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The politics of wire service photography:

Infrastructures of representation in a digital newsroom

ABSTRACT

This article examines the politics of image brokering in the daily rituals of a major wire service's photography division. Specifically, it investigates crises of visualization: moments when routine visualization itself is challenged due to changes in infrastructures of representation. The transition to digital transmission has changed work of image brokers—people involved in the creation, validation, packaging, and circulation of images. New image brokers and changed infrastructures of representation challenge established hierarchies and who provides and polices news images. At a moment when the war on terror is also a war of images, battles over the infrastructures of representation are battles over visual worldmaking. [*digital, infrastructure of representation, photography, Agence France Presse, journalism, crisis of representation, wire service, visualization, Iraq*]

very day at around 9:25 a.m., someone would yell, "Shall we go up?" and two representatives from "Photo" at Agence-France Presse (AFP) would ride the small, arthritic elevator up to the morning meeting on the fifth floor of the agency's Paris headquarters. The jovial air and constant jokiness of the photo department would follow them onto the elevator but adjust to the more muted tone of the text services as soon as they entered the meeting room, not much larger than the table in it. There, they would join the editor-in-chief, flanked by two text editors—one responsible for France and the other for International. The International text editor sat next to the International photo editor, and the respective France editors did the same. Around the table were representatives of the various sections—Economics, Sports, Politics, Arts and Culture, et cetera. Collectively, they reviewed the day's news prospects. The editor-in-chief routinely began the meeting with "Qu'est-ce que c'est le dominant?" [What is the dominant?].[1]

In the context of the daily high-level meeting at one of the world's largest wire news services, the question elicited information that would then shape the next day's major headlines on the front pages of AFP subscribers' publications around the world. The wording of this routine question emphasizes the constant hierarchies being evaluated in the production and circulation of news. At a wire service, what is being evaluated is a news story's perceived importance. Whereas individual publications, such as the *Yomuiri Shimbun,* the *Times of India, TIME,* or *Bild,* might decide their coverage on the basis of imagined reader interest or marketability, the debates about which of the many news stories of the day should dominate the wire service's coverage are phrased in terms of global significance.[2] Wire services function as journalistic wholesalers, and their subscribers pay not for coverage of individual stories but for access to the wire "feed." For one story to be dominant, literally to be the most influential, to exercise authority over others, other stories need to be dominated, given less priority. This daily call and response dictates the reporting for the next 24 hours.

Institutional hierarchies within AFP and between AFP and its competitors, as well as political hierarchies in the world at large, feature prominently in the discussions about what world events should be represented in what manner the following day. Dominance in multiple realms—office politics, industry politics, and geopolitics—is constantly negotiated in this daily ritual.

Rapid-fire reports provided by the assembled editors addressed coverage of planned events (official government visits, the European parliamentary vote of 2004), recurring events (G8 summit, NATO summit, European Cup, annual World Refugee Day), and breaking news (active conflict areas, natural disasters, airline crashes). Furthermore, there was always an attempt to anticipate possibilities and follow up on events of the recent past. These meetings had two purposes. The first was to evaluate AFP's coverage of the previous day's events, particularly in regard to competitors' coverage: "We were very late compared to AP [Associated Press]"; "We had a huge jump on Reuters";[3] How many publications had chosen to use the AFP image?; Had an AFP photo appeared "a la une," that is, on the front page of any of the major newspapers? The second purpose was to review how the main events of the day ahead would be covered.

Salient in these meetings is what I call "newstime"— that peculiar temporality in which the present is so thin as to be nearly nonexistent yet absolutely critical to capture. Journalists at these meetings conflate events with representations of them; they conceptualize events in terms of how they might be reported on in text and image. Therefore, their focus is either on the recently reported past or on the pressing future demanding immediate attention.

