutually constitutive and "imaginative geography and history help the mind to intensify its own sense of itself by dramatizing the distance and difference between what is close to it and what is far away" (1995, 55). Imagined geographies are constructed within various discursive formations and social institutions, meeting "the need for citizens of the nation to place themselves imaginatively within a 'known' territory, and to possess a 'geographic common sense' of belonging" (Radcliffe 1996). In the process in which imagined geographies overlay a more tangible geography, international news can serve to conflate the notions of geographical distance with that of social distance (May 1996, 62). Press photographs thus come to act as vehicles for the imaging of space and dramatization of physical and social distance among nations and nation-states.

The analysis has shown that there are at least four aspects in which press photographs can be understood to be functioning as boundary articulation mechanisms of imagined geographies. These are: (1) underrepresentation of culturally different (Other) nations, states and their representatives; (2) coverage of different types of events (negative as opposed to routine news); (3) a different mode of depiction of same topics/actors (e.g. representations of politicians); (4) coverage according to preconceived (evaluative) judgements and stereotypes.

### **8.1.1 Selection of visual news**

The role of press photographs as delineators of group belonging comes first and foremost from the editorial decisions of visualising or not visualising a particular event. Photography's power of boundary maintenance is first and foremost the power of gatekeeping, of choosing which areas of imagined geography will be visualised and which not. Countries that are culturally, politically or economically closer to imagined community are also those that are more frequently visualised. As a general rule, news coverage of the "Theydom" (Hartley 1992) increases only if the Other is perceived to be endangering the imagined community. In the case of Slovenia, the division between Wedom and Theydom is that of developed Western countries (mainly Europe and US) against the developing world or what were formerly called the Second and Third Worlds. The 2006 study, for example, showed that in 36-day random sample from 2004 only 7 percent of published photographs in international news sections in Delo came from Africa and 1 percent from South and Central America (Tomanić Trivundža 2006). The follow-up study of Delo's news reporting that extended the sample to 72 days over the period of three years<sup>294</sup> yielded similar results (5 percent of published photographs came from Africa and 2,3 percent from Central and South America, while the overall share of visualised news from developing countries amounted to less than 20 percent). While the international news articles during the reporting of the EU/NATO referendum and the Strojjan affair were not quantified, they seem to be complying with the overall pattern of underrepresentation of the Other. The issue of underrepresentation is particularly noticeable in the two weekly magazines that generally publish a fairly limited number of photographs of international events, focusing mostly on those of elite Western nations.

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<sup>294</sup> The sample consisted of a six-day composite week for each of the 12 months from 2004, 2005 and 2006. The sample consisted of 1,034 international news items, 336 of which included photographs.

### 8.1.2 Type of events

The second mechanism of delineating a boundary between “Wedom” and “Theydom” concerns the type of events reported in the news. Since the late 1960s, studies have been showing a pattern of differential reporting of (Western) media – of reducing the representation of developing countries to negative news topics such as wars, coup d'états, famine, political repression and natural disasters. Critiques of such news coverage culminated with the debates on the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) within UNESCO during the late 1970s and the early 1980s (see MacBride et al. 1980/1984). Although the issue has lost its salience in the changing ideological climate of the post-Cold war era, the objectionable patterns of news reporting continue to this day.

The pattern of negative coverage of developing countries (perceived as Slovene Other) is discernible in the two analysed cases and can be taken as the other side of the tendency of underrepresentation of the Other. In the absence of routine reporting from the countries or regions that do not figure centrally in Slovenia's imagined geography, it appears that the events are more likely to be reported and visualised if they fall into the category of so-called "negative" news.<sup>295</sup> The 2006 study and its follow-up further confirm this observation: when evaluated against geographic distribution of news items, almost half of the published photographs from developing countries depicted "negative" news topics, such as wars, crime and terrorism, while countries in the developed West were presented mainly through portraits of their elected officials.

The end result of this practice is a fairly steady flow of images of violence and man-made or natural destruction from certain parts of the globe. The main problem is that such negative coverage is not balanced by more neutral or positive depictions of these regions. In addition to the news section, adjoining sections such as tourism or curiosities can serve as potent delineators of social distance. Sections such as curiosities are particularly informative of boundary maintenance through the (non-)selection of news, as they appeal to the sense of extraordinariness, excess, exoticism, "unusual" practices etc. through which they reaffirm (Western) normality. Such sections in *Delo* and *Mag* tend to minimise the number of "curiosities" from the West, imbuing certain areas of imagined geography with qualifiers of

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<sup>295</sup> Most studies of the nature of news reports follows the following typology. Positive topics: official politics, meetings, negotiations etc.; economic matters; peacetime military and defence; development, international aid, social service; culture, science and religion. Negative topics include: wars, military coups, terrorism etc.; crime, legal issues; and famine, poverty, natural disasters.



strangeness, exoticism, magic and superstition. Wedom thus emerges as a site of normalness. Moreover, thematic sections such as cars or technology further contribute to the formation of national boundary along the lines of progress(ivism). Even sections such as those featuring nudes that were prominent in Mag in 2003 contained only images of "our" girls, white Western Europeans, extending civilisational belonging to concepts of beauty and inscribing them onto (female) bodies.

Figure 8.17 Sections such as curiosities as indicators of imagined geography (Mag)



News coverage of some areas is confined solely or mostly to "curiosities" sections.

Figure 8.18 Indirect delineation of »our« world (Mag)



Status objects and female bodies as indicators of "our" world. Frequently, the amount given to these sections surpasses the one given to hard news.

### 8.1.3 Portrayal of same topics/social actors

The third way in which international news photographs were routinely used as a boundary-demarcating mechanism by the four publications analysed was differentiated portrayal of the same topics or political actors. Apart from the patterned absence of developing nations from news coverage and their reduction to a fairly standardised cast of negative events and characters, there exists another – and, as I will argue – even more influential structural imbalance in visual news coverage that has to do with a contrasting mode of depiction of the same topics or type of social actors.

Photographs of politicians are a particularly illustrative case in this regard. They make up the largest group of published news photographs and appear mostly in the form of portraits, protocol photographs such as handshakes or meetings, and images taken during their public addresses, such as speaking in parliament or during press conferences. Used for their metonymic function, these photographs primarily serve to personalise international politics and attribute legitimacy and visual recognition to political actors. This legitimacy, however, is not a universal good. Western political leaders appear to be more legitimate than their developing world counterparts. The politicians that come from the countries within Slovenia's imagined geography are generally photographed from a low vertical angle that imbues the person depicted with power and a higher symbolic status. With politicians that come from the other side of the imagined boundary, photographs are more likely to be taken from a high vertical angle, connoting power over the person depicted. Furthermore, politicians from the other side of the identification boundary are less frequently framed (and cropped) in a way that would emphasise their individuality. Contrastingly, their colleagues from Theydom are often portrayed unindividually – framed to middle or far distance, these photographs include other social actors, such as fellow politicians, citizens or military personnel (cf. Tomanić Trivundža 2006).

The visual(isation of) difference between "our" and "their" world is further constructed through polarised depiction of political actors as either active or passive. Western political figures are more often portrayed in active mode (which is expressed through their hand gestures, facial expressions or posture), while politicians of developing countries tend to be depicted as passive. When photographed together, it is the representatives of developed countries that are depicted in active mode (talking, gesturing, leading the way etc.) and not vice versa. Additionally, the politicians from the "our" part of imagined geography are more

often depicted in informal and casual poses, such as laughing or chatting during coffee breaks instead of attending formal meetings, which makes them appear more approachable. On the level of presentation, photographs of political actors from "Theydom" are less prominently displayed in terms of size as well as placing within a publication or a given page. The photograph's placement and size are important attributes of the perceived importance of depicted subjects – in the politicised economy of attention-securing, both relative (compared to other photographs on a page) and absolute size (share of the whole page) are indicators of awarded symbolic status and importance (cf. Tomanić Trivundža 2006). This structural pattern of differentiated depiction of representatives of institutionalised politics, particularly in relation to the expression of perceived social power and the active/passive divide, seems to promote and reify the problematic valuation of countries and nations on the scale of progress and power that underpinned and justified European colonial and imperialist expansion during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

**Figure 8.19 Differential portrayal of political actors I (Delo, Dnevnik, Mag)**



"Our" politicians are routinely depicted as active, as individuals and in a way that indicates their symbolic prestige (e.g. low angle). This type of images is exceptional when it comes to politicians from "their" side of imagined geography (as e.g. top and bottom right images).



In addition, political actors from culturally, politically or economically distant countries not only appear less frequently or prominently but are also less likely to be depicted in person. Instead, they are represented through their mediated representations – TV screens, election posters, signs, puppets, murals or statues. Such indirect representations contribute to their dehumanisation and symbolic subjugation, to their Othering, indicating a lower level of social and symbolic status. Unlike their Western counterparts, they are not depicted embodying the nation or state (visual metonymies). On the one hand, the focus on their symbolic representations implies a sort of detachment (even discrepancy) between the "public image" of a politician and his/her "real self". On the other, it can question the legitimacy of these politicians: a president being shown addressing citizens on a flickering TV screen in a coffeehouse (a typical image accompanying articles on the Middle East), places that politician into the negatively perceived image of a propagandist. Unlike the Western politicians who are depicted as if they are addressing their citizens directly, developing world politicians address their citizens indirectly – they are seen addressing the people through the media. The reactions of the addressees (e.g. inattentive listening) and mise-en-scène (e.g. empty coffeehouse) can add a further layer of interpretation to the image. Indirect representations of political actors from within "Wedom" are uncommon even for the most recognisable political figures in the West.

**Figure 8.20 Differential portrayal of political actors II (Delo, Dnevnik)**



Symbolic power of political actors as the power to gesticulate.



Figure 8.21 Differential portrayal of political actors III (Delo, Dnevnik, Mladina)



Differential portrayal “our” politicians are depicted in person, “their” through representations, such as election posters. Hierarchy of status is also emphasised through layout (“our” politicians are always positioned above “their”).

Figure 8.22 Differential portrayal of political actors IV (Delo, Dnevnik)



“Politicians from the other side of the boundary of imagined geography are by rule depicted through representations, such as posters, murals etc. rather than in person.



Often, the delineation of the boundary of imagined geographies works through a differential portrayal of the same type of event. An exemplary case in point are depictions of the formalised political process, such as elections. The pattern is fairly straightforward: for elections in the developed West, (possible) winners or the two main contestants are always depicted in person; if an article contains the cliché ballot-box photograph, it always shows one of the main protagonists casting a vote. Elections in countries from the other side of the imagined boundary of "Wedom" are, on the other hand, generally not visualised through the portrayal of political candidates but through more or less unrelated photographs of everyday life and street scenes. Only the 'well-established dictators' such as North Korea's Kim Jong-il or Libya's Muammar al-Gaddafi are routinely personalised in a manner similar to Western politicians with their portraits regularly accompanying related textual news. In the case of the ballot-box photograph, the vote is cast by an anonymous citizen, most often an old lady.<sup>296</sup> Similar cases were found in my previous studies (Tomanić Trivundža 2005a, 2006), where, for example, articles on elections in India were illustrated by photographs of queuing voters, soldiers guarding ballot-boxes signifying the potential of/for violence, and political rallies without political leaders, thus reducing Indian politics to a faceless and nameless mass. Photographs of everyday life and street scenes that stand in for the political process are equally evaluative. For example, Delo published an article on elections in Iraq with a photograph depicting a man cooking stew on a street corner, evoking the familiar phrase 'election stew' and thereby suggesting a negative interpretation of the pre-election campaigns. A similar valuation was discernible in a news item on a session of the Palestinian parliament which was not depicted in session but during the prayer before the start of the session. Later, a portrait of Yasser Arafat was published from the same sequence of events, depicting him sitting hunched, on the ground, without any shoes, connoting his powerlessness and at the same time conveying his Otherness. Another telling example are war crime tribunals: while the Hague war crime tribunal was routinely depicted through photographs of hearings, courtrooms or identification portraits of the accused that testify to their personal accountability and the eventual triumph of justice, the (archive) photograph that accompanied the news on the start of the UN war crimes trial in Sierra Leone evokes a set of entirely different connotations, as it depicts armed African peacekeepers storming out of a UN helicopter (see Tomanić Trivundža 2006).

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<sup>296</sup> The eponymous image of an old (rural) lady casting a vote is intriguing in its own right and will demand further research as a possible index of the perceived otherness of the country in question.



Figure 8.25 Different portrayal of the same type of event - demonstrations (Delo, Dnevnik)



Demonstrations from “other” regions, especially from Muslim countries (bottom), tend to be depicted as angry and violent, or at least potentially violent, as opposed to calm and rational demonstrators from “our” part of imagined geographies (top). Moreover, protesters from “their” side of imagined geographies are often depicted as mass while visualisation of “our” protestors focuses on the symbols they are displaying.

**Figure 8.26 Equivalent portrayal of the same type of event - demonstrations (Delo, Dnevnik)**



Depictions that would present equivalent portrayal of the same type of event – e.g. irrationality of demonstrators or police brutality are infrequent as the two characteristics are frequently evoked as delineators of social boundaries (cf. Fishman and Marvin 2003).

**Figure 8.27 Different portrayal of the same type of event - ballot box photograph (Delo, Dnevnik, Mladina)**



Left – “our” world: concrete political actors. Right – “their” world: anonymous voters, frequently elderly people. While the use of elderly voters is not limited exclusively to “others”, it is far more frequent in case the reported country falls beyond “our” imagined geography.



**Figure 8.28 Differential portrayal of regions, landscape and people in tourism sections (Delo)**



Tourism is a potent indirect delineator of cultural belonging. It is particularly indicative of the perceived boundaries and definitions of normality if the images used are not produced by professional but by amateur photographers, as in the example above. Although tourism operates as an exchange of pre-conceived images, the legitimate image repertoire is marked by power/status divisions. Compare the different focus and framing of Scotland and Tunisia. If images of the former depict the “typical” (however constructed, artificial and performed it may be), the photographs of the latter focus on visualising the unusual, strange, and exotic (severed camel head, market scenes, potential threat to “our” women).

Visual stereotypisation could also be discerned in visual coverage of Muslims before the US-led invasion of Iraq, where their assigned irrationality was made a prominent feature of the photographs depicting anti-war and anti-US demonstrations. These photographs of angry shouting men emerged in sharp contrast to anti-war demonstrations in the West, where depiction focused on symbolic markers, such as placards held by demonstrators and recognisable buildings and monuments. The photographs of demonstrations from Muslim countries emphasised both the emotional charge and sheer mass of the protesters, the potentially dangerous other. Religion –as a part of both private and political life – was also prominently featured in news from the region when compared to news from the West.

For the countries of the "Theydom", images of politicians were frequently replaced with photographs of children. Images of distressed children can serve as a standard trope for evoking compassion and/or symbolising the plight of a given ethnic or religious group. But they also situate the group, nation or state in question in a hierarchical structure of power relations, depicting them as powerless, in need of help, but also of guidance, education and even disciplining. Contrasted to the idealised image of happy childhood in the developed countries of the West (generally absent from news coverage, appearing only sporadically in the Saturday supplements of the two dailies as illustrations to accompany opinion articles), photographs of children from the developing world tend to promote the idea of the immaturity and helplessness of the area in question, either by demanding help or justifying exploitation and subjugation. Either way, the developing world emerges as passive, at the receiving end of the active Western world.

