Re-imagining Human Rights Photography: Ariella Azoulay's Intervention

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Introduction:

The vital importance of photojournalism for human rights reporting has been long recognised, recurrently heralded for helping to bring to light for public attention and deliberation exigent crises otherwise marginalised, if not ignored altogether, in mainstream news media. Today it is widely perceived to be undergoing a dramatic transformation, however, due to shifting financial rationales (e.g., the decline of major photo agencies, changes in editorial priorities due to news organisations' budget constraints, the impact of internet-centred networks on production, distribution, licensing, and recompense); technological imperatives, such as digitalisation across online platforms; the casualisation of the craft, including shifts from salaried professionals to freelancers; and the advent of mobile digital photography, where citizen witnesses provide first-hand imagery via social media sites, amongst other concerns (see Allan, 2013, 2017; Caple, 2014; Gürsel, 2016; Mortensen, 2015; Pantti and Sirén, 2015; Sheller, 2015; Thomson, 2016). NGOs concerned with human rights are increasingly proactive in responding to these challenges, some electing to commission photojournalists to document crisis events that would otherwise elude news organisations' purview, while others encourage ordinary individuals and groups in afflicted areas to contribute alternative, eyewitness visual reportage (see Dencik and Allan, 2017; Kurasawa, 2015; McLagan and McKee, 2012; McPherson, 2015; Powers, 2016; Wells, 2008; Zarzycka, 2016). Whilst such initiatives potentially serve to render visible the hitherto invisible, they simultaneously raise pressing ethical questions, not least with regard to the journalistic status of the ensuing imagery's truth-claims.

This chapter aims to contribute to theory-building for this area of enquiry by focusing on several pertinent contributions made by Ariella Azoulay which, taken together, constitute an important intervention that invites a radical rethinking of familiar assumptions regarding human rights photography. Here at the outset we turn to her book *The Civic Contract of Photography*, where she elaborates the basis for an alternative approach to citizenship in this context, namely by bringing together discourses of civil contracts with those of photography. 'Photography, at times, is the only civic refuge at the disposal of those robbed of citizenship,' Azoulay (2008) writes, and as such its capacity to provide visual evidence of discriminatory oppression is vital. Here she takes issue with those who insist that 'photography lies' and so cannot be trusted, who are dismissive of its enduring power as a medium of truth documenting what was present before the lens. In her words:

> Photography's critics tend to forget that despite the fact that photography speaks falsely, it *also* speaks the truth. A photograph does in fact attest to what 'was there,' although its evidence is partial, and only in this sense is it false. What was there is *never*

> only what is visible in the photograph, but is also contained in the very photographic situation, in which photographer and photographed interact around a camera. That is, a photograph is evidence of the social relations, which made it possible, and these cannot be removed from the visible 'sense' that it discloses to spectators who can agree or disagree on its actual content. The social relation that 'was there,' to which a photograph attests, is an expression of a mutual guarantee, or its infringement (Azoulay, 2008: 126-127; emphasis in original).

Inundated with a surfeit of images, certain theorists – Roland Barthes, Jean Baudrillard and Susan Sontag are named – have fallen prey to what they liken to 'image fatigue,' Azoulay contends, which has meant they have effectively stopped looking. 'The world filled up with images of horrors,' she writes, 'and they loudly proclaimed that viewers' eyes had grown unseeing, proceeding to unburden themselves of the responsibility to hold onto the elementary gesture of looking at what is presented to one's gaze' (2008: 11).

This burden of responsibility must be borne, however emotionally difficult it may prove to endure at times. 'Photography is one of the instruments which has enabled the modern citizen to establish her liberal rights,' Azoulay points out, 'including freedom of movement and of information, as well as her right to take photographs and to be photographed, to see what others see and would like to show through photographs' (2008: 125). That said, however, neither the photographer nor the photographed persons can determine how their meaning will be inscribed in the ensuing image, she contends, namely because the photograph 'exceeds any presumption of ownership or monopoly and any attempt at being exhaustive' (2008: 11-12). Possibilities for alternative readings of a depicted event will be there, the social relations enabling the photograph's production and subsequent interpretation never being entirely fixed around a singular, stable meaning. In principle at least, anyone 'can pull at one of its threads and trace it in such a way as to reopen the image and renegotiate what it shows, possibly even completely over-turning what was seen in it before' (2008: 13). These negotiations necessitate a civic skill being utilised by the spectator, one that amounts to more than aesthetic appreciation. This is particularly apparent, she argues, where the event rendered concerns human suffering, with such readings being alert to the harm being perpetrated. Indeed, the spectator has a duty to employ this skill under such circumstances, she maintains, 'an obligation to others to struggle against injuries inflicted on those others' (2008: 14).