I conducted fieldwork on photojournalism against the backdrop of Gulf War II, commonly referred to as "the most photographed war in history."[4] This article focuses on the summer of 2004, a time just after the circulation of the Abu Ghraib images and during which terrorists were widely and regularly disseminating videos of beheadings; sovereignty was handed over to Iraq; and Saddam Hussein, who had been caught in December 2003, first stood trial. Every day for a month during this visually eventful summer, I joined the AFP photography department representatives as they rode the rickety elevator up to the meeting, attended the meeting, stopped in with the reps for the obligatory post-meeting debriefing at the second-floor café, and observed them hold a follow-up meeting once back on the ground floor where the photo department was located. Then I would track Photo activities on various desks for the rest of the day. This allowed me to observe how both what dominated and how its dominance was justified were contingent on the specific participants of each level of discussion and their decision-making powers.

Conversations on the elevator, in the meeting with the editor-in-chief, among the senior photo editors in the café, and back in the photography department were slightly different. Whereas the editor-in-chief every morning was asking what the dominant was in both text and photo, I was trying to understand how a visual dominant was constructed through the labor of those in the photo department. The challenge for Photo was not only to attempt to provide images for each story deemed important by the editors at AFP and its clients but also to dominate the competition and get AFP images "played" in publications worldwide. Most social science scholarship on news and journalism has focused on text, but images merit investigation precisely because they travel easily—though not always without friction—across linguistic and commercial borders. They are taken up as universal and self-evident even though they are always polysemic.[5] Precisely because circulation was central to the digital turn in professional photography, focusing on the production and brokering of news images provides insights into larger issues of journalism and international news coverage in the digital age.

News images in times of crises

News images are complex cultural products that circulate as aesthetic constructions, journalistic representations, and commodities. News images do not start out as news images. Certain photographs become news images, acquiring and, occasionally, losing value and credibility through their circulation. Even in a digital age, their production and circulation is far from automatic; it is determined by image brokers. Rather than analyze a single object of mass media—a photograph—in a bounded geographical setting, I focused on the network through which international news photographs move to understand the structural limitations and possibilities that shape image brokers' decisions and the images they broker. Image brokers are the people who act as intermediaries for images through acts such as commissioning, evaluating, licensing, selling, editing, and negotiating. They may or may not be the producers or authors of images. Rather, image brokers are the people who move images or restrict their movement, thereby enabling or policing their availability to new audiences. I conducted fieldwork among professional image brokers in the world of photojournalism. Hence, in this article, image brokers refers to all the people and organizations responsible for the decisions behind the photographs people encounter as news images. These brokers' decisions are informed by how they imagine various communities—both those represented in the photographs and those in which the photographs will circulate. The community of representation and that of circulation may be the same, but often they are not.

My fieldwork centered on the work of image brokers at key nodal points of production, reproduction, distribution, and circulation in the international photojournalism industry in its centers of power in New York and Paris. These sites

were important points of intersection among various actors and institutions, junctions in a system in which choices had to be made, such as which images to circulate, to whom to sell them, where to make them available, or what story to assign to a specific photographer.[6] In my fieldwork, I sought out these decisive moments at critical sites to investigate the brokering of news images as an everyday professional practice.[7] These were sites where I could directly observe image brokering. The brokers' daily activities and selection processes already involved verbally describing, commissioning, selling, or otherwise arguing for the images they were brokering, and I was there to observe these activities.[8]

A time of innovation can cause a domain to become uncertain.[9] The 2003–05 period was a difficult one for photojournalism. The image industry was still in a state of flux due to massive changes brought by the replacement of film photography by digital imaging and transmission. At the very end of the 20th century, certain corporations leveraged their capital and expertise in digital technologies and entered the photojournalism industry. The resulting visual content providers had editorial departments focused on covering the news rather than generating a profit, but these teams were housed within commercial corporate structures. Across the industry, in older as well as newly established collectives and agencies, there was much discussion and anxiety about commercial interests eclipsing or impinging on journalistic ones.[10] For the very loose community of people I studied within photojournalism, it was a time when the core technologies of their craft, the nature of their industry, and their status amid a growing pool of new types of brokers circulating images were changing rapidly. This was a period when amateur digital images such as the cell-phone pictures of the 2005 London bombings, rather than the work of professional photojournalists, were often the key images that shaped public opinion of certain events. More recently, entire social movements that have lasted days or weeks, such as the protests after the 2009 elections in Iran or the revolutionary waves of demonstrations during the 2011 Arab spring, have been documented by amateur image makers. Already in 2003–05, however, the professional identity of image brokers, the very value of their expertise, and the ways in which images entered into journalistic circulation were hotly debated topics in the press around the world.