#### **8.1.4 Unrelated and symbolic photographs**

In the most extreme cases, "other" areas of imagined global geography become "Othered" through stereotypical representations. Often, such photographs also have no direct connection to the reported event and deviate from the norm of accurate and timely reporting. The norm does not appear to automatically apply to all regions of the globe. Thus news from the developing world can be visualised through archive photographs, photographs from other regions and countries, unrelated photographs and depictions that resonate with image repertoires of stock and travel photography. The 2006 and 2008 studies offer two highly illustrative examples: on the back page of *Delo*, an article on an outbreak of bird flu in Nigeria

was illustrated with a photograph of an everyday market scene from Togo. On another day, the leading front page news item (top left corner) on a train exploding at a station in North Korea featured a large (quarter page) photograph of a small, unrelated railway station "somewhere in North Korea". Photographs from another register – i.e. travel photography – such as images of smoke-filled Middle Eastern coffeehouses, with an idle male clientele, frequently accompanied news and political analysis reports from the region at the time of the EU/NATO pre-referendum debates. During the Strojjan affair, articles on Cuba (Castro's illness and recovery) were illustrated with photographs reminiscent of travel guides, such as a shopkeeper leaning against the door of his shop, or an old man sitting in a dilapidated hallway in an old building. The latter image in particular is a highly potent example of referencing established "place-myths" (Shields 1991), drawing on popular imagery from old Havana. Place-myths are conglomerates of place images, of clichés, stereotypes and ideal types associated with a particular location that exist within a given society, particularly in the discourse of popular culture. As Crouch and Lübbren note, place-myths "need not necessarily be faithful to the actual realities of a site; they derive their durability, spread and impact from repetition and widespread dissemination" (2006, 5). Images may constitute crucial components of a particular place-myth by evoking a "particular association or category of place in a powerful synecdochal and iconic way" (Ibid.). Old Havana is one such visual rhetorical device that conjures up not only the notion of exoticism and the picturesque, but is at the same time highly (politically) evaluative. Simultaneously, it points to the economic failure of the communist regime and draws on nostalgia for the alleged golden age, on the bliss and style of the colonial era and pre-revolutionary Cuba. Place-myths are a highly intertextual class of visual representations that depend on their recognisability and circulation within culture. The images of Cuba discussed above resonate strongly with "ephemeral relics of advertising, commercial exchange or personal souvenir-making" (Crouch and Lübbren 2006, 5) or popular culture products such as the Buena Vista Social Club's album(s), concerts and the globally popular film *Buena Vista Social Club* (1999, dir. Wim Wenders).



Figure 8.29 Use of unrelated photographs with news items (Delo)



Framing news through images that are not directly related to the reported event, frequently drawing from the register of tourism and travel photography. Such use of images is uncharacteristic for “our” imagined geography.

Images drawing directly on established social clichés and ethnic stereotypes were also used. Thus a political analysis on Cuba was illustrated with a photograph of a worker sleeping in a wheelbarrow, thus not only valuating Cuba as undeveloped (manual, unskilled labour) but drawing on the proverbial laziness of the local population.

Figure 8.30 Use of unrelated photographs with opinionated articles (Delo)



Strongly evaluative images as illustrations of opinionated articles on Bulgaria (left) and Cuba (right).

Stereotypical images such as hooded Muslim militants, children with guns and armed female combatants, connoting immediate danger, religious fanaticism and the region's innate potential for violence, provided no information that would be specific to the reported events. Similarly, a stereotypical image of two starving Sudanese children in the desert was used to draw attention to the crisis – not through its informational but through its symbolic value. Such images obscure the specific aspects of individual news items by evoking an associative chain of preconceived notions, interpretations and attitudes. It is characteristic that this type of images tends to be more prominently displayed. For example, the aforementioned photograph of the Sudanese as passive victims (starving children in a refugee camp as a result of ongoing conflicts) was published more than four times larger than the photograph of active African subjects – Sudanese women demonstrating in Khartoum against the ongoing violence.

However, these photographs with little or no news value, or photographs that are not directly related to depicted events (everyday scenes from developing countries), are not merely illustrations, attention-grabbers and visual attributers of focus and importance – they serve as potent purveyors of pre-established ideas, stereotypes, visualising differentiation and social distance that establishes a hierarchy of regions or nations within the nationalised imagined geographies, legitimising the valuator's superior position towards less developed countries or countries that are at least perceived as such.

## 8.2 Visual (stereo)types, news frames the visual field

As I have already argued above, the media use photography primarily for their stenographic function. News reporting in itself is highly formulaic, depending on a limited array of topics or possible stories as well as a limited collection of narrative and expressive codes and conventions. The cases analysed exhibit a marked preference for the use of generic images – produced according to a fairly stable structural grid that enables the visualisation of the boundary of "Wedom" (as the domain of inclusion) and its opposition, "Theydom" (understood as imagined geography of exclusion and social distance). The problematic implications of such formulaic news reporting are that, as Hartley points out, the "language of news culture" becomes grounded in a "historical process which makes certain choices easy, other much more difficult" (1982, 8). And as this thesis has made it clear, this historicisation always bears the imprint of nation(al identity). The primary danger of the routine use of

(stereo)typical representations is that the (stereo)typed will tend to be presented in terms of the existing (stereo)typification and will not be selected as newsworthy unless they fit the (stereo)type (Hartley 1992, 116).

Typifications in general and stereotypes in particular operate as a sort of ritual in maintaining the boundaries of normality and legitimacy. They are, as Lippmann (1922) has already noted, a part of the apparatus of social control of the symbolic imaginary. Craig links the issue of such social control to the concept of the *visual field*, composed of "all manner of visual symbols and codes", ranging from facial expressions and gestures, to architecture, graphic design, photography, television and film (Craig 1999, 38). According to Craig, visual field marks all forms of collective identifications, from belonging to a civilisation, nation, ethnic or religious group, to identification with a particular community, city, subculture or family. Visual field is a pre-existing symbolic discourse whose parameters are set by powerful social elites. "Just as people are born into a society with language ready-made and approach the world through it, so, too, are they born into a ready-made visual field that they must learn" to read to be able to function in a society. Controlling the visual field is "a strong form of socialization" writes Craig, since it conditions reception of new images and their interpretations: "Even if viewers are critically predisposed, images must first be interpreted through the visual code of powerful elites [...] Conditioned by the familiarity of the visual field, viewers learn to interpret images at a glance without deep critical reflection, making initial interpretations powerful" (Ibid.). Structural differences in topics and modes of visualisation of news that were discussed above are problematic precisely because they contribute to the maintenance of a particular visual field, which is an expression of society's dominant ideologies. In other words, the visual field is always linked to an imagined geography which in turn is linked to national identification and is, consequently, dependent on a stock of familiar, readily available concepts, either in the form of types or stereotypes.

Several authors (e.g. Pickering 2001) claim that such recurring patterns of typification and stereotypification are essentially a denial of history which would by extension mean that symbolic or non-related photographs (see above) would serve to situate a specific event in a historically unspecific flow of events. The denial of history is in fact not singular but double. What such visualisations of news essentially do is that they abstract an event from its current, ongoing history only to contextualise it in a non-politicised version of history, in which the crisis in Sudan, for example, becomes framed as an issue of hunger and humanitarianism

rather than the direct and indirect consequence of colonialist and neo-colonialist economic and military policies. The national frame of reference is of paramount importance for this project as it defines the regions which are applicable for which type and extent of dehistoricisation. Visuals are an inherent part of these endeavours and, as shown above, operate not only through the depicted content but also through the kind of seeing they invite (Berger 1972). News photographs are particularly persuasive producers of specific visions of social difference (such as hierarchies of class, ethnicity, race or sexuality), since they appear to be transparent and can – on the level of message – only function affirmatively (Burgin 1989; Berger 1982; Solomon Godeau 1991; Worth 1975/1996).

## 8.3 Shifting imagined geography and alternative explanatory models to national identity

As the analysis has shown, routine articulations of collective belonging in press photographs work most clearly through delineation of external and internal Others, creating "Wedom" mostly as a side product of such Othering. Such daily flagging of the nation can most clearly be traced to articulation of imagined geographies in reporting international news, and the connection between imagined geographies and visual reporting of international news deserves some further attention. Can the structural patterns in the selection of visual news, type of reported events, differential portrayal of the same topics or social actors, and the use of unrelated, symbolic and stereotypical photographs be fully explained through the influence of national identity, or can the question of their "origin" be addressed from an alternative perspective? Put differently, can communication theory account for the observed pejorative visual treatment of the news from Slovene "Theydom" through some alternative explanatory models?

### 8.3.1 International news agencies and the flow of international news

One of the more prominent alternative explanatory models on the origin and nature of international news coverage has been the so-called *dependency* or *news flow paradigm*, which foregrounds the reasons behind structural differences in news coverage of developed and developing countries, particularly regarding the negative coverage of developing countries. The critique of the *information dependency/imbalance of news flows* in fact dates back to the first wave of decolonisation, but became particularly salient during the second wave, when it became the centre of the heated debates on the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) that fractured UNESCO in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The critique reached its zenith with the publishing of the report of the International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems (MacBride et al., 1980/1984), and waned with the loss of NWICO's political momentum following the US decision to withdraw from UNESCO in 1984. (see Tomanić Trivundža 2006) Although the end of the Cold War and the increased pace of economic globalisation have only accentuated the concerns raised by the NWICO

movement, the topic has not reached the scale, attention or the controversy of the news flow research between the mid-1970s and the mid-1980s.<sup>297</sup>

The NWICO debates explicitly tied the information imbalances and consequent negative coverage of the developing world with the activities of major international (Western) news agencies. As I have summarised it elsewhere (2006, 23), at the time “the ‘Big Four’ Western international news agencies, followed by the Soviet TASS, effectively dominated the international news scene. In the 1970s, nearly 80 percent of world news emanated from London, Paris and New York (MacBride et al 1984, 72; 114) and represented an even larger share of news sources de facto used by the media (e.g. Argumedo 1982; Schramm et al. 1978). This share remained relatively unchanged throughout the following decade (Alleyne and Wagner 1993; Rampal 1995)” and has not been seriously challenged by the rise of the Internet.<sup>298</sup> The limited and negative coverage of certain imagined geographies was seen as a consequence of the structural inequality of news distribution: the “distorted picture” was an outcome of the underlying economic logic according to which the reported content, type of coverage and importance attached to the event are primarily determined in/by the locations where the news is consumed and paid for and not in/by the locations where it is gathered (Chu 1985; Boyd-Barrett 1980). Thus, according to the *information dependency/imbalance of news flows* paradigm, the negative and (stereo)typical coverage of international news would be attributed to the dependency of the Slovene media on information provided by major news agencies.

Both of the major objections raised by the developing countries – the issue of *negative news coverage* of developing countries and *imbalanced traffic of media products* – were the subject of a variety of studies, ranging from “global” studies to smaller comparative projects and case

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<sup>297</sup> Some of the recent work addressing the international flow of news includes Boyd-Barrett and Rantanen 1998; Rampal 1995; Sreberny and Stevenson 1999; Wu 2003.

<sup>298</sup> In spite of (or perhaps precisely because of) the proliferation of local, regional and global media since the end of the Cold War, the overall structure of the “raw news” media market remained relatively intact. While there has been some increase in diversity regarding the number of players on the international market, major news agencies maintained their leading role in the hierarchy due to their accumulated market benefits. At the first tier, the number of major players has reduced and there has been increase of competition at the second tier (mainly by European national news agencies), while at the third tier “many of the national news agencies of the former Second and Third Worlds are in crisis, facing financial difficulties and diminished scale of operations, or in poorer countries, are on the verge of collapse.” (Tomanić Trivundža 2006, 25; see also Boyd-Barrett 1998, 2000, 2001 and Rantanen and Boyd-Barrett 1998, 15-16).

studies.<sup>299</sup> These studies confirmed that the dissemination of international news was in fact dominated by a small group of powerful players – the Western news agencies. These were shown to be influencing international news to a significant extent by (1) *influencing what news gets into the news flow*,<sup>300</sup> and through (2) *setting the standard of content and form/presentation of news*. The implications of this structural imbalance, however, remained highly contested, both within academia and politics.

However, this research on the domination of news flows has centred mostly on the content of textual, not visual messages. While several studies addressed the flow of television imagery, photographic representations were completely absent from the NWICO debates and a systematic study of the news photography market still remains to be written. While this is to a certain extent indicative of the second-grade status of images in news reporting, this disregard of the news photography market is also surprising as the global supply of news photographs is even more limited than that of the written news. High production costs and low levels of investment return, coupled with the market dominance of a handful of strong existing players, erect high market entrance barriers for aspiring new entrants or independent players that seek to promote alternative content and hence alternative definitions of news. At the same time, the only other alternative to existing news agencies – a proprietary network of foreign correspondents - is under siege by corporate, profit-oriented media management. In the corporate culture of diminishing newsroom budgets, it is becoming more and more unlikely that media can afford to finance a parallel network of staff photographers.

However, a straightforward reduction of the structural patterns in the selection of visual news, type of reported events, differential portrayal of the same topics or social actors, and the use of unrelated, symbolic and stereotypical photographs that was shown to characterise Delo's, Dnevnik's, Mladina's and Mag's international news reporting, is problematic.

First of all, the resulting "negative" or (stereo)typical coverage appears to be independent of the quantity of news sources and "origin" of available images. For example, a comparative study of photographic coverage of the US invasion of Iraq in two Slovene daily newspapers

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<sup>299</sup> E.g. Becker et al. 1981; Kirat and Weaver 1985; Lange 1984; Nordenstreng and Varis 1974; Okigbo 1985; Schram et al. 1978; Skurnik 1981; Sreberny-Mohammadi 1984; Varis 1984.

<sup>300</sup> The "distorted picture" was and still is an outcome of the underlying economic logic: the content of news (what and how is covered and what importance is attributed to it) is primarily determined not in the locations where it is gathered but in the locations where it is consumed and paid for (Chu 1985; Boyd-Barrett 1980).

indicated that visual coverage is more dependent on the editorial decisions of indigenous gatekeepers than on dependency on news sources. Delo's visual coverage, which featured photographs from four agencies (AP, AFP, EPA and Reuters) supplied a markedly different coverage and, by extension, framing of events, to Večer, with its coverage from a single Western source (AP). While Delo's coverage focused on the symbolic dimension of the conflict, depicted clean, deodorised war and framed the conflict visually in the Orientalist discourse of civilised 'West' vs. barbarian 'Other' (Tomanić Trivundža 2004), Večer's published images framed the conflict in a distinctly non-symbolic way, prominently visualising the Iraqi side through the conflict's civilian and military casualties, framing the invasion in what was, in visual terms, a fairly powerful interpretative narrative condemning the US-led invasion (Tomanić Trivundža 2005a). Furthermore, Delo's reliance on the images supplied by the staff photographer they dispatched to cover the conflict did not provide a strong alternative visualisation of the conflict, a fact that has more to do with the editorial selection of news photographs than with the images captured by the photographer.

Secondly, the decisive role of selection over the supply of images in determining the patterns of visual representation has been noted by several studies which have indicated that the news agencies supply a far broader news diet than the one that reaches readers on the pages of their newspapers (Kirat and Weaver 1985), as well as that the same news stories are often 'localised' by national media (Gurevitch, Levy and Roeh, 1991; Clausen, 2004; Okigbo 1985). These text news-based findings were supported, for example, by a recent study of photographic coverage of the Afghan war. Fahmy (2004) convincingly shows that press agencies' offerings of wire photographs portrayed a far more complex version of events than the one that was reflected in the published images which, as in the case of the NATO/EU referendum and the Strojjan affair, ascribed the interpretation onto a female body. Afghan women became both signifiers and metonyms of an ideological interpretation of events (e.g. "liberation" depicted through the ultimate Orientalist fantasy of unveiling the Oriental women), or as signifiers of social distance (burka-veiled women in everyday situations and street scenes). All this foregrounds the role of indigenous or local gatekeepers (news editors, photo editors and publication designers) over simple information dependency in producing the structural differences in visual coverage of international news. Although news agencies do significantly limit the diversity of available images in terms of content and geographical location, i.e. limit the supply of raw (news) material, analysis of published images suggests that the power to frame the news, to bestow interpretation, moral evaluation or historical



reference resides with the editors of the publication in question. If the power of framing the news does indeed reside with the local editors, this raises questions about the criteria that influence their decision-making.