In striving to theorise human rights photography in relation to visual literacy, then, this belief that individuals' tacit commitment to one another should be first and foremost – rather than toward the ruling power – is of crucial import. The very nature of the photographic act in this regard, Azoulay maintains, 'presumes the existence of a civil space in which photographers, photographed subjects, and spectators share a recognition that what they are witnessing is intolerable' (2008: 18; Azoulay, 2012, 2016). A conceptual framework, which as an ontology of photography has been criticised for its foundation upon "possible Euro–American-centric narratives" (Pinney, 2015: 23) and its "open–ended construction of a political "we" (Roberts: 2014: 11). Yet,

when applied to human rights photography, her work offers invaluable insight into a more productive way of understanding, relating to, acting with, through and upon, photography. For purposes of this chapter, our attention turns to the continuity between what she regards as the two events of photography – the first characterised by the mediation of the photographer's camera capturing a moment at the scene, the other transpiring retroactively via the ensuing photographic images, and thereby resisting closure – and its implications for how and why 'regime-made disaster conditions' recurrently elude journalistic attention. That is to say, where the almost routine, everyday violence experienced by Palestinians in the Occupied Territories has recurrently failed the test of Western criteria of newsworthiness (media codes isolating events, denying them adequate context), it may well come to light in the photographic depository or archive, 'a source that can be accessed, consulted, interpreted, and used by the many without any racial, national, gender, or other discrimination and precondition' (2016: 218). It is the latter event, which opens up new opportunities, she argues, for spectators to intervene.

Observing Unbearable Sights

The evidentiary status of human rights photography defies straightforward categorisation. Writing with the benefit of hindsight, Azoulay recognised how 'observing the unbearable sights presented in photographs from the Occupied Territories, encountering them in the national context within which they were presented and enduring the difficulty of facing them day after day,' compelled her to develop this conception of what she terms the 'civil contract' between partner-participants in the act of photography in disaster contexts (2008: 16). This contract exemplifies an imagined arrangement that regulates relations within this virtual community of participants (once again, photographer, photographed subject, and spectator) prepared to suspend, even challenge 'the gesture of the sovereign power seeking to totally dominate the relations between us, dividing us as governed into citizens and noncitizens thus making disappear the violation of *our* citizenship' (2008: 23; emphasis in original). As she proceeds to elaborate:

> The widespread use of cameras by people around the world has created more than a mass of images; it has created a new form of encounter, an encounter between people who take, watch, and show other people's photographs, with or without their consent, thus opening new possibilities of political action and forming new conditions for its visibility. The relations between the three parties involved in the photographic act – the photographed person, the photographer, and the spectator – are not mediated through a sovereign power and are not limited to the bounds of a nation-state or an economic contract. The users of photography thus re-emerge as people who are not totally identified with the power that governs them and who have new means to look at and show *its* deeds, as well, and eventually to address this power and negotiate with it – citizen and noncitizen alike (Azoulay, 2008: 24).

It follows that where the nation-state (re) territorializes citizenship, namely by striving to protect those declared as citizens while discriminating against non-citizens, photography deterritorializes citizenship (see also Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). That is, in transgressing these boundaries, photography invites the eventual participation of all the governed – citizen and non-citizen alike – in the political space it plots. 'Photographs,' she argues, 'bear traces of a plurality of political relations that might be actualized by the act of watching, transforming and disseminating what is seen into claims that demand action' (2008: 25-26). Spectatorship, therefore, is effectively anchored in civic duty.