Images in the press, from photographs to cartoons, were not just illustrating current events but were often also factors in causing these events, thereby playing a critical and highly controversial part in political and military action.[11] I do not mean merely that the journalistic representations of events contributed to the worldviews that provided the conditions of possibility for further events.[12] Rather, I am arguing that the circulation of certain visual representations themselves were consequential events, not merely illustrations of events. On the one hand, the Abu Ghraib photos produced by rogue U.S. soldiers and circulated widely in May 2004 were amateur images that dominated headlines. Their transmission was as subversive as their content in that, at least initially, it bypassed the infrastructures that had traditionally circulated news images. On the other hand, terrorists made political demands in the form of direct-address videos and photos promising and delivering severed heads, images that were then validated as they circulated through reputable news infrastructure. My fieldwork continually revealed to me that the war on terror was always also being fought in a visual register and was, hence, a war of images.[13]

As I show below, the structures and routines that allow a wire service to "dispatch" news about events and to "cover the world" visually for worldwide publications were critical to this war of images. I am interested in the infrastructure of representations, all of the practices, institutions, and technologies that make news images as worldmaking representations possible. I pay particular attention to moments of crisis in the sense of turning points, decisions, and moments of judgment. These reflect underlying assumptions about what constitutes appropriate ways of imaging the world daily. Yet crises in the sense of unexpected world events are also precisely what a newsroom is well equipped to cover routinely (Born 2005; Fishman 1980; Gans 1979; Schlesinger 1991; Tuchman 1973; Tunstall 1971). Building on my fieldwork on the AFP newsroom's routine coverage of crises in the world, I investigate crises of visualization that both shape and are shaped by the work of image brokers. A crisis of visualization is a moment when routine visualization itself is challenged or disturbed as well as a crisis of dominance both within AFP and the world at large that affects which representations get distributed on the wire. Crises not as the content of news but, rather, in its production and circulation help make the otherwise often invisible infrastructures of representation visible.

This research contributes to and expands the very productive debates around the "politics of representation" both within and outside of the discipline of anthropology (Clifford and Marcus 1986; Hall 1997; Lutz and Collins 1993; Marcus and Fischer 1986; Said 1979). However, rather than focusing only on the politics of representation, I add to scholarship that pays closer attention to the politics of the infrastructures behind visual representations (Ganti 2012; Jain 2007; Larkin 2008; Mazzarella 2003; Morris 2002; Myers and Marcus 1995; Pinney 1998; Schwenkel 2009; Spitulnik 2002; Strassler 2010). Conducting fieldwork in the visually incendiary first few years of the war on terror demanded that I consider how crises of visualization are exacerbated in structures in which images are mandatory, when any dominant must be imageable. A focus on infrastructures allows one to see beyond spectacle and address the particular politics of events that are themselves about visual representations.

Rewiring the wire

Heeding media anthropologist Brian Larkin's call to "pay attention to the technical features of the technologies themselves" (2008:47), let me dwell on "the material wire" of a wire service in more detail. News agencies—of which the three largest are AP, AFP, and Reuters—were, after all, called "wire services" after the physical telegraphic or telephonic infrastructure that allowed them to distribute information.[14] Moreover, wire services were initially formed to collectively share the cost of transmitting dispatches over the wire, thereby sending news farther and faster. Today, wire services are news organizations responsible for gathering news, both text and still and moving imagery, and distributing it to a very wide subscriber network of global news providers.

The senior manager of the AFP photo department, referred to by his last name, Valery, defined a wire service for me in a single word: "Speed." Valery was proud of the work of his photographers, mentioning several awards they had received and reminding me that many established freelance photographers had initially worked for AFP. The implication was that AFP was a great place to start and get trained as a professional photographer even if one was talented enough eventually to leave the wire service and become a sought-out freelancer who was represented by a top agency and did not need to cover multiple stories a day.