### **8.3.2 News values, gatekeeping and propaganda**

The alternative explanatory models most frequently used in communication studies to interpret the selection and type of news coverage are the concepts of *news values* (Galtung and Ruge 1965), *gatekeeping* (White 1950, Shoemaker 1991) and the *propaganda model* (Herman and Chomsky 1988). These three models are not so much contrasting as they are complementary, placing their emphasis on a set of shared values used for the selection of news, the nature and origin of the decision-making process and patterns of media performance imposed by prevailing economic and political ideologies respectively. In short, gatekeeping describes the process of news selection, news values account for some of the factors that influence the transformation of events into news, and the propaganda model situates these processes in a broader framework of the political economy.

As it is currently understood, gatekeeping is not used to describe merely the process of news selection by individuals, but summarises various forces that come into play as newsmakers and editorial staff make necessary selections, deciding which messages will be selected and how they will be presented to their audience. The reconceptualisation of the original model, as proposed by Shoemaker (1991), repositions the solitary Mr. Gates in the domain of media sociology, emphasising "external" forces (institutional as well as social) that guide the selection procedure. The current model thus locates the gatekeeping process at five levels. While three of these are directly related to newswriters and the media – *individual*, *work routines*, and *organization* – two address levels of influence that are external to the media, such as that of *society's institutions* and the *social system*. In other words, as news photographs pass from gate to gate within the newsmaking process, selection of the decision-makers manning each of the gates is based on influences at individual, routine, organizational, external and ideological levels. Gatekeeping studies, including those specifically addressing press photography, have noted the strong influence of personal factors on the selection of images, such as an individual's preferences or dislikes, their past work experience, education, perception of the profession, ways of thinking about social problems, and preferred decision-making strategies (Shoemaker 1991, Bissel 2000). But as Shoemaker emphasised, the

"gatekeeper is not totally free to follow a personal whim; he or she<sup>301</sup> must operate within the constraints of communication routines" (1991, 75).

The level of work routines foregrounds the fact that gatekeeping decisions are based on a pre-established and generalised set of practices in judging the newsworthiness of a topic or event. The studies have shown that these practices are not so much a set of formal, written instructions as they are a set of internalised criteria gained through professional socialisation or what is sometimes referred to as newsroom initiation. Furthermore, it has also been indicated that the journalists evaluate their work foremost in relation to their peer groups, not the public. Journalists learn what makes a "good story" or "worthy event" through the working of the newsroom, through editorial affirmation and peer<sup>302</sup> praise or envy. As van Ginneken points out, it is important to note "that journalists function as each other's primary reference group. They may say that they do this or that 'because the audience wants it.' But their actual contact with the audience is extremely limited [...] By contrast, they are in almost daily touch with peers" (1998, 80). Slovene journalists and editors are no exception to the rule. In the interviews conducted for the follow-up of the 2006 study of changing news reporting on developing countries, a former editor and foreign correspondent continuously justified their newspaper's editorial policy by referencing not the desires of the audience but global trends in journalism: "Nobody reports much on Africa these days, not even *Le Monde*, that's the way things are nowadays." Global trends in news reporting were stated as indicative of the "objective circumstances" in international relations and Slovene reporting on developing regions, such as Africa, was merely a result of following "international trends" in journalism and politics. Lack of funds and lack of audience interest were quoted as the other main reasons for the meagre coverage of the former Third World. However, when asked if their media outlets have conducted any surveys of an audience's preferences in relation to the content or type of coverage, the answers were negative. As one of the interviewers put it: "When you are in this business for so long, you simply know what the audience wants." As Sonwalkar (2004, 208) succinctly notes, "news must essentially be about 'us' [...] and even though the contours and constituents of 'us' usually remain amorphous, journalists always have a clear conception of what will interest 'us'."

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<sup>301</sup> Gatekeeping studies have in fact found that gender does not play a decisive role in gatekeeping decisions (Lavie and Lehman-Wilzig 2003).

<sup>302</sup> Peers as the primary reference group are naturally not limited to co-workers but include journalists from other media outlets as well.

The level of routine factors that influence the selection of news is probably the most studied stage of the gatekeeping process. Ever since Galtung and Ruge (1965) proposed that the economic, social, political and geographic characteristics of a given nation determine both the amount and type of its news coverage, researchers have struggled to pin down the decisive factor(s) that influence the selection process. The most frequently proposed<sup>303</sup> factors *pace* the basic elements of news discourse<sup>304</sup> were:

- *economy* (insensitivity of trade, index of economic development, GNP per capita)
- *status/impact of country in international politics* (elite status of a nation, population or size of country)
- *cultural and geographic proximity* (cultural ties, language, regionalism, former colonial ties)
- *involvement and perceived interests of the 'home' state* (direct military, political or economic involvement abroad, official state visits or summits, perceived military or security threats, national interest)
- *media infrastructure* (presence of news agency reporters or stringers, the “celebrification” of the journalist, time constraints, prefabrication of news, logistics and availability of reports)
- *visualness and narrativisation* (availability of images, impact of images; 'composition' of news and availability of 'slots', possibility of personalisation, dramatisation (conflict, controversy) and human interest)

Among these, economy, (cultural) proximity and direct (military or political) involvement appear to be the most universal and decisive factors that influence the selection of news.

The gatekeeping model postulates three additional levels of manning the gates – the *organisational*, *extra-media* and *social system* levels. The organisational level focuses on pressures and selection criteria connected to ownership and organisational policies. The extra-media level incorporates the influences of news sources, pressures from advertisers, government or interest groups, audiences, public relations activities and competition among media outlets, (Donahue et al. 1989; Gandy, 1982), while the latter relates to broader socio-cultural factors such as culture, cultural norms, language and ideology (Shoemaker 1991, v-

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<sup>303</sup> The list is based on: Ahern 1984, Bissel 2000, Chang and Lee 1992, Chang 1998; Galtung and Ruge 1965, Galtung 1971, Gans 1979/2005, Hachten 1999, Nossek 2004, Östgaard 1965, Pietiläinen 2006, Rosengren 1974, Shoemaker 1991, Shoemaker and Reese 1996, Staab 1990, Wu 2003, 2007.

<sup>304</sup> These generally include timeliness, novelty/deviance, predictability, negativity and prominence.

vi). These structural attributes influence the amount of news coverage one country or region receives in the media of another, since nations with similar attributes tend to relate more to each other than those with divergent cultures or/and ideologies.

These later levels of influence on gatekeeping decisions overlap with many of the stipulations of the *propaganda model*. Herman and Chomsky (1988) proposed that the selective emphasis on certain topics and differential reporting on the same type of issues and events<sup>305</sup> can be directly tied to accommodation of the interests of the corporate and political elite(s). The propaganda model hypothesises that the "market system" of news reporting will accommodate the elite interest – often expressed in a country's official foreign policy – through five "filters": ownership, advertising, sourcing, flak and what was later termed "dominant ideology" or the "fifth filter"<sup>306</sup> (1988, see also Klaehn 2009). In a 1996 reassessment of the model, Herman defines it in the following way:

The crucial structural factors derive from the fact that the dominant media are firmly imbedded in the market system. They are profit-seeking businesses, owned by very wealthy people (or other companies); they are funded largely by advertisers who are also profit-seeking entities, and who want their ads to appear in a supportive selling environment. The media are also dependent on government and major business firms as information sources, and both efficiency and political considerations, and frequently overlapping interests, cause a certain degree of solidarity to prevail among the government, major media, and other corporate businesses. Government and large non-media business firms are also best positioned (and sufficiently wealthy) to be able to pressure the media with threats of withdrawal of advertising or TV licenses, libel suits, and other direct and indirect modes of attack. The media are also constrained by the dominant ideology. (Herman 1996)

To sum up, the propaganda model describes a decentralised market system of information processing and control which proposes that the mainstream media are structurally inclined to subscribe to, legitimise and promote the interests of power. In short, as elite institutions,

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<sup>305</sup> E.g. Chomsky and Herman (1988) talk about "worthy" and "unworthy" victims of political oppression and genocide.

<sup>306</sup> The "fifth filter" is an ideology that helps mobilize the populace against an enemy and is as such necessary somewhat flexible and fuzzy, accommodating the current needs for projecting the image of ultimate evil. In short, it is the "Enemy" or the "Face of Evil". (Chomsky and Herman in Mullen 2009, 14)

dominant media report news and foster public debate only within the parameters set by the dominant interests of the elite.

But do these three alternative models actually account for the structural patterns of international news coverage in the Slovene media *pace* national identity? Or can they actually make such a claim, since all of them imply "interference" by at least some aspect of national identity, be that in the form of the (perceived) proximity of a reported country within the concept of news values, the dominant ideology (fifth filter) of the propaganda model or the level of social system in the gatekeeping model?

### **8.3.3 Slovene media and the structuring power of national identity**

Generally speaking, the Slovene periodical press has since the days of *Lublanske novize* (1797–1800) and *Kmetijske in rokodelske novice* (1843–1902) been firmly embedded within the domain of party politics and strongly dedicated to the promotion of the national cause. As such, the printed press interpellated the population into both political and national subjects, constituting imagined communities of (political) public and nation. In the process, the strongly polarised – and often militantly agitative – party press greatly contributed to the constitution of the deep-seated and exclusivist polarisation into political camps of *liberals* and *catholics* during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (see e.g. Amon 2008), which became the staple of Slovene national identity by the time of the disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian empire, and heightened during the Second World War (see Chapter 5).

The intertwining of the press and (party) politics remained strong throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Presently, the Slovene media sphere is (still) characterised by a high degree of what Hallin and Mancini (2004, 26-30) have termed *political parallelism*. Political parallelism is evident in organisational connections (the government's indirect ownership of media through privatisation funds, politically-sponsored advertising of certain publications by corporations directly or indirectly controlled by the state, attempts to found a party press in the form of dailies, weekly magazines or free papers). It can also be discerned in media content (explicit advocacy and agitation), in the partisanship of audiences (political polarisation among the readership is characteristic of the weekly press), and in journalistic role orientations and practices (exhibiting a strong desire to influence public opinion, e.g. through commentary).<sup>307</sup>

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<sup>307</sup> See Bašić Hrvatin and Petković 2008.

In other words, the media in Slovenia are not so much economic as they are political entities and consequently rate high in *political instrumentalisation*, i.e. "control of media by outside actors – parties, politicians, social groups or movements, or economic actors seeking political influence – who use them to intervene into the world of politics" (Hallin and Mancini 2004, 37). Moreover, direct or indirect state ownership of large corporations (major sources of advertising revenue) has effectively transformed or replaced the so often deplored economic (market) pressures that lead to commercialisation and depoliticisation of media content, into a specific "political economy" of newsmaking under which for example advertising of country's largest corporations (most of which are directly or indirectly controlled by state-run funds) becomes a way of subsidising or disciplining individual media outlets (for examples see Bašić Hrvatin and Petković 2008; cf. Bašić Hrvatin et al. 2004). However, as noted earlier, in Slovenia the political always featured a strong sense of the national, conflating the *demos* with the dominant *ethnos* and subjugating policy-making decisions to perceived national interests. In most cases, these indirect forms of political influencing and control were a continuation of the paternalistic model of media that thrived in socialist Yugoslavia,<sup>308</sup> though journalism's self-proclaimed embracement of the objectivity ideal and neutral reporting doctrine (especially in the daily press) also contributed to the arcanisation of political influences. Overall, this would seem to suggest strong support for the arguments put forward by Herman and Chomsky. There is, however, an important qualification that needs to be made – the politicisation of news reporting described above was and continues to be confined to the domain of domestic news.

The Slovene case does not seem to lend enough support to the claim that international news reporting would be directly tied to accommodating the interests of corporate and political

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<sup>308</sup> The Yugoslav media system differed from other communist media systems in that it was not authoritarian but paternalistic: "[It] was based simultaneously on a state-dominated, one-party political system and centrally planned economy and on a self-regulated pluralism of (mainly political) interests and market economy that introduced some features of civil society" (Splichal 1994, 27). As I have summarised it elsewhere: "The Yugoslav self-regulation system (at least in theory) needed well-informed citizens, and the Yugoslav media were given the difficult task of providing comprehensive information to its citizens, including interpretation and critique of "negative phenomena in society", while simultaneously still serving as a "means of social education" and contributing to the building of a Socialist society. Because of this "freedom because of responsibility", the Yugoslav media were not directly owned and/or controlled by the state or by the Communist party, nor were they financially dependent on them but were financed through subscriptions, licence fees and partly from advertising. Consequently, the media's coorientation/coordination with "the official line" was normally achieved not through direct control but through "informal channels" (Robinson 1977, 146), trial and error reporting or "off the record" consultations with key party members, informal pressure on journalists, editors etc." (2006, 26)

elites.<sup>309</sup> First of all, Slovenia is a small country whose political and economic footprint in global international affairs is negligible. Consequently, political actors focus their efforts predominantly on the national (and regional) arena, which makes pressure from 'filters' concentrated on domestic rather than international news reporting. According to interviewed former correspondents and editors, reporting of international news has been a form of safe haven from ideological and political pressures. Even during the Yugoslav period, the interviewees claimed not to have experienced any political pressures on news reporting, apart from politically "sensitive" reports concerning the two superpowers.<sup>310</sup> During the last decade, the only major case of international news reporting where one media outlet's<sup>311</sup> reporting of international events was tainted by the "official" line – the 2006 reporting of the Darfur crisis – had more to do with a power struggle between Prime Minister Janez Janša and Minister of Foreign Affairs Dimitrij Rupel on the one hand, and President Janez Drnovšek, regarding the primacy of defining the country's foreign policy. It was, in short, a domestic politics power struggle fought out on international terrain.<sup>312</sup> However, in terms of Slovenia's international politics, such covariance between the administration and media reporting is exceptional. Much more frequently, the media's relations to the filter have been those of antagonism, even outright conflict. Thus Minister of Foreign Affairs Dimitrij Rupel, in one of his many clashes with the media, publicly accused Slovene journalists of being unpatriotic and, during a press conference, urged journalists to practise more unbalanced and openly jingoistic reporting that would be more supportive of Slovenia's policy regarding the border disputes with Croatia.

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<sup>309</sup> I should, however, emphasise that this interpretation of the cases analysed is not intended as a test or rebuttal of the propaganda model – but to draw attention to certain specifics and contradictions relating to the Slovene press's reporting of international news.

<sup>310</sup> According to interviewed Delo's former correspondents, international news reports from Africa, Asia or Latin America were not tightly monitored nor were they regime-stimulated. Thus Delo's correspondents from Africa were able to publish critical articles on countries of the Non-aligned movement during 1970s and 1980s in spite of the centrality of the movement to Yugoslavia's foreign policy. In the words of one informant: "We had learned how to properly phrase critical reporting so that it would retain its critical note, and I never had any interference with my work during the socialist period." Similarly, informants claim that Delo's decision to open a permanent correspondent bureau in Africa in the mid-1970s was editorial and not politically motivated decision. What the editors wanted was "to provide an unmediated, Slovene interpretation of the events unfolding in the region, which were seen to have a direct bearing on international politics in general." The former correspondents claim that Yugoslavia's engagement in the Non-Aligned movement certainly made the opening of the bureau and their work much easier, state support or promotion was never used or asked for. Official political disengagement from international news reporting could also be inferred from the fact that Delo was the only Yugoslav daily newspaper to have opened an independent bureau in Africa (other newspapers mostly used TANJUG's news feed to cover the region).

<sup>311</sup> Compared to coverage of the Darfur crisis in Dnevnik or on major Slovene television networks (TV Slovenia and Pop TV), Delo significantly downplayed the issue and sided with the Janša government at a time when its political influence in the newspaper was particularly strong (for ownership structure and changes see Bašič Hrvatin and Petković 2008).

<sup>312</sup> Similarly, Delo's firing of two correspondents from Vienna (Mitja Grah) and Zagreb (Rok Kajzer) in 2007 was allegedly tied to their critique of Slovene foreign policy and not to reporting on Austria or Croatia per se.