Azoulay relates the civil contract of photography to Rousseau's conception of the social contract as something 'perhaps never been formally set forth' previously, yet that is 'everywhere the same and everywhere tacitly admitted and recognised' (Rousseau cited in Azoulay, 2008: 26). Its historical existence in every act of photography – the civil contract being as old as photography itself – has become so conventionalised as to be taken for granted. To render explicit the implicit clauses of this contract, it follows, is to recognise that photography as an apparatus of governmental power may well encounter resistance by those enacting their right to challenge its imperatives. Under certain conditions, photography can afford an individual with the means to establish sufficient distance from this power to be able to observe its actions, Azoulay contends, thereby providing them with a degree of protection in the visual field (see also Chouliaraki, 2012, 2016; Cottle and Cooper, 2015; Fehrenbach and Rodogno, 2015; Sliwinski, 2011; Kozol, 2014). Members of what she calls 'the citizenry of photography' are obliged to safeguard this right; best they are able, in partnership with others. 'Exercising this right – or discharging this duty – constantly undermines any attempt of founding an exclusive sovereign authority over the exercise of photography' (2008: 105). To become a citizen in the citizenry of photography, she adds, will entail 'seeking, by means of photography, to rehabilitate one's citizenship or that of someone else who has been stripped of it' (2008: 117).

In discerning the varying degrees to which different groups are exposed to the dispossession of citizenship, Azoulay draws particular attention to Palestinians considered 'stateless persons,' as well as the denial of full citizenship to women in different national contexts. She employs the phrase 'regime-made disaster' to characterise how citizens can be differentiated from non-citizens by a political regime intent on protecting the former at the expense of the latter. 'Its visible measures are expulsion, dispossession, and destruction related to "others,"' she writes, 'inflicted by one population of governed – usually the citizens, the privileged ones – upon another.' In this way, a 'vicious circle' unfolds whereby this type of disaster 'makes itself invisible to this population of citizens who are mobilized to take part in it, especially because it is not perceived as disaster' while, at the same time, 'they do not perceive themselves as those who inflict such a disaster or are responsible for its outcome' (2013: 550). A regime-made disaster persists, it follows, because it enables 'those who partake in it not to resist it because they are conditioned not to recognize it'; even were they to do so, it is likely to be partial (namely as that which is done to 'others'), such is the purchase of existent categories.

To what extent, Azoulay asks, do Israeli Jews recognise their own regime-made disaster when considering the formative years of Palestine's

transformation into Israel? Her compilation of an archive of over 200 photographs taken from 1947 to 1950 leads her to contend that the denial of the basic human rights of the 'visible victim' – the Palestinian – has been preserved and recurrently replicated by being left effectively unseen in the visual field. In her words:

> When the majority of the Jewish Israeli population does not recognize the expulsion, dispossession, and destruction inflicted upon Palestinians as disaster, and views it as the consequence of reasonable and justified deeds, and when a tiny minority recognizes the disaster inflicted upon Palestinians and cannot recognize in it the Jewish population's own disaster, the need to reconstruct the discursive and archival conditions of a regime-made disaster becomes urgent. […]
>
> Such distress cannot be solved by a new and different interpretation of one or another chapter in history. It is the kind of distress linked to the possibility of knowing, seeing, learning, and hence living, experiencing, and imagining (Azoulay, 2013: 550).

For Azoulay, the imposition of such demarcations 'etched in the consciousness of Israeli citizens and in archives as if they were historical facts,' reiterates the constituent violence that expelled most of 750,000 Palestinians living in the country at the time. The Palestinians, she maintains, 'have been doomed ever since to appear from the outside and to embody the roles forcibly assigned them: refugees, expellees, occupied, enemies, a threat, terrorists, or suspects' (2013: 552). It is this ruling perspective that must be secured as an object of enquiry, its accustomed logic reversed for scrutiny.

On the basis of her photographic archive, Azoulay argues it is possible to 'reconstruct the regime's efforts to undermine the possibility of a civil life shared by Jews and Arabs, the entire citizenry of the land' (2013: 558). She observes how they illustrate the military's imposition of constraints on public space, its allocation of boundaries, and yet, in a personal aside, notes their limited contingency. 'The more deeply I looked at photographs from that period,' she writes, 'the more the use of war as the general organizing category of the photographed situation became less and less plausible.' Here she notes that the term 'war' has 'gradually appeared as an effect of the regime's power to impose its unifying logic of national enmity upon complex exchange relations on different levels: commerce, labor, unionization, partnership, community, and friendship,' but is not intrinsic to the imagery itself (2013: 562). To view the protagonists being depicted as opposing sides in a conflict, she argues, is to ignore, firstly, 'the considerable history of civil resistance to the violence of war all over Palestine' until the end of the 1940s, and secondly, 'the force it took to silence attempts among Jews to acknowledge and condemn, or at least problematize, the overt violence of expulsion and destruction that the photos depict' (2013: 561). Azoulay's use of photography thus opens up the potential to destabilise the 'scopic regime' underwriting the national identity's founding presupposition that Jews and Arabs were 'two truly separate, hostile, homogenous parties prior to the war in 1948' (2013: 566).