His comment alluded to a predigital order in the photojournalism industry. Until the widespread use of digital photography in the late 1990s, news publications received images from three main types of sources: wire services, photo agencies, and archived collections (containing mainly historical photographs). Wire services would transmit images of a significant news event to their subscriber base of mostly daily publications over the wires. These were "fast" photographs. In contrast, news magazines would send freelance or (far less often) staff or contract photographers on assignment to cover the event or produce a feature story. Their images, shipped back to agencies or publications as undeveloped film, were often published some time after the event had been covered in the dailies but might accompany more in-depth reporting on the event. These were thought to be "good" photographs.

The aim of a wire service was to have a photograph available on the wire as soon as possible after the event. Because the transmission of a single image took anywhere from 4 to 15 minutes, wire photographers were trained to take shots that summed up the event in a single image rather than in a series of images that collectively formed a story or a photo essay. In the predigital era, there was little competition between the wire service photographers and other news photographers because they catered to publications with different production cycles. However, with the transition to digital imagery and digital distribution, suddenly all photographs could technically be transmitted instantly. All digital photos had to be "good" because they were all "fast."

The shift to digital transmission over the Internet eventually rendered obsolete the physical infrastructure that had enabled the circulation of images over wires. The Internet also enabled many more image brokers to put images into potentially global circulation. Yet wire services have thus far survived the obsolescence of the wire. They now use the Internet in their operations, and they still disseminate a majority of the international information broadcast every day.[15] This is because of the continued pertinence of the wire's infrastructure, understood not only as the physical wire but also as the totality of organizational structures, protocols, practices, and conditions that allow for and direct the circulation of news by a wire service.

In a speech to the U.S. House Armed Services Committee just a week after the Abu Ghraib scandal broke, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld memorably pronounced, "We are constantly finding that we have procedures and habits that have evolved over the years from the last century that don't really fit the 21st century. They don't fit the information age, they don't fit a time when people are running around with digital cameras." It was, of course, not merely that people were running around with digital cameras that caused havoc but that the images downloaded from those cameras could spread with unprecedented speed and without any institutional monitoring. Regardless of the politics of the content of the images, the change in the infrastructure of representation through online distribution magnified their impact significantly. During my fieldwork at a major wire service just a few weeks after Rumsfeld's remarks, many professional image brokers were bemoaning loss of control over powerful images. They too were constantly finding that they had "procedures and habits that had evolved over the years from the last century that didn't really fit the 21st century," and what I observed were early attempts to establish new grounds for their authority.[16]

Official entrances and revered ideologies

There are two entrances to the AFP building. One is the official entrance, where screens constantly show the news feed and project the images that are being sent to the wire. Some insights into what AFP understood to be its mission and the sources of its authority can be gained by reading the three plaques that line the wall next to the elevators inside the main entrance. Their inscriptions about the role of the free press span two centuries, indicating a belief that these principles are timeless. The center plaque quotes from the portion of the 1957 statute establishing AFP as an independent entity that concerns the agency's obligations

to maintain objectivity and to resist legal or de facto control by any ideological, political, or economic group. This statute is also quoted on the AFP website next to a photograph of the headquarters building. A government-chartered public corporation, AFP is a commercial business that operates independently of the French government, yet several members of its board are government representatives or representatives of government-owned radio and television.[17] The two other plaques link AFP to an ever-broadening discourse of rights. On one, an excerpt from the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights emphasizes "the right to receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers." On the other, Article 11 of the 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen proclaims, "The free communication of ideas and opinions is one of the most precious of the rights of man" yet warns that with this freedom comes responsibility and that abuse of this right should be legally punishable.[18] The main entrance has been renovated since my fieldwork, yet these plaques were considered important enough to incorporate into the renovation unchanged despite significant changes in the way AFP now operates, distributing not just textual information but also images, graphics, video, and prepackaged multimedia for Internet news. In other words, the implication is not only that these ideals are timeless but also that they are not medium specific. So anyone who arrives for an appointment at AFP, in the brief time it takes to hand over an ID to the person who will announce the visit, is reminded of the major challenges of news gathering that persist in the digital age: the age-old dilemmas of freedom of information and its accompanying responsibilities, the promise that AFP is an unbiased conduit of knowledge, and the utopian ideal that information can travel regardless of frontiers and that this is always desirable.