Occasionally, such clashes could escalate to the point where the minister refused to give any statements, comments or interviews to one of the media outlets and even launched a smear campaign against the outlet in question. Similarly, during the Strojan affair, the government of Prime Minister Janez Janša was attacking the media for smearing the international reputation of Slovenia, thus betraying the fundamental national interest.

Evaluating the working of the propaganda model on Slovene cases leads to a conclusion similar to the one relating to the information dependency paradigm: international news coverage in the publications analysed seems to be much more dependent on the structuring power of the "fifth filter" than on the working of the first four. The dominant ideology, however, is primarily not that of a social class but of a nation.<sup>313</sup> Inasmuch as Slovenia's 'nationalising nationalism' (Brubaker, 1996) of the 1990s was a project in which dominant social (and state) institutions actively participated, the structural inequalities of international news coverage in the Slovene media could be seen as a case where "mainstream media, as elite institutions, commonly frame news and allow debate only within the parameters of elite perspectives" (Herman, 2000). While the general climate of disinterest for news concerning developing countries can be more or less reduced to issues concerning the structural imbalance of news flows (domination of Western press agencies), this general climate does not explain the evaluative reporting of these regions, just as the relational character of identification processes does not necessarily construct difference as Otherness. Rather, it is a specific type of national identity and a specific type of "disinterest" that produces a structural grid of differentiated and evaluated reporting, one which has a stake in articulating particular regions or nations in terms of cultural belonging. It should be noted that negative and evaluative coverage of the developing world is a feature of Slovene post-independence press. As I have shown elsewhere (Tomanić Trivundža 2006), the Slovene daily press used to provide more balanced textual and particularly visual coverage of the Third World during the 1980s.<sup>314</sup> Like the change itself, the previously balanced reporting cannot be reduced to mere covariance with official politics, but has to do with a broad social consensus, a general orientation – as the patterns of differentiatonal portrayal are discernible along both sides of

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<sup>313</sup> Or more precisely, it is of a nationalised class, a system of power relations and representations within which the non-majority ethnic/national groups remain to a large extent confined to lower levels of social stratification. While this match might not be perfect in "real life", it is a permanent characteristic of media representations.

<sup>314</sup> In short, news coverage of developing nations in Delo dropped dramatically from almost a third to less than ten percent. Moreover, in terms of topics and types of news covered, the predominantly negative coverage of developing nations is no longer balanced by the coverage of what is generally defined as positive news topics, such as economy or culture. In terms of visual coverage, the shift has been from visual equality into that of visual equals into evaluative or symbolic portrayal (see Tomanić Trivundža 2006).



the political spectrum and can be seen in the work of a larger number of photo editors. Due to insufficient or nonexistent standards<sup>315</sup> governing how to use an image in news (Ritchin 2009, Zelizer 2004b), cultural values and personal reflections are more likely to come to the fore in the editorial selection of photographs.

Both gatekeeping and news values lend further support to this argument, as the studies carried out within the two approaches have often highlighted the role of ethnocentrism (e.g. Gans 1979, see also Shoemaker and Reese 1996), cultural filtering (Chang and Lee 1992, Fenby 1986, Okigbo 1985, Rosengren 1974, Sreberny and Stevenson 1999, Stevenson 1984, Stevenson and Cole 1984, Wu 2000) and context dependence in journalists' filtering and reporting of international news (Glasgow University Media Group 1985, Gurevitch et al. 1991, Nosseck 2004).

In recent times, research on international news has increasingly been focusing on the influence of the "national filter" on both the selection and nature of international news coverage, working on a rather elusive and esoteric concept of *national interest*, or what Gans termed perceived "impact on the nation and national interest" (1979/2005, 148). The point that individuals, organizations and professional routines are tied to a broader social system has already been noted, just as the fact that, despite political, economic and social globalisation,<sup>316</sup> media and its publics (as citizens) are primarily (socially, economically, legally, politically) embedded into the context of the nation-state and mechanisms of identification with the imagined community of a nation. As Sonwalkar put it, "journalists are invariably drawn from the 'national mainstream'<sup>317</sup> and circularly cater to this section of society and its value system. Thus, events and issues that do not fall within the paradigm of interest to this section are unlikely to be considered by journalists as unworthy" (2004, 208). The concept of "national interest" that one comes across in studies such as those of Noosek (2004) or Yang (2003) is a somewhat abstract, fuzzy and elusive concept of common (national) good that transcends the particularistic interests of political actors and consists of "a set of shared priorities regarding

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<sup>315</sup> As Zelizer put it: "Today, some 160 years after the ascent of photography in news, the visuals of journalism are a source of inattention by the journalistic world. How to use images, how or whether to caption or credit them, how to affix them to words at their side, remain unanswered questions in the use of visuals in the news" (2005b, 173).

<sup>316</sup> As Greenfeld (2004, 43) argues, "much of what is regarded economic globalization [...] is in fact a function of the normal working of particular national economies, guided by their particular, often explicitly national, interests and reflecting their particular cultural traditions(i.e. nationalisms)".

<sup>317</sup> Similarly, Weaver (1998) claims that journalists represent a fairly coherent group in demographic terms, as they are recruited mainly from the dominant and established groups within a given society.

the [nation's] relation with the rest of the world" (Nye in Yang 2003, 233). Defined in this way, national interest appears to be a derivative of national identity coupled with perceived economic interests, most frequently articulated or at least referred to by elite social actors and institutions. Interviewed Slovene editors and former foreign correspondents claimed that the news focus was guided by an abstract, elusive and all-encompassing estimation of the actual (or potential) political or economic effects, benefits and interests Slovenia would have in a particular country or region. Like with "knowing" reader's preferences (see section 8.3.2), "knowing" of the national interest was not based on expert assumptions, estimations, or data but on speculative estimations, intuitive hunches, and anecdotal evidence at best.

Likewise, it has also been repeatedly emphasised that the power of the "national filter" is particularly influential in countries which are immersed in the process of defining and securing the dominant ideas of nation or which find themselves in nat. Thus Nossek (2004) suggests that the national filter exists side by side with the professional filter and that the nature, location and context of a given event determine which of the two criteria for news selection will be employed. Nossek argues that there is:

an inverse relationship between professional news values and the national identity of the journalist and the journal's editors. Expressed as a rule, we would say that the more 'national' the report is, the less 'professional' it will be, i.e. the closer the reporters/editors are to a given news event in terms of national interest, the further they are from applying professional news values. (2004, 343)

Nossek basically argues that the identification of a news item as "ours" will subordinate journalistic reporting to national rather than professional loyalty, drawing partly on studies that show journalists as being willing to "place the nation's morale and image, as well as the broad definition of national interest, before their own professional values" (2004, 348, cf. Herman and Chomsky 1988). While Nossek's substitution argument may account for the emergence of jingoistic news reporting in charged situations, such as war or terrorism, it is far less applicable to "normal" political and social situations when consensus on what constitutes the national interest is far less evident and uniform. As my analysis of the EU/NATO pre-referendum debates has shown, political actors and media have frequently resorted to the argumentative and evaluative power of national interest which, apart from civilisational

belonging to the West, proved to be a highly contested field. Similarly, Amon (2008) notes in her historical analysis of the Slovene press that promotion of the proclaimed national interest is a universal feature of Slovene dailies – though with sharp differences in the understanding of its ideological mission. Moreover, Nossek seems to overlook the fact that defining an event as "their" will not necessarily lead to the prominence of non-national filter/frame, since national perspective constitutes one of the central tenets of journalistic professionalism. As I have shown above, (visual) reporting of an event designated as "their" is still carried out in accordance with(in) the national perspective. One of the basic characteristics of the nation-based filter for the selection of news is that the imposed criteria are not easily recognisable but operate more or less at the level of common sense. Both the media and the public are part of the same cultural system and thus share certain cultural frames which tend to be internalised and naturalised to the point of commonsense knowledge. The fact that the ideological colouring of the photographic coverage “need not be deliberately chosen or even explicitly recognised by the editors who deploy them” (Fishman and Marvin 2003, 41) does not negate its presence and connection to the broader, national cultural context.

#### **8.3.4 Nation, visual framing and temporal depth of news**

News agencies set the limits of the agenda for international news<sup>318</sup> both in terms of which issues are covered and the relative level of importance attached to them. Thus, to a large extent, they “determine which characteristics of a given country are known outside that country” and “how those characteristics are assembled into a mosaic that makes up the overall image of one country in the eyes of the residents of another” (Becker et al. 1981, 105). Within this general frame, journalists, editors, and designers make conscious or unconscious culturally dependent selections that, depending on the event, can decisively shape the preferred reading and interpretation for the audience. The cases analysed, particularly in terms of photographic coverage, reveal the important lever of power held by 'indigenous' gatekeepers over representations of international news. They point to a more intricate interplay of news selection factors than the propaganda, news flow/dependency or professionalism paradigms seem to account for on their own. This should come as no surprise as postcolonial studies have long been arguing that cultural imperialism is never simply

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<sup>318</sup> Western news agencies are the major agenda-setters: "They make the first decisions on how and whether international stories will be covered. They choose where to allocate their resources, and hence which stories will be covered and where; they decide on which stories to send to their clients; how much visual element they will provide; what kind of audio and accompanying background text they will send." (Herbert 2000, 41)

unmediated consequence of foreign domination, that it is "never simply external force laid over existing social relations" (Roach 1990, 278), but a web of complex relations and practices within which 'indigenous' appropriations and 'traditions' exert significant influence.

Media theories have long postulated societal integration as one of the main functions of mass media in general, and authors have long been emphasising the ritual (e.g. Carey 1988) and mythic (e.g. Lule 2001) function of journalism for contemporary societies by generating and maintaining an imagined community of audience/citizens/nation through the "daily reaffirming of community ties" (Nerone and Barnhurst 2003, 112) and mapping of its imagined geographies (Said 1979). From this perspective, journalism is one of society's main agents of social control, as it contributes to the articulation of normality and deviance (e.g. see Hartley 1992, 141) by producing distinctive visions of order which seek to sustain established hierarchies of social power. Consequently, it should come as no surprise that journalism turns to visual storytelling not because of its superior descriptive capabilities but because of its ability to contextualise the discrete details in a broader, symbolic frame (Zelizer 2004b, 130). Thus "pictures are frequently used in ways that depict not what is the core of the news story but peripheral, symbolic, associative aspects of its events, sometimes illustrating the key point of a news story but often depicting scenes or people removed from those described in the text" (Zelizer 2005a, 10). The apparently unmediated realism of the medium renders these representations more natural and hence more pervasive. As I have argued throughout this thesis, the "real" storytelling potential of the medium depends on its ability to bestow interpretations upon the accurately rendered objects, to synthesise the meaning of their relations into a single image. This, as argued earlier, is most easily achieved through symbolic depictions, and these symbolic frames help us recognise a particular image as "consonant with broader understandings of the world" (Ibid.). As Berger put it: "Professional photographer tries, when taking a photograph, to choose an instant which will persuade the public viewer to lend it an appropriate past and future." (1982, 89; original emphasis)

Symbolic coverage necessarily resonates with a set of pre-established images, stereotypes and clichés that work as pervasive instruments of news framing, of promoting "a particular problem definition, causal interpretations, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendations for the item described" (Entman 1993, 52). As Griffin argues, news photographs "may be more important for their role in priming pre-existing interpretative schema, linking the viewer's memory to familiar news categories and scenarios, than for their

specific referential or descriptive function" (2004, 384). In this way, press photographs frequently lend temporal depth to news, decontextualising the pieces of event-specific information and reinscribing them into mythical and hence interpretative and evaluative (national) narrative woven from a selection of such decontextualised pieces of information. Thus, I have argued, press photography's role within journalism tends to be somewhat contradictory, as such schematic, conventionalised and simplified visualisations of news often bypass those very intellectual processes (rational reasoning) that journalism, and print journalism in particular, would aim to encourage and nourish.

Furthermore, such symbolic and ideological images are problematic from the perspective of the collective public memory through which they act as signposts for future societal self-understanding, as well as demarcators of acceptable visual discourse. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, photographic image came to dominate the collective memory of society (Hardt 1999, 2003), forming the communal reservoir of canonised and shared visual markers that tend to structure and inform both the consciousness and the memory of the individuals. I must stress that this argument should not be interpreted deterministically – while the cultural products of mainstream media, such as press photographs, tend to be complicit with hegemonic structures in society (political, economic, national), they do not necessarily determine cultural action. What they do instead is that they make it more difficult to sustain certain cultural formations outside of the dominant discursive and hegemonic frameworks. In short, they make certain choices of interpretation or social action more likely than others. If public memory is indeed, as Douglas (1987, 70) claims, a storage system for the social order, press photographs as “dramatisations of public life” (Chaney 1993) serve both as facilitators of various forms of social control on the one hand, and, on the other hand, confirm the validity and “naturalness” of the commonsense social knowledge by supporting not only society's *public memory* but also its *structural amnesia*.

## 8.4 Noble dreams, wicked pleasures and contested proclamations of the end of photography and photojournalism

By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, photography had been entrusted with important social responsibility for securing both modern objectivity and subjectivity. What came to be

projected into the mechanical apparatus and its glass eye were not merely rays of reflected light but modernity's absolute belief in appearances and the possibility of accessing the Truth through the power of Science and Reason. By the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Enlightenment project of reuniting the human subject and the world through the power of Reason appeared to be nothing more than a noble 18<sup>th</sup>-century dream. But has this really resulted in the death of its privileged apparatus? What can the analysed cases of Slovene press photography suggest regarding the question(ing) of photography's possible transformation, decline or death?

If anything, they confirm the postmodernist stance that the meaning of photography – both as practice and as an object – is context-dependent. Furthermore, they suggest that press photographs are moving from an indexical function to an iconic function. The cases analysed indicate that the central dialectics of the medium – it's inherent, epistemological indexicality, and a marked preference for symbolic and iconic visualisations – which ethics-centred debates on the status and the future of the media tend to obscure, does not impend the use of photographs in news reporting. Quite the contrary- while the photographs still primarily serve to validate reported events, they are equally prominently used for their power to communicate beyond the referential, to interpret or frame the interpretation of an event, to symbolise instead of signify. The non-referential use of photographs in itself does not lead to the loss of trust in both medium and media. For trust in press photographs is not tied to the apparatus as such but to "the 'traceability' of a whole chain of the (institutionally or otherwise certified) production, publication and circulation of pictures" (Brunet 2008, 45). The trust is thus primarily a product of the audience's relation to the image-producer, not to the technology through which the message is communicated. The fear of digital manipulation, so central to (admittedly US-dominated) professional ethics, does not appear to be causing real stir among (increasingly 'Photoshop-savvy') audiences. Thus the waning audience trust in press photography (which is itself a problematic claim) is but a part of the product of a more general distrust of the media. As Fontcuberta has noted, "the dramatic metamorphosis from the grain of silver to the pixel represents nothing more than a screen which conceals the evolution taking place in the whole framework that provided photography with cultural, instrumental and historical context" (Fontcuberta 2002, 10-11).