Human Rights Photography

The surfeit of photographic encounters now available to us via digitalization has created a new type of photographic encounter, Azoulay contends:

> Photography is much more than what is printed on photographic paper. The photograph bears the seal of the photographic event, and reconstructing this event requires more than just identifying what is shown in the photograph. One needs to stop looking at the photograph and instead start watching it. The verb "to watch " is usually used for regarding phenomena or moving pictures. It entails dimensions of time and movement that need to be reinscribed in the interpretation of the still photographic image. When and where the subject of the photograph is a person who has suffered some form of injury, a viewing of the photograph that that reconstructs the photographic situation and allows a reading of the injury inflicted on others becomes a civic skill, not an exercise in aesthetic appreciation (Azoulay, 2008: 14).

By this rational she states that even the stateless can participate in taking the photograph, performing for the camera or in the meaning making of the resulting image. In this free world of photography, we can no longer ignore the multitude of people that come together in order to create a photograph; a pertinent possibility in the context of this chapter as we think about potential futures for human rights imagery.[1] Azoulay has described human rights photography as intentionally placing the viewer of the image outside the frame, shaping a particular way of looking: 'The scheme,' she has maintained, 'repeated time and again, is rather simple,' namely that 'the violated rights are those of *others*, and viewer-citizens are encouraged to recognize that the rights of others, who are often geographically distant from the spectators, have been violated.' In this way, then, such 'images reflect the common perception of human rights as a visibility project' (Azoulay: 2014: 351). In the contemporary practice it seems that this 'scheme' is being disrupted as photographic projects experiment with different ways of engaging the viewer.

Steps toward realising this agenda necessarily recognise how and why the relationships at play within human rights photography require renegotiation. Several examples of photographic projects have emerged over recent decades which, taken together, illuminate the basis for alternative approaches. They reflect endeavours to revisit and reframe the agendas of human rights photography, thereby giving viewers the opportunity to consider their responsibility and exercise their potential to intervene in the issues under documentation. In 1991, during the Gulf War, the Magnum Photographer, Susan Meiselas began a project that pioneered a new way of sharing human rights photographs, AKA Kurdistan. Meiselas is both archivist and photographer in this on-going project, which functions as a website, book and touring exhibition. The home page to the website reads: 'This site, a borderless space provides the opportunity to build a collective memory with a people who have no national archive.' It was a significant project of its time, one that defies easy

categorisation. 'In many ways (AKA Kurdistan) was trying to find a community,' Meiselas has reaffirmed since. 'It was a project that overlapped history, photography, cultural studies and politics and I'm not sure it ever really found the nexus of any of them. Perhaps because it was trying to form it's own nexus' (Meiselas cited in ASX, 2010). The site functions as a timeline of Kurdish history whereby people are invited to submit images and stories, diary extracts, documents, and historical writing. Its aim is to rebuild and archive a part of Kurdish history for - and by - the people. Any submissions are checked and verified by Meiselas's team before being uploaded to the site. Meiselas emphasises the importance of the project in sharing images with those for whom they mattered, allowing the activation of the citizenry of photography through a communal website: 'It is not easy to reinvent new contexts for images and make them matter. Images are generally, still, trapped in limited ghettos.' It is rarely the case, then, that images will have a direct effect. 'So in a quiet way that's why the Kurdistan project was important. The images were embraced by communities for whom the project was a meaningful process and exchange' (Meiselas cited in ASX, 2010). The result is an on-going archive, continually live and changing through those who choose to participate in it.