The photo department employees, like those who work on the side of the vast building farthest from the main entrance, use the back door. At the back entrance, there are no screens showing news feeds and no idealistic plaques. No guests enter here. After my first day, I also used only this door.

Three desks covering newstime

The photo department occupied the basement and first floor of the mammoth building. Pierre Martin was technically the "chef du département photo," but, as a man who had come from the text world upstairs, he did not get involved in the daily workings of the department. That responsibility belonged to Olivier Valery, the department's senior manager, who had defined a wire service's goal for me as "speed." When in his office, Valery was usually following news coverage either on the TV or on the phone, often both. His desk was dominated by telephones—the office phone,

his personal cell phone, and two separate wire-service cell phones, all four usually spread in front of him. A large world map covered the wall behind his desk, and an even larger map of Europe covered another wall. Within minutes of my first entering his office, Valery handed me *Patterns of Global Terrorism*, a report published and distributed by the U.S. State Department. He said, "I'm supposed to look at it and start developing ideas of how our coverage is adequate for contemporary events. The photos of Abu Ghraib risk becoming the photos of the war in Iraq, but they were not taken by professional photographers, they were taken by soldiers. You have to ask whose eyes are we seeing through and does it matter?"

The large room that took up most of the space at AFP's Paris photo headquarters was divided into two banks of computers with editors working on images coming in from photographers. One side of the room, the "Desk France" covered France, and the other, the "Desk Inter," covered international news. "Newstime" requires around-the-clock coverage, and above the Desk Inter were digital clocks showing Greenwich Mean Time, local Paris time, and the time in Washington, DC, and Hong Kong. (AFP also has regional bureaus in Nicosia, Cyprus, and Montevideo, Uruguay, though no clocks displayed the local time at those locations.)

In the middle of the room on a long table were several newspapers, international and French, that people thumbed through all day, both to read the articles and to see how the AFP images had "played." On the same table, all the "play reports," sheets showing aggregate usage of AFP-supplied images of various events, were arranged neatly on clipboards. The tally next to an event showed how many AFP images of it had played in the major dailies in each regional market compared to how many Reuters or AP images.[19] The table, covered in newspapers and clipboards with printouts and tangible play reports, was a physical marker of the transition period from analog to digital transmission of information. Although the wire might be a thing of the past and the photo department was completely dominated by the digital in terms of production, distribution, and circulation, the play reports, the only real measurement of whether AFP journalists and editors had correctly anticipated their subscribers' dominant stories, were dutifully printed on paper.

At the very back of the large room was the "Third Desk." This desk covered not a specific geography but a specific temporality: the future. Pierre had explained this desk's role as anticipatory. Like obituary writers in the text world, those who worked on the Third Desk tried to anticipate and fulfill any potential visual requests that clients might have in the future. And yet, even on this temporal frontier, a desk that could afford to be less reactive to world events shared the wire service's long ingrained culture of speed. When I asked Janet, an American working on the Third Desk, what it

covered, her answer illustrated the institutional focus on speed and the continued definition of a wire service photo department competing against photo agencies.

> We fill the archive. We do special-interest coverage and produce feature stories. Hey, we're a wire service. No offense to the fancy schmancy photo agencies who also work with magazines and advertising, but we're trying to get the picture in the paper the next day. The client pays no travel costs, no expenses. We're in every major city in the world so we're cheaper, we're faster, and we understand a daily.

Despite the Third Desk's relative independence from immediate deadlines, Janet answered as if she were imagining herself as a subscriber to the wire, a photo editor at a daily, perhaps, choosing between an agency and the Third Desk.[20] The notion of "filling the archive" highlights the constant need to anticipate and supply images now of events that may require visualizing later, so that the archive can best serve subscribers not only in illustrating today's news but also in meeting tomorrow's visual needs.

Marc, another senior photo department official also emphasized speed as he led a dozen new bureau chiefs through a departmental orientation one day: "The most important thing for us is speed. We must not leave room for AP, Reuters, or Getty."[21] Marc clearly saw competition coming mainly from rival wire services.

"Do you think publications have any sense of loyalty to a particular wire service?" inquired one of the new bureau chiefs.

"Yes, I believe speed creates loyalty."