What is presently at stake is not photography's ability to supply visual evidence. Within Western culture, photography is ontologically tied to the idea of reality and its documentation, even if the resulting document is seen as problematical (cf. Ribalta 2008). Photography

constructs an accepted truth of the visible. It represents a will to see reality "even if this reality is a radically constructed one. Through photographs, we secure those truths that inhabit and regard as our reality. [...] We no longer believe in the objectivity of photography, but we still regard photographs as, in some way or the other, our reality." (Stiegler 2008, 195-7)

In the present-day image-dominated culture, visual information has become one of the central ways in which we communicate and make meaning of the world around us. Even if the dominant images (advertising) have become mostly detached from its referents and transformed into what Ritchin (2008) aptly termed "desirents", proclamations of photography's death are pretentious, to say the least. Photographs have become an indispensable means of expressing and supporting the journalistic narrativisation of social reality that depends on the mythologised prioritisation of *eye-witnessing* as a means of producing and accessing knowledge. The conflict between news and photography that determined the occupational status of photography within the mass media in the years before the Second World War was, as Hardt warns, "ultimately resolved by the industrial authority of media ownership rather than by the cultural authority of journalists" (1999, 5), and it seems unlikely that the presently proclaimed crisis of photojournalism would be resolved differently than by restoring photojournalism's status within the system of commercial(ised) mass communication as a means for the promotion and reinforcement of the system's dominant ideology. The mainstream media will continue to use photography to support the idea of the ability of accessing truth and a meaningful interpretation of the world, and for securing the social order and integration of individuals into imagined communities of media audiences, political subjects and nation-state citizens – even if the images employed will offer an impoverished visual experience judged by the standards of realism, the professional ideology of photojournalism, and humanistic impulses that have fueled photojournalism's noble dream of communicating and explaining man to man. It has been argued above that the media might in fact prefer to use symbolic/iconic images over mere indexical accounts because they are more persuasive and hence effective for these purposes.

"Photoshopping" and other forms of meddling with (post-processing of) photographic representations, disconcerting as they might be, are not the major problem in contemporary photojournalism, just as the faking of textual articles is not the central problem in contemporary journalism as such. In terms of total news output, both are marginal practices that seem to – when publicly sanctioned – work more effectively as a means of restoring the

public trust in the media. Moreover, it was shown above that even the most febrile critics of post-production photo manipulation still maintain the truth-capturing ability of the basic apparatus (camera). However, what the non-photographic contemporary critiques of journalism and media reporting suggest is that the fundamental "problem with reality" lies in the continuous efforts of power elites that dominate communication channels to meddle with reality rather than its picture – through the aggressive news management, through staging and managing of events, or through selectively limiting access to information and/or reality. The central concern of the fact that we are living in the age of the "managed icon" (Perlmutter 1998) is thus not so much about the media's questionable reliance on iconic representations as in the stenographic function to which these iconic images are subjected – to give credibility to the docudrama of managed and directed events. These practices, coupled with a tendency to present opinions and value judgements as facts, reduce mass communication to mere confirmation, reinforcement and promotion of the dominant ideology and status quo. In the long run, as Hardt emphasises, "such practices may well breed political detachment, if not indifference, among audiences with civic ambitions but limited political power" (2004, 53).

As I have already suggested above, the contemporary crisis of photography is not so much a crisis of the medium as it is a crisis of the political system which the medium is made to serve. Photojournalism's failure is the failure of the "renewal of eighteenth-century promise to unite the human subject and the world in a process of self understanding and self-realization" (Kelsey and Stimson 2008, xvi), of maintaining the overidealised link between access to the truth and progressive politics, facilitating meaningful social action. If even the images from the most humanistically inspired photojournalistic genres such as war photography generally fail to provoke any discernible political action, the issues at stake might be broader than the much promoted critique of voyeurism, pornography of the visual (Jameson 1992) and compassion fatigue (Sontag 1977, 2004). "If photography fails," writes Taylor (2000, 138), "it does so within a failing system", a system of governance that does not enable the citizens/public to efficiently utilise their knowledge for meaningful and efficient collective action. The problem is not just that the public no longer receives the information needed to function as a democratic collective (McChesney 1999), but that the levers of institutional power have become inaccessible, sufficiently insulated and non-responsive to pressures from below, both in the form of the "milling of the crowd" (Park 1924/1967), the rumbling of "popular clamour" (MacKinnon 1849/2007) or that of the currents of rationally formed public opinion. The much advocated need for media reform would not revitalise democracy by itself,



as the connection between public knowledge, between "access to truth" and social action would need to incorporate a Deweyian reawakening of media audiences and citizens into a politically active public.

But photography's role is central to the political project even before the unlikely start of the overall reform of the media system. As Kelsey and Stimson emphasise, "the photographic index, having moved from scientific guarantee to social promise to myth, now finds its calling as a secular ritual form [...] ever renewing a social commitment to an enlightenment never achieved and the reality-based community we must still become" (2008, xxv-xxvi). The importance of press photography thus resides in its role as a useful, even if highly imperfect arbiter of social occurrences. Its importance for the political system resides not in their (much mythologised) ability to uniformly sway public opinion or influence the publicly expressed opinions of political actors, but as, for example, the Abu Ghraib torture photographs clearly showed, to act as stimulators of public debate, as crystallisers of latent opinions and mobilisers of alternative forms of political participation,<sup>319</sup> while at the same time integrating the public into the imagined communities and geographies of a given nation-state.

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<sup>319</sup> See e.g. Andén-Papadopoulos' (2008) analysis of »vernacular« imaging and referencing of the Abu Ghraib torture photographs.

## Slovene summary

### **Fotografija in konstrukcija nacionalnih identitet: prikazovanje »Drugega« v slovenski novinarski fotografiji**

Tisk je pogosto označen kot prva različica zgodovine. Pa vendar zelo malo besednih opisov pomembnejših dogodkov preživi bledenje časopisnih strani. Po drugi strani pa fotografije pomembnih novic pogosto postanejo spominske bližnjice, ikone in metonimije, ki pomembno prispevajo k ohranitvi zgodovinske zavesti in kolektivnega spomina. Pričujoča disertacija se osredotoča na proučevanje fotografskih reprezentacij v medijskem poročanju, predvsem na njihovo vlogo pri artikulaciji kolektivnih identitet, pri čemer ji kot analitični okvir služi koncept nacionalne identitete. Kako je narod »zamišljen« in komuniciran na ravni novinarskih podob? Kaj objavljene podobe komunicirajo občinstvu? Katere diskurzivne resurse in strategije so uporabljane? Kakšen je odnos med vizualnim in besedilnim delom poročanja? Kot nakazujejo ključna raziskovalna vprašanja, je analiza omejena na področje reprezentacije in se ne ukvarja z nivojem produkcije ali percepcije podob. Kar ponuja, je podrobna kvalitativna analiza komunikacijske vrednosti novinarske fotografije za konstrukcijo in vzdrževanje nacionalne identitete.

Disertacija tako gradi na analizi fotografski artikulacij privilegiranih diskurzivnih elementov slovenske nacionalne identitete in njihovem vplivu na selekcijo in način upovedovanja domačih in mednarodnih novic. Privilegirani diskurzivni elementi so specifične artikulacije nacionalne identitete, ki jih ustvarja in promovira širok spekter institucij nacionalne države in ki tvorijo simbolno jedro, okoli katerega lahko posamezniki artikulirajo svoja občutja nacionalne pripadnosti. Privilegirani diskurzivni elementi vključujejo kanonizirane interpretacije zgodovine in kulture (ki vstopajo v kolektivno zavest skozi izobraževanje, publicistiko, muzeje, popularno kulturo of glasbe do filmov, državne praznike itd.), pa tudi mite in simbole, ki jih denimo v svojo retoriko vpletajo politični akterji.

Slovenska nacionalna identiteta je že od srede devetnajstega stoletja hegemonični boj za (re)definicijo in (re)interpretacijo dokaj stabilnega nabora sedmih diskurzivnih elementov. Ti so: (1) slovenski jezik in literarna kultura kot temeljna kamna naroda; (2) mit o Karantaniji kot (pra)izvoru slovenske državnosti; (3) mit tisočletnega sna o neodvisnosti; (4) zamišljen

geografsko-kulturni prostor Srednje Evrope; (5) ideja limesa oziroma mejnosti; (6) tesna vez med religijo, slovenskostjo in kmetstvom; ter (7) povezava med (ruralno) krajino in narodom. Disertacija obravnava (te) privilegirane diskurzive elemente kot vizualne in besedilne novičarske okvirje (frames). Četudi študije okvirjanja vizualne elemente novic praviloma izpuščajo iz analize, lahko fotografske podobe delujejo kot zelo vpliven artikulatork okvirjev in so posledično zelo učinkovite pri promociji določenih definicij, interpretacij in vrednotenju poročanuh dogodkov. Analiza pokaže, da je vloga fotografij kot interpretativnih okvirjev še posebej pomembna v primerih, ko vizualna naracija odstopa od besedilne.

Zaradi teoretske fragmentacije se disertacija naslanja na koncept privilegiranih diskurzivnih elementov tudi na nivoju teorije fotografije. To omogoči, da definicijo novinarske fotografije in fotožurnalizma kot njenega podžanra določim kot diskurzivno artikulacijo normativnih diskurzov in institucionaliziranih praks, ki se naslanjajo na šest privilegiranih diskurzivnih elementov: (1) časovno-prostorske dislokacije; (2) ikoničnost in indeksičnost; (3) specifična izrazna sredstva medija; (4) besedilo; (5) kontekst; (6) mistična moč/mistifikacija moči fotografije. Definicija novinarske fotografije in fotožurnalizma, ki jo ponujata dominantna diskurza izobraževanja in profesionalne etike, je dvoumna, saj na eni strani nekritično promovira idejo dejstvenega poročanja (pasivnega zapisovanja stvarnosti), po drugi pa zagovarja in nagraduje medijsvo sposobnost simbolnega komuniciranja in preseganja zgolj povednega. V praksi se namreč fotožurnalizem zateka k nekakšni vizualni stenografiji – repertoarju predobstojećih vizualnih simbolov, metafor in metonimij, ki lahko dogodek dekontekstualizirajo in prikažejo znotraj simbolnega imaginarija predpripravljenih podob, ki se pnejo od prepoznavnih izrazov in gestikulacij univerzalnih občutij in čustev (denimo sreče, žalosti ali odločnosti), ponavljajočih se simbolnih podob (npr. rušenje spomenikov), stereotipov (zakrinkan muslimanski terorist) do referenc na skupno zakladnico podob popularne kulture ali visoke umetnosti. In prav skozi uporabo tovrstne vizualne stenografije postanejo novinarske fotografije močen dejavnik promocije določenih novičarskih okvirjev. Skozi tovrstno simbolno reprezentacijo fotografije izpostavljajo (le) določen del realnosti, s čimer promovirajo točno določeno definicijo problema, njegovo (vzročno-posledično) razlago ali moralno vrednotenje in s tem omejujejo možne legitimne reakcije občinstva. Fotografije se zaradi svojega simbolnega potenciala kažejo še posebno primerne za novičarsko okvirjanje, zaradi njihove sposobnosti učinkovitega komuniciranja neracionalnih (npr. čustvenih) apelov.

Eksplorativna kvalitativna analiza vizualnega okvirjanja je bila narejena na primeru dveh dogodkov, ki sta generirala široko javno razpravo o slovenski nacionalni identiteti skozi potrjevanje ali pretresanje njenih privilegiranih diskurzivnih elementov. Izbrana dogodka – referendum o pridružitvi Slovenije Evropski uniji in zvezi NATO iz leta 2003 ter izselitev Romske družine Strojanovih iz leta 2006 – sta bila izbrana zato, ker ustrezata dvojni naravi identifikacijskih procesov, tj. artikulaciji lastne identitete skozi odnos do zunanjih in notranjih Drugih. V analizo sta bila vključena dva časnika (Delo in Dnevnik) ter dva politična tednika (Mladina in Mag) zaradi vključitve čim bolj lastniško raznovrstnih in politično profiliranih medijev ter njihovih različnih profesionalnih rutin in dostopnih virov informacij. V vzorec so bili zajeti trije meseci pred marčevskim referendumom o pridružitvi EU in NATU, kar je obdobje, v katerem so se odvijali najpomembnejši mnenjski boji in z referendumom povezane politične odločitve. V primeru Strojanovih je analiza zajemala medijsko poročanje od začetnega incidenta konec oktobra 2006 do delne razrešitve afere v Januarju 2007. Obe temi nista bili analizirani izolirano ampak kot del toka (flow) dnevnih novic, kar z drugimi besedami pomeni, da so bile v analizo zajeti tudi drugi deli publikacij, da bi razkrili neposredne ali posredne artikulacije nacionalnih identitet v njenih »banalnih«, vsakodnevnih oblikah.

Analiza fotografskih reprezentacij na primeru poročanja o predreferendumskih razpravah o pridružitvi EU/NATO je pokazala, da so novičarske fotografije pomemben artikulator okvirov nacionalne identitete ne glede na njihovo šibko avtonomijo (podložnost besedilu), omejenem simbolizmu in navkljub omejitvam, ki jih nalagajo »kode objektivnosti« fotožurnalizma. Na straneh analiziranih publikacij je Slovenija prikazana kot sodobna Zahodna družba srednjega razreda, za katero je značilna določena stopnja premožnosti, potrošništva, zvezdnitva in osredotočenosti na prosti čas. Neposredne vizualne reference na privilegirane diskurzivne elemente nacionalne identitete so bile redke, analiza pa je pokazala rabo okvirjanja novic skozi elemente nacionalne identitete z uporabo arhivskih fotografij ter interpretativnih podnapisov in naslovov. Skozi ta dva prijemata nacionalna identiteta in zgodovina postaneta kriterij za presojanje moralnosti delovanja političnih akterjev in določanje njihove statusne hierarhije. Bolj kot skozi neposredno vizualiziranje privilegiranih diskurzivnih elementov nacionalne identitete pri domačih novicah, se je vizualno okvirjanje izkazalo za značilno pri posrednem izkazovanju kulturne pripadnosti skozi pokrivanje zunanjepolitičnih dogodkov.

Medijsko poročanje o aferi Strojanovi je bilo v veliki meri drugačno od predhodnega poročanja o Romih, ko so Romi praviloma predstavljali »družebni problem« in ogrožali »naš« držbenoekonomski red skozi kriminal, nasilje, lenobo in zlorabo mehanizmov socialne države. Posledica tega spremenjenega diskurza in vloge družbene pedagogike je bilo poročanje o Romih kot konkretnih posameznikov. Namesto abstraktne, anonimne kolektivitete, se Strojanovi prikažejo kot družina z nekaj jasno prepoznavnimi posamezniki, ki sta jim je poleg imena dana tudi (lastna) beseda in (fotografska) podoba. Vendar ta premik ni prišel brezpogojno – cena, ki so jo za svojo individualizacijo morali plačati Strojanovi, je bila izguba Romskosti. Pozitivnejše novinarsko poročanje o Strojanovih je bilo namreč izvedljivo le znotraj obstoječih kategorij in privilegiranih diskurzivnih elementov slovenske nacionalne identitete.

Analiza je pokazala, da nacionalna identiteta pomembno strukturira vizualno poročanje domačih in mednarodnih dogodkov, četudi je praksa vsakodnevnega označevanja nacije v vizualnem registru manj neposredna kot v verbalnem. Hkrati je analiza pokazala, da nacionalna identiteta in iz nje izhajajoča civilizacijska pripadnost konstituirata vzorce, ki določajo fotografsko reprezentacijo tudi izven področja politike, v rubrikah kot so turizem in potovanja, zanimivosti, kulinarika, kultura, tehnologija, šport in nenazadnje, oglaševanje. Nadalje je analiza pokazala, da tovrstni strukturni vzorci diferencirane vizualizacije niso odvisni od vira (tuje tiskovne agencije, domači fotografi) ali preofesionalnega statusa ustvarjalca podob (poklicni fotografi, amaterski fotografi).