Another pioneering example can be seen in the 1996 collaboration of Gilles Peress and Fred Ritchin, namely the interactive website 'Bosnia: Uncertain Paths to Peace.' Here, photography and hypertext are combined in an attempt to turn the viewer into co-author and collaborator of the work. (It was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize in public service in 1997). Pixel Press hosts the website and describes it as, 'both a photographic chronicle and a worldwide discussion of this crucial passage in Bosnia's struggle' (Ritchin: 1996). For two months the site hosted forums where academics, artists, diplomats and humanitarians amongst other experts, came together to discuss pertinent issues emerging from the crisis. It now hosts an edited version of these discussions (as the site couldn't support the wealth of material that emerged) along with the photo essay by Gilles Peress. The viewer is invited to navigate their own path through the site, each click leads to a related set of photographs and contextual information. In this way, they are able to actively engage in the website and direct the information available pertaining to their own interests. Both this example and the earlier one by Meiselas, suggest, how Azoulay's conception of the citizenry might be made possible through innovative uses of digital media and the web. They demonstrate how human rights photography can be produced to reflect the multiple participants involved in the act of photography and to embrace the collaborative ways that meaning can be attributed to them. In so doing, these projects create a space where the civil contract of photography might be found, as the invitation for engagement by all participants in the photographic event is opened up. A closer study of their production could offer a more detailed counter narrative to criticisms that have focused on the utopian foundations of Azoulay's work.[2] (Harriman & Lucaites, 2016: Pasternak, 2013: Castelloe, 2010: Pinney, 2015 & 2016).

In the contemporary field of human rights photography, photojournalists exist within a very different visual economy to that of their predecessors, one demanding very different approaches to image making (Allan, 2017; Harriman &

Lucaites, 2016). With the decline of the editorial market, and the rise in restrictions when working in conflict situations, alongside the casualization of the craft (via citizen journalism and the accessibility of digital media) photojournalism has been undergoing transformation. As noted at the outset of this chapter, INGOs have been responding to these challenges over recent years, not least via funded assignments, with some offering scope for longer-term commitment and potentially, in some long-term conflict situations, creative input. Dominic Nahr favourable reflections on an assignment with the UNHCR in 2015 confirms this turn in commissioning:

> It has re-sparked my love for taking photographs and reporting, I could let go of the usual stress, anxieties and restrictions of not having long assignments and constantly hustling to look for money to pay for drivers, fuel, translators, housing, et cetera. I felt I could use all of my energy to focus on being truly with the people I am documenting over and over again (Nahr cited in Laurent, 2015).

Nahr's experience is significant. It demonstrates one method in a continued progression for INGOs from the highly criticised representations of the past. In contemporary practice, there are a number of INGO visual strategies at play that respond to 'our historic responsibility not only to produce photos, but to make them speak' (Azoulay, 2008: 122). Representations are being devised to step away from reductive scenes and instead include traces of the event that enabled their existence. What was once a singular frame depicting a sole victim or beneficiary is now, increasingly, being inflected in different ways with accompanying materials; Letters, drawings, text, and collage can be used in or around the photograph to further imprint the voice of the subject on the image. Some of the more participatory projects also incorporate footage of the 'making of' with information about the people that came together to make the work (Willocq, 2016). The result is that some human rights imagery produced by NGOs is beginning to encourage viewers to 'watch' the image rather than merely look. Reflecting a move away from the tight framework that has characterised previous INGO visual representations (Azoulay, 2014).

These opportunities are recognised by a number of contemporary theorists writing on photography and human rights. In addition to Azoulay, important contributions have been made by Lilie Choulairaki (2012), Robert Harriman and John Louis Lucaites (2016), Fred Ritchin (2017), Susie Linfield (2010), Margaret Olin (2012), WJT Mitchell (2015), and Sharon Sliwinski (2011), amongst others. While it is difficult to generalise, together these studies illuminate important steps towards reframing human rights photography emphasising its democratic potential in this digital age. There is seemingly a shift in desire (for some) to embrace this transition of power and explore the possibilities now available to us. As Anastasia Taylor-Lynd (2015) explains:

> What we need is different stories about different people in the world, told in different ways…That means diversity of storytellers, diversity of media and discipline, diversity of perspective: telling people something new. Editorial photography is very good at confirming what people already know. Our task is to find a way to

> challenge what people know or think. Technology and the digital revolution has gifted us with so many more ways to do this, and also to make photography more accessible, reaching more people in different places (Taylor-Lynd, 2015).