Producing visibility and invisibility

The first morning I attended the meeting upstairs, I heard the following answer to the question, "What is the dominant?": "The G8 summit and Venus will be dominant. We should also look ahead to the European parliamentary elections."

The June 8, 2004, transit of Venus across the face of the sun as it passed between the earth and the sun had been a dominant event the day before, and the editor-in-chief inquired about the play reports: "How did the photos of Venus play?"

"Very good," bubbled Marie the director of Desk Inter, referring to a group of AFP photographs showing people in various parts of the world observing Venus transiting the sun.[22] "Even the New York Times used our images," she crowed, obviously proud of the front-page placement of an AFP photographer's work. The prominent display of the images was praised by all, yet Marie had expressed concerns about the same photographs the day before. She had found one photograph's caption, highlighting sangomas (e.g., traditional healers) in southern Africa dancing around fires

during the passage of Venus, sensationalist and had told me without hesitation, "I don't like such things. It's like the caption should say: 'Look at the African barbarians.'" Marie was often frustrated by stereotypical images of African topics. Yet, when a newspaper of record like the New York Times placed images "a la une," its judgment as a client effectively trumped Marie's professional opinion of unproblematic imagery of world events.

African news stories were often ignored if they did not have something to do with Europe. As if to prove her point that African visibility depends on a European connection, the next day Marie read out a dispatch as it appeared on her screen: "Sixteen people died in a plane crash in Gabon."

"How many French?" asked Manoli, one of the eager sales reps.[23]

"Two. Why? We don't care about the Africans?!"

"Only in soccer," Manoli quipped.

Looking forward to prepare images to be used on International Refugee Day (June 20), Valery suggested finding images from Zimbabwe or Mozambique. When one of the photo editors suggested asking a photographer to shoot Palestinian camps in Lebanon, Valery demurred, saying, "The refugee camps in Lebanon are cities now. They don't even look like camps anymore." This visual logic implied that the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon could no longer represent world refugees because their habitats no longer looked like stereotypical refugee camps, even though they were populated by large numbers of people who had been refugees for a very long time.[24] This example shows that how well an image corresponds to a visual expectation on the part of imagined readers carries greater weight than how representative the specific image is: An image of a refugee camp with tents is preferable to one of an urban camp in Lebanon, even if the latter has a larger population.[25]

Obviously, some events, although anticipated, do not get represented. For example, in the summer of 2003, France had experienced a severe heat wave leading to a large number of fatalities. At almost every morning meeting during the summer of 2004—despite the gray drizzle outside—someone would report on AFP's preparedness to cover that season's heat wave ("la canicule") when it eventually arrived. It never did. This demonstrates that anticipation and journalistic preparation can keep a topic contending for dominance even when there are no events to justify doing so.

The European parliamentary elections that June provided a challenge for the photo team for different reasons. The elections were, in fact, newsworthy: 342 million people were eligible to vote, the second-largest democratic electorate in the world after India. They were the biggest transnational direct elections in history. At the café after a morning meeting in which the topic of the upcoming elections had come up again, one photo editor complained to

Valery, "There's no point sending someone to photograph a voting booth, is there?" The concern was twofold: First, images of people voting are tired and cliché and, in fact, communicate very little about what makes a particular election important, and, second, the team seemed to believe that the primary feature of this particular vote would be absenteeism, which is particularly difficult to express visually, especially by a photographer assigned to cover a voting booth.

Absenteeism was, in fact, the story of the day. The editor-in-chief began the morning meeting on June 14, 2004, by joking, "Look at this. There are more people around this table than there were at the elections!" Marie, having already studied the play reports, noted that AFP had done well with election imagery. However, the photo that seemed to be the most popular choice to illustrate the elections was a Reuters image. An important feature of the elections had been that the ten new European Union member states had elected representatives to the European Parliament for the first time, and Marie reported that the image that seemed to garner the most attention showed "three little Hungarians with their little skirts." Photo editors may (and, like Marie, often do) roll their eyes at stereotypical shots such as the South African healers looking at Venus through special glasses or the three Hungarian women in folkloric national costume at the ballot box, but these images do get published, and so photographers keep on taking them. If the wire service photo department sees its goal as providing visuals for as many news stories as possible on any given day, and especially for dominants, photographs that use national, ethnic, or other stereotypes are the easiest way to visualize events that pose challenges for representation. Whether these stereotypes get published or not, they circulate on the wires and enter wire service archives. The light-heartedness and stereotypical nature of the images trivialize the dominant somewhat, even though the intention might be to have the image draw a reader into a political story that is complex and difficult to illustrate.