Povedano drugače, analiza je tako pokazala, da obstajajo strukturni vzorci neenakosti fotografskih reprezentacij posameznikov in družbenih skupin, ki ne pripadajo »našemu svetu« oziroma naši »zamišljeni« geografiji. Poleg neposrednih fotografskih referenc na privilegirane diskurzivne elemente nacionalne identitete, je analiza pokazala, da so objavljene novinarske fotografije pomemben mehanizem posrednega označevanja nacionalne identitete, še posebej na primeru mednarodnih novic. Slednje skozi proces vsakodnevnega, rutinskega označevanja meje nacionalne skupnosti odločilno prispevajo h konstrukciji »zamišljenih geografij«. Zamišljene geografije so diskurzivno konstruirane percepcije prostora, ki niso le gradnik procesa kolektivne identifikacije, temveč funkcionirajo tudi kot sredstvo in opravičilo za simbolno, ekonomsko ali politično dominacijo določenih ozemelj. Zamišljene geografije so dramatizacije razlike med »nami« in »njimi«, ki je v prvi vrsti civilizacijska, kulturna, ter šele nato geografska. To se jasno odraža v vzorcih poročanja (npr. količina, frekvenca, način) o

mednarodnih dogodkih, kjer novinarske fotografije postanejo sredstvo materializacije oziroma vizualizacije prostora in dramatizacije socialne in fizične distance med nacionalnimi državami. Analiza je pokazala, da so novinarske fotografije uporabljane za označevanje zamišljene geografije na vsaj štiri načine: (1) podreprezentacija kulturno drugačnih narodov, držav in njihovih predstavnikov; (2) poročanje o različnih vrstah dogodkov (negativne vs. rutinske in pozitivne); (3) različen način vizualizacije istih tipov dogodkov, političnih predstavnikov ali tem; in (4) poročanje skladno s predobstoječimi podobami, vrednotenji in stereotipi.

## English summary

### **Photography and the construction of collective identities: Representation of the “Other” in Slovene photojournalism**

Journalism is often claimed to be the first draft of history, but very few verbal descriptions of the major news events survive the fading of newspaper and magazine pages. Images on the other hand can become mnemonic shorthand, icons and metonymies that significantly contribute to formation and maintenance of collective consciousness and historical memory of important events. This thesis analyses the somewhat overlooked role of press photography in framing news reporting – in particular, the ways in which visual framing is grounded in the symbolic imaginary of national identity.

The thesis is built on the analysis of visual coverage of the two events that had generated a wide ranging public debate and (re)assessment Slovene national identity – the 2003 referendum on joining EU and NATO and 2006 eviction of Roma family Strojan – in Slovenia's two leading daily newspapers and two weekly magazines. The thesis shows how national identity determines visual framing of news reporting of domestic and international events either directly – by referencing what was termed privileged discursive elements of national identity – or indirectly – through a structured pattern of differential depiction that divides the globe into imagined geography of our and their world. In the former case, visual referencing is most frequently achieved through the use of shared, easily recognisable motifs or iconic images, and through the use of archive photographs. In the latter case, the photographs function as delineators of nation's cultural belonging, an identification that also implies division along the criteria of civilisation and development, which is never neutral – it is evaluative project that constructs difference and Otherness. This practice is particularly notable in the coverage of the international news and includes following strategies: (1) underrepresentation of culturally different (Other) states and their representatives; (2) coverage of different types of events (negative as opposed to routine news); (3) a different mode of depiction of the same topics/actors (e.g. realistic vs. symbolic depiction, formal vs. informal and active vs. passive mode, direct vs. indirect coverage etc.); (4) coverage consonant with the pre-conceived (evaluative) judgements and images.

From the theoretical standpoint, the thesis builds on the concept of national identity that is understood as an “identification” – a continuous, never finished project but one that arises in discursive articulations and practices of social (collective and personal) identifications. National identity as one of the forms of social identities is a particular socio-historical form of ethnic identification (ethnicity), whose function is the social organisation of cultural difference by means of culture and interaction. National identity consists of internalised shared patterns of social differentiation that promote and elicit feelings of belonging to an entity. This community (nation) is understood as a community of destiny which includes both notions of communal shared past as well as anticipated future. The key constitutive element of (national) identity is boundary which emerges in interaction of ascription and classification. Boundary (and with it identity) is thus constructed and maintained through a limited repertoire of features which is not an assemblage of some "objective" differences or characteristics of the group, but a selection of characteristics that actors themselves regard as significant. With national identity, the boundary is articulated and maintained at two levels: through privileged discursive elements (institutional/formal/planned/discursive) and performed symbols as personal/informal/unplanned/symbolic articulations of national identity. Privileged discursive elements belong to higher order, they form the basis and delineate a framework within which performed symbols can be reproduced, enacted and performed as meaningful acts of national identity signification in everyday lives of citizens. Accordingly, Slovene national identity can be seen as an ongoing struggle for the (re)definition and (re)interpretation of a fairly stable pool of privileged following discursive elements: (1) Slovene language and literary culture as foundations of the nation; (2) myth of Karantanija as the origin of Slovene state; (3) myth of nation's thousand-year dream of independence; (4) an imagined geo-cultural space of (Central) Europe; (5) notion of limes and frontier; (6) the bond between religion, Slovene-ness and ruralness; and (7) the bond between rural land(scape) and nation. These seven privileged discursive elements were used as (meta) frames for the analysis of news reporting.

The concept of privileged discursive elements was similarly used to define press photography and its sub-genre of photojournalism as a discursive articulation of photography's theoretical and normative discourses and institutional(ised) practices that evolve around six privileged discursive elements. They address the notions of: (1) temporal and spatial dislocation; (2) iconicity and indexicality; (3) medium-specific means of expression; (4) text; (5) context; and (6) mystical power/mystification of power. Practical and ethical approaches to press



photography and photojournalism expose the two practices as highly ambivalent discourses that while relying on the power of factual reporting (recording) in fact build on the capacity of the medium to transgress the factual and convey the message by moving into the domain of symbolical. Photojournalism in particular appears to operate through a set of visual shorthand – a repertoire of pre-existing visual symbols, metaphors and metonymies that render visual reporting of particular events into more or less ahistorical articulations of scenes and compositions, resonating with a pre-existing stock of familiar images that range from shared expressions of basic human values and emotions discernable in gestures and body language of depicted subjects to recurring symbolic events (e.g. toppling of statues) or references to shared images from popular culture and high art. This is precisely what makes press photographs (visual) frames – (partial) selections of some aspects of a perceived reality and making them more salient in a communicated text in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the reported issue. Frames are thus organizing principles that are socially shared and persistent over time, that work symbolically to meaningfully structure the social world and work particularly well with images as the latter are more effective when they communicate non-rational (i.e. emotional) appeals.

The primary focus of the thesis is on the field of (press) photography and related issues of visual communication and representation, while national identity and media/journalism serve as an analytical framework for the investigation. How is nation "imagined" and "talked about" through the use of press photographs? What is communicated to audience/citizens through images in the press? What discursive resources and strategies are used in the process? How does the visual coverage relate to the verbal accounts of the news within which press images are embedded? The thesis addresses these questions through exploratory qualitative research of visual framing of the two events that generated extensive public debate on Slovene national identity, either by stabilising or challenging the established constellation of its privileged discursive elements. The two events – the 2003 referendum on whether Slovenia should join the EU and the NATO, and the 2006 eviction of the Strojans, a Roma family– were chosen to correspond to the two dimensions of the identity formation process – articulation of self in relation to external and internal Others. The analysis coverage of the two events in two daily newspapers (*Delo* and *Dnevnik*) and two weekly magazines (*Mladina*, *Mag*) to take account of a broad spectrum of political orientation, different ownership structures and above all, professional routines and availability of sources. The sample for EU/NATO referendum

covered the three months before the referendum which was the period of the most intensive debates on the issue, while in the case of the Strojjan affair, the sample extended from the start of the affair in October 2006 to its partial resolution in January 2007. The two events were not analysed in isolation but as part of the “flow” of daily news. Consequently, other sections of newspapers and magazines were scrutinised in order to reveal direct and indirect articulations of national boundary in its daily, “banal” form. Results confirm the findings of comparable research projects, namely that journalism turns to visual storytelling not because of its superior descriptive capabilities but because of the ability to contextualise the subjects and events it reports in a broader, symbolic frame. Through this, it does not only lend them a national perspective or angle, but more importantly, it provides depicted scenes and reported events with temporal depth, it lends them appropriate past and future, which necessarily implies interpretation and evaluation.

## **Slovene abridgment**

### **FOTOGRAFIJA IN KONSTRUKCIJA NACIONALNIH IDENTITET: PRIKAZOVANJE »DRUGEGA« V SLOVENSKI NOVINARSKI FOTOGRAFIJI**

Tisk je pogosto označen kot prva različica zgodovine. Pa vendar zelo malo besednih opisov pomembnejših dogodkov preživi bledenje časopisnih strani. Po drugi strani pa fotografije pomembnih novic pogosto postanejo spominske bližnjice, ikone in metonimije, ki pomembno prispevajo k ohranitvi zgodovinske zavesti in kolektivnega spomina. Vendar to še zdaleč ne pomeni, da so podobe privilegirana modalnost sodobnega novičarskega sporočanja. Ne glede na vseobsegajočo in naraščajočo vizualizacijo vsakdanjega življenja v sodobnih zahodnih družbah in priseganju novinarjev na pogosto samoizpolnjujočo se krilatico »brez podob(e) ni novice«, novinarstvo in spremljajoči diskurzi še vedno privilegirajo besedo nasproti podobi. Primarna vloga podob v sodobnih medijih tako večinoma še vedno ni samostojno upovedovanje novic ampak potrjevanje, podeljevanje kredibilnosti govorjenemu ali pisanemu besedilu. Situacije, v katerih podobe prevladajo nad besedilom, so redke in izjemne, so kratkotrajni odkloni od prevladujoče norme. Prevlada podob nad besedilom je nemreč indikator izjemne pomembnosti nekega dogodka. Kot nazorno kažejo primeri poročanja denimo ob Azijskem tsunamiju 2004, terorističnih napadih 11. septembra 2001 ali slovenski desetdnevni vojni 1991, nenadna porast števila podob nakazuje na percipirano izjemnost dogodka in z njim povezano družbeno krizo, število fotografij pa upade z »normalizacijo« dogodka ali vzpostavitev njegove dominantne interpretacije.

Pričujoča disertacija se osredotoča na vprašanje moči fotografije, moči, ki izhaja iz dvoumnega in dinamičnega odnosa med podobo, besedilom, občinstvom ter družbenimi

institucijami, ki se borijo za določitev njihove vloge v mreži družbenih, ekonomskih in političnih odnosov moči. Disertacija tako proučuje načine, na katere so fotografije uporabljene v slovenskem tisku za konstrukcijo, komuniciranje in razširjanje družbenih identifikacij, še posebej nacionalne identitete skozi novinarsko sporočanje. Tako združuje proučevanje medijev/novinarstva in nacionalne identitete/nacionalizma s fotografijo, povezavo, ki je povečini spregledana navkljub tesni zgodovinski, paradigmatiki in epistemološki povezanosti teh treh področij. Njihova sorodnost se nenazadnje kaže tudi v trenutnem občutku krize in (spoznavne) negotovosti, ki zadnji dve desetletji postavlja pod vprašaj fotografsko produkcijo in teoretizacijo, konceptualizacijo in institucionalizacijo nacionalne države ter kredibilnost in družbeno funkcionalnost medijev in novinarstva.

Neraziskanost povezanosti teh treh polj je presenetljiva, a hkrati simptomatična za paradigme znotraj katerih se je v preteklih desetletjih razvijalo kritično proučevanje novinarstva, nacionalne identitete in fotografije. Presenetljiva je predvsem zato, ker študije nacionalnih identitet in nacionalizmov že tri desetletja poudarjajo konstitutivno vlogo množičnega komuniciranja za oblikovanje ideje naroda kot politične skupnosti in za njeno vsakdanjo, rutinsko ohranjanje. Po drugi strani pa je zapostavljanje vizualnega simptomatično za ambivalenten odnos do podob, ki je zaznamoval večino (zahodnih) znanstvenih razprav o moderni in postmoderni. S tem mislim predvsem na povečevanje okularcentrizma kot osrednjega načina spoznavanja sveta ter hkraten slabšalen in nemalokrat zaničevalen odnos do podob in gledanja samega. Ta ambivaletnost se paradoksalno združi v pogostih proklamacijah o nezaustavljivi prevladi in moči podob v sodobnih družbah, ki pa ne pomenijo nujno tudi njihove legitimizacije kot objektov znanstvenega proučevanja. Ta ambivaleten odnos bi lahko poimenovali kar »racionalistični predsodek«, saj je privilegiranje besedila na račun podob utemeljeno na dveh globoko zakoreninjenih, a le redko reflektiranih

predpostavkah. Prva poudarja nujnost posameznikovega racionalnega delovanja na področjih politike, ekonomije in komuniciranja, druga pa povezuje podobe z iracionalnim delovanjem in vplivanjem, s čustvenimi reakcijami, ki so v nasprotju z racionalnostjo uma in logičnega sklepanja. Takšno enačenje razuma z besedilom kot antipoda čustvom in podobam je le eno v nizu kulturno ustvarjenih binarnih nasprotij, kot so denimo znanost in umetnost, resnica in videz, moškost in ženskost itd., ki so značilna tako za popularne kot institucionalne rabe. Marginalizacija in očrnitev podob je v največji meri povezana z (ne)razumevanjem njihovega delovanja, s strahom pred njihovo močjo, celo magičnostjo.

Toda kaj je pravzaprav tisto, kar naredi (fotografske) podobe tako primerne za komuniciranje prelomnih dogodkov in zgodovine, za družbeno samorazumevanje? Deloma moč podob izhaja iz njihove zmožnosti, da ustvarijo iluzijo participacije, da postavijo gledalca v vlogo priče, očitve. Vendar ključna moč fotografske podobe ne izvira iz tega, da se gledalec o videnem »prepriča na lastne oči«, temveč iz zmožnosti fotografij, da v ta prikazni realizem sočasno vpeljejo še simbolno raven komuniciranja, ki presega opisne omejitve jezika. Kot bo prikazano v disertaciji, je prav ta inherentna dvojnost fotografske podobe – njena hkratna metonimična narava in simbolni potencial – tisto, kar omogoča fotografijam, da postanejo nadomestki za individualno in kolektivno (re)producirane interpretacije sedanjosti in preteklosti. V tem procesu se splošno prepoznavne podobe izoblikujejo v močna pomenska in spominska vozlišča (nodes), ki strukturirajo pripovedi in samorazumevanje na ravni kolektiva in posameznika. Nacionalna identiteta je zgolj en (četudi pogosto primaren) sistem tovrstnih pomenskih vozlišč in njihovih naracij.

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Pričujoča disertacija se umešča v trenutno hitro razvijajoče se polje študij vizualne kulture, ki poskušajo repozicionirati zapostavljenost in pogosto negativno karakteritacijo podob znotraj proučevanja množičnega komuniciranja in umetnosti, pri čemer se naslanjajo na intelektualno tradicijo (britanskih) kulturnih študij, kritične komunikologije ter postmoderne teoretizacije fotografije. Novinarska fotografija je tako obravnavana kot specifična oblika političnega komuniciranja, vgnezdена v in posledično določena s širšim družbenim kontekstom in nacionalno identiteto.

Disertacija se osredotoča na proučevanje fotografskih reprezentacij v medijskem poročanju, predvsem na njihovo vlogo pri artikulaciji kolektivnih identitet, pri čemer ji kot analitični okvir služi koncept nacionalne identitete. Kako je narod »zamišljen« in komuniciran na ravni novinarskih podob? Kaj objavljene podobe komunicirajo občinstvu? Katere diskurzivne resurse in strategije so uporabljane? Kakšen je odnos med vizualnim in besedilnim delom poročanja? Kot nakazujejo ključna vprašanja, na katera poskuša disertacija odgovoriti, je analiza omejena na področje reprezentacije in se ne ukvarja z nivojema produkcije in percepcije podob. Kar ponuja, je podrobna kvalitativna analiza komunikacijske vrednosti novinarske fotografije za konstrukcijo in vzdrževanje nacionalne identitete.