In this new era of digital photography, we increasingly see visual projects that speak to this need by embracing the opportunities afforded them via digital technology. Cases such as the iPhone participatory photography project created in 2014 with Save the Children UK in Za'atarri refugee camp exemplifies an NGO attempt at realising this objective (https://www.facebook.com/insidezaatari/ retrieved January 10, 2018). Traditional methods of creating and sharing images were cast aside as emphasis was put on asking children in the camp to create their own photo documentation of their lives. Teenage Syrian refugees were given iPhones and taught photography over a four-day period with the Magnum photographer Michael Christopher Brown. The resulting images were published in various news articles and Save the Children's social media sites. They are shot in colour and show everyday life in the camp from the point of view of children who live there. Each photograph is carefully captioned to interpret the pictures contents (seemingly) from the perspective of the child who took the photograph. One image of a young boy with a dog on a lead reads, 'I stole the dog from some people outside the camp. I know it is bad but I love animals.' Another shows a young girl skipping on the top of a sand dune, the caption reads, 'Today is a beautiful day. I am going to run as fast as I can. I wish I could go back to home that quickly'. This project took place during a three-year programme of photography workshops funded through Save the Children Jordan, with photographer Agnes Montanarri. This ensured that the shorter IPhone project sat within a longer-term initiative giving the children a sustained space where they could develop the skills they had learnt. A Tumblr feed of the teenagers' images was created, along with an Instagram and Facebook page displaying a wider edit of images produced over the three years of workshops.
(http://insidezaatari.tumblr.com;
https://www.instagram.com/insidezaatari/?hl=en, retrieved January 10, 2018).
Whilst in action these sites have afforded the opportunity to build a visual archive, which offers viewers a narrative on life inside Za'atarri refugee camp and the day-to-day emotions and aspirations of children living in this context.

The use of Facebook and Instagram created an arena whereby the 'act of photography', enabled a progressive step towards the realisation of Azoulay's 'imagined' citizenry of photography. 'Photography is one of the instruments which has enabled the modern citizen to establish her liberal rights, including freedom of movement and of information,' she argues, 'as well as her right to take photographs and to be photographed, to see what others see and would like to show through photographs' (2008: 125). Still, the page through which the teenagers share these images (or used to as the page seems defunct since March 2017) was set up and managed by Save the Children. In this way, the images still signify within a contextual framing laid out by Save the Children. They are circulated and viewed through the humanitarian framework, as an image of a problem elsewhere. They offer little contextual information other than reference to the Save the Children charity (using an image of the Save the Children flag as a cover photo). Due to this, it seems unlikely that NGO supporters will be able to

reconceptualise the Inside Za'atarri images, as they remain entrenched in the Save the Children brand. This leaves a question over authorship and the balances of power at work within these 'collaborative' photographic practices[3] (Fairey, 2017). Should the teenagers have taken the initiative to utilise the skills learnt through Inside Za'atarri to claim responsibility for the editing, captioning, and design of the social media pages, over time their archive of images might have provoked a very different dialogue with viewers. (There are, of course, obvious ethical and child safeguarding implications that would prevent an INGO such as Save the Children from facilitating this themselves).

'The Art of Survival Project', a commissioned photography project by Save the Children UK 2016, represents another project which on first view seems to de-territorialise civil boundaries through photography. Burundi and Syrian refugee children worked in collaboration with the photographer Patrick Willocq (and his team) to produce large tableaux's depicting their dreams or hopes for the future. The sets were created by the children, photographer and surrounding community from materials found in the refugee camps where they were produced. The resulting images are striking, childlike and playful in their construction (not what has come to be expected from humanitarian campaigns). They use rich colours and show the authors of the story and their community performing to create the narrative of each vibrant scene. In this way, they defy easy categorisation (Azoulay, 2011). However, Save the Children has worked to ensure that their intended message is still easily evident as each tableaux is accompanied by a textual explanation and an archive of video and still footage explaining the 'making of' the work. For the NGO, this ensures the resulting photographs still function within a tight set of boundaries and can be contextualised to support specific campaigns and human rights motivations. [4]

It then follows that despite these energetic and thoughtful approaches to participatory human rights photography, the resulting images still circulate within the bounded space of those that control them. In so doing, they highlight the dominant role of the state as the persistent and ever present contender to the citizenry of photography (Harriman and Lucaites[5] 2016: Costelloe: 2010). Azoulay outlines, that for the spectator to bear the responsibility for the image, to fulfil their civic duty, they must first transform their relationship to the understanding of human rights. The photographic projects discussed offer an invitation to the viewer to engage in different ways with fellow citizens through the photograph, but their full potential is perhaps on hold until we can, as Azoulay suggests, learn to 'exercise our right – or discharge our duty to undermine any attempt of founding an exclusive sovereign authority over the exercise of photography' (2008: 105). This would necessitate that the viewers positionality is fluid and thereby, on this basis, able to see outside the frame presented within the current conception of humanitarianism. Here we argue that these projects warrant further investigation so as to assess, on a case-by-case basis, the full potential of each individual approach and its capacity to reposition the viewer as an active participant in the photographic narrative. In-depth study can uncover further evidence for how conceptions of human rights are negotiated and played out by those present during the creation of collaborative

visual projects. Whilst revealing shifting dynamics between professionals and citizens and the balances of power at play in the field of production. Most crucially, it would offer an opportunity to investigate the potential of these online photographic archives (instigated through such endeavours) to offer a space for alternative reflections on our conception of human rights.