Disertacija tako gradi na analizi fotografskih artikulacij *privilegiranih diskurzivnih elementov* slovenske nacionalne identitete in njihovem vplivu na selekcijo in način upovedovanja domačih in mednarodnih novic. Privilegirani diskurzivni elementi so specifične artikulacije nacionalne identitete, ki jih ustvarja in promovira širok spekter institucij nacionalne države in ki tvorijo jedro, okoli katerega posamezniki lahko artikulirajo svoja občutja nacionalne pripadnosti. Privilegirani diskurzivni elementi vključujejo kanonizirane interpretacije

zgodovine in kulture (ki vstopajo v kolektivno zavest skozi izobraževanje, publicistiko, muzeje, popularno kulturo of glasbe do filmov, državne praznike itd.), pa tudi mite in simbole, ki jih denimo v svojo retoriko vpletajo politični akterji. Disertacija obravnava privilegirane diskurzive elemente kot vizualne in besedilne novičarske *okvirje* (frames). Četudi študije okvirjanja vizualne elemente novic praviloma izpuščajo iz analize, so fotografske podobe lahko zelo vpliven artikulator okvirjev in posledično zelo učinkovite pri promociji določenih definicij, interpretacij in vrednotenj poročanih dogodkov. Kot bo pokazala analiza, je vloga fotografij kot interpretativnih okvirjev še posebej pomembna v primerih, ko vizualna naracija odstopa od besedilne.

Eksplorativna kvalitativna analiza vizualnega okvirjanja je bila narejena na primeru dveh dogodkov, ki sta generirala široko javno razpravo o slovenski nacionalni identiteti skozi potrjevanje ali izpraševanje njenih privilegiranih diskurzivnih elementov. Izbrana dogodka – referendum o pridružitvi Slovenije Evropski uniji in zvezi NATO iz leta 2003 ter izselitev Romske družine Strojanovih iz leta 2006 – sta bila izbrana zato, ker ustrezata dvojni naravi kolektivnih identifikacijskih procesov – artikulaciji lastne identitete skozi odnos do zunanjih in notranjih drugih. Referendum o pridružitvi EU in NATO je bil izbran zaradi osrednje vloge, ki jo je v predreferendumskih razpravah igrala nacionalna identiteta. Javne razprave so bile namreč tudi javno ovrednotenje slovenskega projekta politične, družbene in ekonomske neodvisnosti in so diskurzivne elite so v tem hegemoničnem boju za izoblikovanje mnenjskega konsenza odločno sodelovale. Ta proces je temeljil v prvi vrsti na jasni artikulaciji zunanjega Drugega. Izselitev Strojanovih je bila izbrana kot paradigmatski primer konstrukcije oz. preizpraševanja nacionalne identitete skozi artikulacijo notranjega Drugega. Odločilna kriterija za izbiro Strojanovih in ne kakšne druge marginalizirane skupine (npr. Izbrisani, ilegalni migranti, prebivalci iz nekdanjih jugoslovanskih republik) sta bila narava

poročanja (kontinuirano, ne pa sporadično) in njegovo preizpraševanje vrste temeljnih idej, idealov in simbolov, na katerih je utemeljena hegemonična artikulacija slovenske nacionalne identitete. V analizo sta bila vključena dva časnika (Delo in Dnevnik) ter dva politična tednika (Mladina in Mag) zaradi vključitve čim bolj lastniško raznovrstnih in politično profiliranih medijev ter njihovih različnih profesionalnih rutin in dostopnih virov informacij. V vzorec so bili zajeti trije meseci pred referendumom o prodružitvi EU in NATU, ki je potekal 23. 3. 2003, kar je obdobje, v katerem so se odvijali najpomembnejši mnenjski boji in z referendumom povezane politične odločitve. V primeru Strojanovih je analiza zajemala medijsko poročanje od začetnega incidenta konec oktobra 2006 do delne razrešitve afere v januarju 2007. Obe temi nista bili analizirani izolirano ampak kot del toka dnevnih novic (flow), kar z drugimi besedami pomeni, da so bile v analizo zajeti tudi drugi deli publikacij, da bi razkrili neposredne ali posredne artikulacije nacionalnih identitet v njenih banalnih, vsakodnevnih oblikah.

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Strukturo pričujoče disertacije v veliki meri določa zgoraj omenjena prepletenost teoretskih polj proučevanja fotografije, medijev oz. novinarstva ter nacionalnih identitet/nacionalizmov. Tako fotografijo kot nacionalno identiteto namreč zaznamuje odsotnost koherentnih, vseobsegajočih teoretskih dispozicij o objektu proučevanja, zaradi česar sta obe ponavadi podrejeni drugim disciplinam in poljem, kot sta denimo sociologija in socialna psihologija za nacionalne identitete, ter medijske študije ali umetnostna zgodovina za fotografijo. Ta odsotnost konsenza o teoriji, metodah, tehnikah in temeljnih raziskovalnih vprašanjih je še posebej očitna v hitro rastočem korpusu literature o obeh področjih. Tako je za študije nacionalne identitete značilna poplava fragmentiranih študij primerov, ki ne prispevajo k oblikovanju nekega univerzalnejšega korpusa splošnih teoretskih dispozicij. Po drugi strani pisanju o fotografiji pogosto umanjka sistematičen teoretsko-analitičen aparat, zaradi česar



večina besedilne produkcije ostaja omejena na področje kritike, ne pa znanosti. Poleg tega sta obe polji sta razdeljeni na dva nasprotujoča si epistemološka in ideološka tabora, ki bi jih lahko poimenoval »naturalisti« in »kulturalisti«. Posledično je dovršen del disertacije namenjen razjasnitvi in teoretski osmislitvi ključnih konceptov. Poglavja o fotografski teoriji, novinarski fotografiji in nacionalni identiteti gre tako brati ne le kot poskus premoščanja spregledanih področij v obstoječi literaturi, temveč tudi kot poskus preseganja ekskluzivizma polariziranega teoretskega imaginarija.

Zaradi teoretske fragmentacije se disertacija naslanja na koncept privilegiranih diskurzivnih elementov tudi na nivoju teorije fotografije. To omogoči, da definicijo novinarske fotografije in fotožurnalizma kot njenega podžanra določim kot diskurzivno artikulacijo normativnih diskurzov in institucionaliziranih praks, ki se naslanjajo na šest privilegiranih diskurzivnih elementov: (1) časovno-prostorske dislokacije; (2) ikoničnost in indeksičnost; (3) specifična izrazna sredstva medija; (4) besedilo; (5) kontekst; (6) mistična moč/mistifikacija moči fotografije. Definicija novinarske fotografije in fotožurnalizma, ki jo ponujata dominantna diskurza izobraževanja in profesionalne etike, je dvoumna, saj na eni strani nekritično promovira idejo dejstvenega poročanja (pasivnega zapisovanja stvarnosti), po drugi pa zagovarja in nagraduje medijsko sposobnost simbolnega komuniciranja in preseganja zgolj povednega. V praksi se namreč fotožurnalizem zateka k nekakšni vizualni stenografiji – repertoarju predobstojećih vizualnih simbolov, metafor in metonimij, ki lahko dogodek dekontekstualizirajo in prikažejo znotraj simbolnega imaginarija predpripravljenih podob, ki se pnejo od prepoznavnih izrazov in gestikulacij univerzalnih občutij in čustev (denimo sreče, žalosti ali odločnosti), ponavljajočih se simbolnih podob (npr. rušenje spomenikov), stereotipov (zakrinkan muslimanski terorist) do referenc na skupno zakladnico podob popularne kulture ali visoke umetnosti. In prav skozi uporabo tovrstne vizualne stenografije

postanejo novinarske fotografije močen dejavnik promocije določenih novičarskih okvirjev. Skozi tovrstno simbolno reprezentacijo fotografije izpostavljajo (le) določen del realnosti, s čimer promovirajo točno določeno definicijo problema, njegovo (vzročno-posledično) razlago ali moralno vrednotenje in s tem omejujejo možne legitimne reakcije občinstva. Fotografije se zaradi svojega simbolnega potenciala kažejo še posebno primerne za novičarsko okvirjanje, zaradi njihove sposobnosti učinkovitega komuniciranja neracionalnih (npr. čustvenih) apelov.

Podoben diskurzivni pristop je uporabljen tudi za definicijo slovenske nacionalne identitete. Ta je razumljena kot »identifikacija«, kontinuiran, nikoli končan proces, ki ga posameznik izvaja znotraj strukturnih okvirjev, ki mu jih določajo dominantne družbene institucije. Nacionalna identiteta je koncipirana kot posebna oblika etnične identifikacije, katere funkcija je družbena organizacija kulturne razlike skozi kulturo in interakcijo. Sestavljajo jo internalizirani vzorci družbene diferenciacije, ki porajajo občutje pripadnosti z zamišljeno skupnostjo (imagined community), ki deli skupno usodo, ki ima skupno preteklost in pričakovano prihodnost. Zamišljene skupnosti se artikulirajo skozi definicijo meje (boundary), ki jo skupnost ustvari in vzdržuje skozi omejen nabor »lastnosti«. Razlike med skupnostmi torej niso rezultat nekakšne objektivne danosti temveč so produkt načrtne selekcije določenih elementov, ki omogočajo diferenciacijo oz. ki jih določena družbena skupina določi za pomembne. Meja se tako artikulira na dveh ravneh, na nivoju skupine pod okriljem njenih institucij, ter na nivoju posameznika, ki te artikulacije (modificirane ali nemodificirane) ponotranji, pri čemer se disertacija osredotoča le na institucionalne/formalne/načrtovane privilegirane diskurzivne elemente artikulacije meje. Slovenska nacionalna identiteta je informativen primer tovrstne diskurzivne konstrukcije in jo lahko že od samih začetkov sredi devetnajstega stoletja dalje obravnavamo kot gramscijevski hegemonični boj za (re)definicijo in (re)interpretacijo dokaj stabilnega nabora sedmih

diskurzivnih elementov. Ti so: (1) slovenski jezik in literarna kultura kot temeljna kamna naroda; (2) mit o Karantaniji kot (pra)izvoru slovenske državnosti; (3) mit tisočletnega sna o neodvisnosti; (4) zamišljen geografsko-kulturni prostor Srednje Evrope; (5) ideja limesa oziroma mejnosti; (6) tesna vez med religijo, slovenskostjo in kmetstvom; ter (7) povezava med (ruralno) krajino in narodom. Teh sedem privilegiranih diskurzivnih elementov naslavlja različne vidike slovenske nacionalne identitete in niso nujno vselej artikulirane znostraj posamične diskurzivne formacije. Tovrstna definicija slovenske nacionalne identitete omogoča tudi zelo natančno določitev »nacionalnih« novičarskih okvirjev, ki naj bi strukturirali vizualno novinarsko poročanje.

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Analiza fotografskih reprezentacij na primeru poročanja o predreferendumske razpravah o pridružitvi EU/NATO je pokazala, da so novičarske fotografije pomemben artikulator okvirov nacionalne identitete ne glede na njihovo šibko avtonomijo (podložnost besedilu), omejenem simbolizmu in navkljub omejitvam, ki jih nalagajo »kode objektivnosti« fotožurnalizma. Na straneh analiziranih publikacij je Slovenija prikazana kot sodobna Zahodna družba srednjega razreda, za katero je značilna določena stopnja premožnosti, potrošništva, zvezdnitva in osredotočenosti na prosti čas. Velik del publikacij je namenjen prikazu statusnih dobrin, kot so denimo avtomobili. Te rubrike so nemalokrat daljše od prostora, ki je namenjen denimo zunanjepolitičnim novicam pri časnikih ali tedenskemu fokusu pri revijah. Osrednje mesto srednjega razreda se konstruira skozi podobe institucionalizirane politike, omejevanju dostopa do javne sfere in v dominantni reprezentaciji dela. Tako denimo v ekonomski sferi skoraj povsem umanjka produkcijski vidik – fotografije v veliki večini predstavljajo vodilne kadre, delavci pa se na straneh publikacij pojavljajo zelo redko. Prosti čas je povezan s kulturo in aktivnostmi v naravi (planinstvo, zimski športi, enodnevni izleti). Jasno je vidna delitev na

urbani in ruralni svet, pri čemer pa je tudi urbani del populacije prikazan kot še vedno tesno povezan z naravo.

Glede kulturne pripadnosti, fotografije analiziranega obdobja vzpostavijo trdno povezavo med Slovenijo in globalnim Zahodom tako na nivoju institucionalne politike kot na nivoju civilne družbe. Neposredne vizualne reference na privilegirane diskurzivne elemente nacionalne identitete so bile redke, analiza pa je pokazala rabo okvirjanja novic skozi elemente nacionalne identitete z uporabo arhivskih fotografij ter interpretativnih podnapisov in naslovov. Skozi ta dva prijema nacionalna identiteta in zgodovina postaneta kriterij za presojanje moralnosti delovanja političnih akterjev in statusne hierarhije.

Bolj kot skozi neposredno vizualiziranje privilegiranih diskurzivnih elementov nacionalne identitete pri domačih novicah, se je vizualno okvirjanje izkazalo za značilno pri posrednem izkazovanju kulturne pripadnosti skozi pokrivanje zunanjepolitičnih dogodkov. To je denimo jasno razvidno pri prikazovanju napada na Irak, kjer fotografije konstituirajo novice znotraj diskurza binarnih nasprotij med nami (Zahod) in njimi (Orient) glede na kulturne in civilizacijske razlike skozi prizmo tehnološke in družbene razvitosti. Vizualno reprezentacijo vojne v Iraku – pogosto v močnem nasprotju z besedilnim delom novic – odločno zaznamuje vrednostna struktura Orientalizma, pri čemer je potrebno izpostaviti, da je od dveh polov, ki praviloma sestavljata diskurz Orientalizma (ženski – čuten, ter moški – nevaren), v publikacijah prisoten skoraj izključno moški pol, ki predstavlja nevarnega Drugega (npr. vizualizacija nasilnosti pri Iračanih in ne pri ameriških in koalicijskih vojakih).

Medijsko poročanje o aferi Strojanovi je bilo v veliki meri drugačno od predhodnega poročanja o Romih, ko so Romi praviloma predstavljali »družebni problem« in ogrožali »naš« držbenoekonomski red skozi kriminal, nasilje, lenobo in zlorabo mehanizmov socialne države. Podobno kot pri Orientalizmu, se je slovensko medijsko poročanje o Romih praviloma napajal samo iz ene, tj. negativne/moške veje diskurza o Romih (kriminal, umazanost, lenost). Četudi je nedvomno tudi dogodek sam prispeval k drugačnemu poročanju (odmevnost, trajanje, nivo in intenzivnost vpletenih državnih institucij ter civilne družbe), je največjo spremembo povzročila drugačna samopodoba medijev. Ti so se iz nevtralnih posrednikov informacij pretvorili v aktivne promotorje strpnosti in svoji deklarirani vlogi psa čuvaja poleg institucionalne politike dodali še nestrpne množice. To je v nekaterih publikacijah (Delo, Dnevnik, Mladina) privedlo do premika v poročanju: namesto do tedaj standardnega zoperstavljanja binarnih kategori »nas« in »njih« (Romi), se je poročanje preusmerilo v konflikt med »njimi« (netolerantni Slovenci) in »njimi« (Romi) ali celo v različico »mi« (tolerantni Slovenci) in »oni« (netolerantni Slovenci). Posledica tega spremenjenega diskurza in vloge družbene pedagogike je bilo poročanje o Romih kot konkretnih posameznikov. Namesto abstraktne, anonimne kolektivitete, se Strojanovi prikažejo kot družina z nekaj jasno prepoznavnimi posamezniki, ki sta jim je poleg imena dana tudi (lastna) beseda in (fotografska) podoba. Vendar ta premik ni prišel brezpogojno – cena, ki so jo za svojo individualizacijo morali plačati Strojanovi, je bila izguba Romskosti. Pozitivnejše novinarsko poročanje o Strojanovih je bilo namreč izvedljivo le znotraj obstoječih kategorij in privilegiranih diskurzivnih elementov slovenske nacionalne identitete. Najbolj jasno se ta premik vidi v postopnem izoblikovanju ikonične figure »mame Jelke« kot ključnega člana družine, ki ustreza kanoniziranemu liku trpeče cankarjanske matere, ki se žrtvuje za dobrobit svojih otrok in ki je v kolektivni zavesti usidran skozi kanonizirano literaturo, filmsko produkcijo, narodnozabavne pesmi in učne načrte. Fotografski diskurz še

posebej posvoji ikoničnost »mame Jelke« s čimer prispeva k demaskulinizaciji družine, ki jo sproži fokus na otrocih in ženskah. Za razliko od svojih sinov namreč »mama Jelka« ni predstavljena kot nemočna in vdana v usodo, hkrati pa je tisti akter, ki omogoči preskok iz negativnega moškega diskurza o Romih v pozitivnejši ženski diskurz. Vizualne reprezentacije podpirajo tovrstno konstrukcijo dogodkov ne samo skozi podobe Strojanovih kot feminizirane družine (fokus na ženskah in otrocih) temveč tudi skozi prikaz protestnikov, ki so vizualizirani kot (večinoma) moške (in nevarne) skupine.

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Analiza je pokazala, da nacionalna identiteta pomembno strukturira vizualno poročanje domačih in mednarodnih dogodkov, četudi je praksa vsakodnevnega označevanja nacije v vizualnem registru manj neposredna kot v verbalnem. Hkrati je analiza pokazala, da nacionalna identiteta in iz nje izhajajoča civilizacijska pripadnost konstituirata vzorce, ki določajo fotografsko reprezentacijo tudi izven področja politike, v rubrikah kot so turizem in potovanja, zanimivosti, kulinarika, kultura, tehnologija, šport in nenazadnje, oglaševanje. Nadalje je analiza pokazala, da tovrstni strukturni vzorci diferencirane vizualizacije niso odvisni od vira (tuje tiskovne agencije, domači fotografi) ali preofesionalnega statusa ustvarjalca podob (poklicni fotografi, amaterski fotografi). Povedano drugače, analiza je pokazala, da obstajajo strukturni vzorci neenakosti fotografskih reprezentacij posameznikov in družbenih skupin, ki ne pripadajo »našemu svetu« oziroma naši »zamišljeni geografiji« (Said). Te ugotovitve nikakor niso specifične zgolj za analizirane primere, saj se skladajo z ugotovitvami mojih predhodnih analiz novinarske fotografije v slovenskih dnevnikih, ki so bile opravljene z drugačno metodologijo na bolj longitudinalnem vzorcu.

Analiza predreferendumskih razprav o pridružitvi EU/NATO ter afere Strojanovi je pokazala, da so neposredne in eksplicitne vizualizacije privilegiranih diskurzivnih elementov nacionalne identitete v aktualnih političnih novicah relativno redke, so pa zato pogosto uporabljane v nenovičarskih rubrikah analiziranih publikacij, denimo skozi krajinske fotografije (ruralnost, kmetstvo, narava, katolištvo). Prav tako so bile eksplicitne reference na označevalce nacionalne identitete pogoste v tedenskih prilogah analiziranih časnikov, kjer fotografije večinoma ne služijo upovedovanju novic ampak ilustraciji mnenjskih prispevkov. Je pa analiza pokazala na dve učinkoviti strategiji uporabe direktnih referenc za vizualizacijo privilegiranih diskurzivnih elementov slovenske nacionalne identitete: (1) uporaba arhivskih fotografij, povezanih s kanoniziranimi dogodki slovenske zgodovine, ter (2) uporabo interpretativnih podnapisov in naslovov.

Arhivske fotografije so izhajale iz časa t.i. slovenske pomladi in desetdnevne osamosvojitvene vojne in so se izkazale kot zelo vpliven način okvirjanja, saj kanonizirana preteklost z vidika teleološke interpretacije narodove zgodovine ponuja ultimativni kriterij za presojanje (ne)moralnosti trenutnih dogodkov ter preteklih ali trenutnih dejanj političnih akterjev. Za te vizualne reference kanoniziranih dogodkov nedavne zgodovine je značilno, da gre za omejeno število vedno znova uporabljenih fotografij (npr. aretacija Janeza Janše, zborovanja na Kongresnem trgu, dvig zastave na osamosvojitveni proslavi leta 1991, tanki JNA med »desetdnevno vojno« ipd.), ki so pogosto uporabljane tudi v drugih kontekstih (knjige, plakati, dokumentarni filmi, učbeniki). Te fotografije so uporabljane, da umestijo dogodek ali akterje v tok nacionalne zgodovinske pripovedi in posledično vrednotijo oziroma okvirjajo interpretacijo v luči ultimativnega moralnega kriterija – vzpostavitve nacionalne samostojnosti in državnosti. Med analiziranimi publikacijami je pri rabi arhivskih fotografij izstopal Mag, kjer so bile uporabljane ali kot samostojne ilustracije za okvirjanje pomena

besedila ali kot vrednostni kvalifikatorji ob fotografijah sodobnih dogodkov (npr. zoperstavitev proti NATO demonstrantov z ikonično podobo dviga zastave pred parlamentom na osamosvojitveni proslavi leta 1991). Poleg tega je Mag uporabljal arhivske fotografije Josipa Broza Tita kot negativne označevalce oseb ali dogodkov. Drug način neposrednega artikuliranja privilegiranih elementov slovenske nacionalne identitete je predstavljala uporaba interpretativnega spremnega besedila. Besedilo v obliki podnapisov ali velikih naslovov za sidranje »pravilnega« branja podobe in reference na narod oziroma njegovo zgodovino sta uporabljala predvsem Mag in v nekoliko manjši meri Mladina.

Poleg neposrednih fotografskih referenc na privilegirane diskurzivne elemente nacionalne identitete, je analiza pokazala, da so objavljene novinarske fotografije pomemben mehanizem *posrednega* označevanja nacionalne identitete, še posebej na primeru mednarodnih novic. Slednje skozi proces vsakodnevnega, rutinskega označevanja (Billig) meje nacionalne skupnosti (Barth) odločilno prispevajo h konstrukciji *zamišljenih geografij* (Said). Zamišljene geografije so diskurzivno konstruirane percepcije prostora, ki so ne le gradnik procesa kolektivne identifikacije, temveč funkcionirajo tudi kot sredstvo in opravičilo za simbolno, ekonomsko ali politično dominacijo določenih ozemelj. Zamišljene geografije so dramatizacije razlike, ki je v prvi vrsti civilizacijska, kulturna, ter šele nato geografska, kar se jasno odraža v vzorcih poročanja o mednarodnih dogodkih (npr. količina, frekvenca, način). V tem procesu novinarske fotografije postanejo sredstvo materializacije oziroma vizualizacije prostora in dramatizacije socialne in fizične distance med nacionalnimi državami.

Analiza je pokazala, da so novinarske fotografije uporabljane za označevanje zamišljene geografije na vsaj štiri načine: (1) podreprezentacija kulturno drugačnih narodov, držav in



njihovih predstavnikov; (2) poročanje o različnih vrstah dogodkov; (3) različen način vizualizacije istih tipov dogodkov, političnih predstavnikov ali tem; in (4) poročanje skladno s predobstoječimi podobami, vrednotenji in stereotipi.

Vloga novinarske fotografije kot označevalcev zamišljene geografije izhaja v prvi vrsti iz uredniških odločitev, ali določen dogodek ali političnega akterja vizualizirati ali ne. Moč izrisovanja mej skozi fotografije je torej moč odbiralateljstva (gatekeeping), moč izbirati, katera področja bodo vizualno prikazana in katera ne. Države, ki so kulturno, politično ali ekonomsko bližje neki zamišljeni skupnosti, so tudi pogostejše vizualizirane. Vizualno poročanje držav, ki so določeni zamišljeni skupnosti drugačne ali tuje se poveča le, če pričnejo predstavljati vojaško, politično ali ekonomsko grožnjo. V slovenskih publikacijah se meja zamišljene geografije vije med »Zahodnim svetom«, konkretnije državami Evropske unije in ZDA, ter državami, ki so se do nedavnega označevale za Drugi in Tretji svet. Problem podreprezentacije je prisoten tako v dnevnikih kot v tedenskih publikacijah, kjer je zaradi omejenega prostora, ki je namenjen mednarodnim novicam, fokus na elitne Zahodne države še toliko bolj opazen.

Drugi mehanizem zamejevanja med »našim« in »njihovim« svetom so strukturne razlike v poročanju oziroma neporočanju določenih vrst dogodkov. Študije že od šestdesetih let prejšnjega stoletja kažejo, da mediji razvitih držav o nerazvitih državah poročajo prvenstveno v povezavi z »negativnimi novicami«, kot so vojne, vojaški udari, naravne nesreče, politična represija, lakote ipd. Vzorce negativnega poročanja bi lahko šteli za drugo stran pojava podreprezentiranja Drugega. Pri tem velja pravilo, da je večja verjetnost, da bodo fotografije drugačnih ali Drugih držav oziroma narodov objavljene, če bo šlo za negativne novice.

Končni rezultat tovrstne prakse ni le relativno konstanten dotok podob trpljenja, uničenja in revščine iz določenih področij sveta. Sam po sebi tok tovrstnih negativnih reprezentacij še ni problematičen, problematično pa je dejstvo, da tovrstne podobe nimajo nasprotnega diskurza. Torej da ne obstaja tok podob, ki bi bile povezane z nevtralnimi ali pozitivnimi novicami iz teh področij. Poleg novic, k tovrstni vizualni diferenciaciji močno prispevajo tudi rubrike o turizmu in zanimivostih, ki se pogosto osredotočajo na teme nenavadnega, »čudnega« ali eksotičnega, skozi katere utrjujejo in potrjujejo »normalnost« lastne kulture. V tovrstnih rubrikah v Delu in Magu denimo »zanimivih«, nenavadnih družbenih praks iz Zahodnih držav skoraj ni zaslediti.

Tretji način na katerega so novinarske fotografije rutinsko uporabljane za demarkacijo meje med zamišljenimi skupnostmi in njihovimi zamišljenimi geografijami, so različni prikazi (funkcionalno) enakih družbenih akterjev ali tem. Z vidika nacionalne identitete je ta način demarkacije še povednješi (in problematičnejši) od predhodnih dveh. Razlika je najočitnejša pri strukturnih razlikah, ki zaznamujejo prikaze političnih akterjev, katerih funkcije so personifikacija države, personalizacija politike ter simbolno podeljevanje legitimnosti oz. pomembnosti. Kot je pokazala analiza, legitimnost in pomembnost nista univerzalni dobrini – v slovenskem tisku obstajajo namreč strukturni vzorci drugačnega prikazovanja politikov iz »našega« in nam tujega sveta. Razlike se kažejo denimo v zornem kotu, iz katerega je posneta fotografija: fotografije »naših« politikov praviloma konotirajo njihovo moč (posnete od spodaj navzgor), medtem ko so fotografije politike razvijajočega se in nam tujega sveta večinoma posnete na način, ki njihovo simbolno moč zmanjšuje (npr. posnete od zgoraj) ali je vsaj ne poudarja. Poleg tega so politiki razvitega sveta prikazani na način, ki poudarja njihovo individualnost, medtem ko so politični voditelji razvijajočih se držav večinoma prikazani kot del kolektivov, skupin, fotografirani od dlje ipd. Nadalje so politični akterji iz nam

tujih/drugih držav pogosteje prikazani kot pasivni, njihovi Zahodni kolegi pa so po pravilu aktivni (npr. gestikulacija, telesna govorica, poze, gibanje po prostoru itd.). Prav tako so njihove fotografije praviloma manjše in objavljene na manj prestižnih straneh in pozicijah (notranje strani; spodnja polovica strani). Poleg tega so politiki iz razvijajočega sveta oziroma Drugih držav pogosto prikazani neosebno – skozi reprezentacije v obliki plakatov, kipov, lutk ali medijskih reprezentacij (npr. nastopi na televiziji) – ali pa so namesto njihovih objavljene fotografije navadnih državljanov, otrok itd.

V najbolj ekstremnih primerih se drugačnost in Drugost vzpostavita skozi uporabo stereotipnih vizualizacij. Za nam tuje in Druge države je značilna objava fotografij, ki nimajo neposredne zveze s poročanim dogodkom in kot take predstavljajo odmik od novinarskih standardov točnega in aktualnega poročanja. Poleg tega tovrstne fotografije pogosto prihajajo iz nenovičarskih diskurzov, kot sta denimo popotna ali stock oziroma oglaševalska fotografija. Pogosto gre za »tipične« ulične prizore, ki niso niti nujno iz države, o kateri medij poroča, ali pa so uporabljene arhivske fotografije podobnih lokacij, dogodkov itd. Tovrstne fotografije, še posebej tiste, ki izhajajo iz turističnega diskurza, so pomembni vizualni okviri, saj na spremljevalno besedilo vežejo vrsto predstav, vrednostnih sodb in asociacij, ki (lahko) determinirajo branje in razumevanje besedila. Poleg tovrstnih fotografij je analiza pokazala naklonjenost uporabi klišejskih in stereotipnih podob, kot je denimo zakrinkani muslimanski bojevniki. Tovrstne podobe so problematične, saj na eni strani omejujejo možno pojavnost določenih etničnih, verskih ali političnih skupin, po drugi pa dogodke, ki naj bi jih upovedovali, abstrahirajo iz njihovega specifičnega socio-zgodovinskega trenutka in premestijo v »ahistorično«, interpretativno naracijo.

Disertacija tovrstne strukturne razlike v fotografskih reprezentacijah v tiskanih medijih pripiše internaliziranim vzorcem nacionalne identifikacije novinarjev, fotografov, urednikov in oblikovalcev, tj. »domačim« ustvarjalcem novic. Komunikološka literatura navaja tri modele teoretizacije tovrstnih strukturnih vzorcev diferencialne reprezentacije: obvladovanje globalnih novičarskih tokov s strani Zahodnih tiskovnih agencij, odbirateljstvo ter propagandni model. Zaključek disertacije pokaže, da fotografskih reprezentacij v analiziranih publikacijah ne moremo preprosto zreducirati na vprašanje informacijske odvisnosti od globalnih, Zahodnih ponudnikov novic. Tiskovne agencije resda pomembno zamejijo količino dostopnih novic (in s tem vzdržujejo tudi monopol nad definicijo kaj šteje za novico), vendar vselej ponujajo veliko bolj raznovrstno podobo sveta, kot je tista, ki jo ponujajo publikacije. Moč tiskovnih agencij je tako moč prednostnega tematiziranja (agenda setting), moč lokalnih urednikov in novinarjev pa v dokončni izbiri in interpretaciji, tj. moč okvirjanja (framing). Prav tako analiziranih fotografskih reprezentacij ni mogoče brez ostanka zreducirati na delovanje poropagandnega modela, razen če t.i. peti filter oz. filter dominantne ideologije ne povežemo z nacionalno identiteto. Podobno se iskaže pri aplikaciji modela odbirateljstva, kjer se kot odločilni dejavnik selekcije novic iskaže poseben vidik nacionalne identitete – nacionalni interes.

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Odločilni vpliv nacionalne identitete oziroma njenih privilegiranih diskurzivnih elementov na strukturiranje vizualnega novinarskega sporočanja izhaja primarno iz družbeno-integracijske funkcije množičnih medijev, deloma pa iz nejasnih profesionalnih kriterijev za izbiro in uporabo novinarske fotografije, zaradi katerih je njena raba praviloma pogojena z intuitivnimi argumenti in osebno, velikokrat nezavedno presojo. Ta pa je vselej prepletena s kulturnimi dejavniki in (nacionalnimi) identifikacijskimi matricami, ki zaznamujejo družbo in prostor, na katerem medijska produkcija nastaja. Vendar v tem kontekstu »kulturno« nikakor ni

razumljeno kot apolitično. V »nacionalizirajočih nacionalizmih« (nationalising nationalisms), ki zaznamuje države, kot je Slovenija, je namreč »kulturno« polje eksplicitnih političnih bojev za hegemonično interpretacijo realnosti med posredno in neposredno politično motiviranimi skupinami.

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