Conclusion

To close, this chapter has aimed to highlight vantage points from which to identify and evaluate several challenges confronting human rights photography as it evolves in difficult, contested circumstances. Viewed through the prism of several of Ariella Azoulay's contributions to scholarly enquiry and strategic intervention, it is possible to recognise what she terms 'the civic contract of photography' in a manner alert to how the interests of citizens and – crucially – individuals denied citizenship in the Occupied Territories continue to be shaped by both the camera's mediation in a specific moment of crisis, as well as by current readings of the ensuing, now-archival imagery today. 'From both,' Azoulay (2016) writes, 'one is able to reconstruct the circumstances and forces that shape the governed as embodiments of political categories – "collaborator," "noncitizen," "wanted person," "refugee," or "citizen," – and situations as "events" that serve as the changing centre of gravity of the news world' (2016: 219). It is in this way, then, when 'a depository of photos from a slippery slope of a regime-made disaster is opened as an archive to civil viewing, the political regime, and the violence of the law upon which it is founded, emerges' (2016: 219).

In aiming to further elaborate upon these insights for purposes of theory-building, we introduced several examples of photojournalists attempting to 'activate' viewers by inviting them to co-create photographic narratives via methods of hypertext and online archival interaction, and of INGOs working to create projects which 'speak' to those viewers by involving the children they seek to represent in the production of photography. In taking up Azoulay's call to rethink public relationships to human rights imagery, it follows, we recognise these creative INGO photographic projects represent progressive, albeit modest steps towards addressing the multifarious inequalities at stake. At the same time, however, realising this potential necessarily depends on making good the promise of rendering visible the normative ideals of human rights, one attuned to the lived, material contingencies of affordances, limitations, compromises and failures. It is in reimagining these shifting, uneven conditions of possibility that we may reinvent anew human rights photography.

Notes:

[1] Imagery takes the place of the word photography here to account for the wealth of technological devices now available to make images of humanitarian situations.

[2] Further creative examples of contemporary Human Rights imagery can be found in examples such as UNHCR's current Dream Diaries project, whereby refugee children who have found asylum in Europe shared their aspirations and dreams with producers. The dream diaries are an eclectic mix of digitally constructed photographs created by the production team and intended to show each individual's dreams for the future. For example, fourteen-year-old Manaal,

from Somalia, is shown staring up to sky whilst sitting on the wing of an aeroplane, the caption beneath explains that she hopes to be an air stewardess one day. Another shows fifteen-year-old Amr, from Syria, pasted into 'Breaking News' on television screens, reflecting his hope to be a reporter. The project was intended by UNHCR to engage viewers in new ways by evoking their creative imagination.

3. "The overall project is thus Rousseauian and post-structuralist, and like many a Rousseauian post-structuralist before her, Azoulay overplays her hand. The utopian and vaguely anarchistic desire for an intimate community from which power and humiliation have been banished is likely unsatisfiable, even in fantasy. Certainly it appears well beyond what anyone could reasonably expect either photography or contractarianism to deliver." (Costelloe: 2010: 182)

4. It also resonates with Robert's discussion of the relationship between photography and capitalist reproduction remaining dominant in Azoulay's citizenry of photography. "This is why the civil part of Azoulay's version of the social ontology of photography's contract is asked to do far more than the actual class actors producing the photographs - those actants represented in the photographs and those looking at the photographs - can actually do. This is not a recipe for pessimism or the enclosing of thinking and the imagination against the multiple actants of the photographic enterprise. Rather, it is a recognition that the social ontology of the photograph is, as it was at its origins, caught up in the machinery of capitalist reproduction."(Roberts: 2014: 19)

5. "…the final difficulty is that the civil contract of photography will seem idealistic – that is, too much at odds with the realities of state power and the fact that human rights still depend on protections provided by state citizenship." (Harriman & Lucaites: 2016:188)

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