The infrastructure of being there

AFP Photo was well placed to cover the 2004 G8 summit. With a hint of cynicism in his voice, Pierre confirmed that an AFP photographer had been credentialed to cover the event. "We paid, therefore we have the right to work the event." AFP had had to pay $3,500 for each journalist attending the event. At the coffee stop on the way down from the morning meeting, several members of the photo team expressed their qualms about how such access fees impeded free press coverage. Yet fees to get credentials or fees to cover the cost of traveling on board an official's flight were, nevertheless, accepted as one of the realities of contemporary journalism, part of the infrastructure of getting a photographer to a story. In other words, financial infrastructures are critical to getting in place to cover an event and to circulating the resulting images.

Being in position is also critical for moments when longer-term news stories suddenly need to be made dominant to keep justifying expenses incurred in their coverage. When a photographer called wanting to accompany a junior French foreign minister, Renaud Muselier, on a visit to Darfur, he underlined the appeal of this story about Africa because it concerned a French official. Christophe, Marie's peer on the Desk Inter, negotiated for the photographer at the morning meeting, emphasizing AFP's advantage over the competition. "There's a rumor that no one at Reuters and AP has the requisite visa, so our photographer might be the only one with Muselier. I think Muselier would appreciate a French wire service having exclusive coverage."

Christophe ended up having several extensive conversations with the photographer during the Muselier visit because the story was difficult to cover and transportation was a constant challenge. Christophe told others on the desk that the photographer had had "a three hour flight and a three hour drive to get 45 minutes with Muselier. But at least tonight Muselier is going to a high-level meeting and taking him along." Clicking through the photographer's images from the day in Darfur, Christophe read Muselier's visit as mainly a propaganda stunt. "A white guy amongst the Africans. Pretty, no? It will do his office good. Good for public relations."

Just as Marie's reservations about the images of voters in Hungarian national costume or of the South Africans dancing around the fire made clear, Christophe is acutely aware of how certain photographs can get mobilized for various political narratives. Both Christophe and Marie, like many image brokers I observed, are highly adept at modulating their opinions of images depending on their audiences. They verbally caption according to context. None of the images are doctored or are in any way inadmissible by strict criteria of objectivity—they are all credible photographs. Rather, the principle in the three entrance plaques that they disturb is that information should travel "regardless of frontiers." For national frontiers are, at times, quite central in photo editors' negotiations for funding or access. Requiring visas is the simplest way by which governments control the circulation of photojournalists. However, national allegiances come up in myriad ways. Despite his skepticism about the politician's sincerity, Christophe underscored that the French foreign minister would appreciate giving exclusive coverage to a French wire service, in the hope that a promise of exclusivity might help him get the resources he needed to get the photographer well positioned to continue his coverage of Darfur.

Furthermore, his skepticism about the motivation for the official's visit did not in any way dampen his pride in the photos themselves when they got prominent placement. He was particularly excited when the British paper the

Independent featured one of the photographer's images on its cover. This photograph, of a funeral ceremony for a small child, prompted a favorite ritual of photo editors: the telling of the tale behind the photograph, highlighting serendipity. Before the photo team rode the elevator up to the morning meeting, Christophe told them, "You know, he was only able to make the photos of the funeral because there was a sandstorm and the plane couldn't take off." Not surprisingly, he did not repeat the same story upstairs, where, instead, he proudly held up the newspaper's front page as exemplary placement. Placement, especially on the front page, and most especially on the front page of a major paper such as the *New York Times* or the *Independent,* means visibility for AFP and reflects well on the photo department for knowing how to get people in place at the right time. Serendipity is good for entertaining colleagues in the photo department, but upstairs Christophe wanted valorization of Photo's good judgment, foresight, and mastery at putting infrastructures in place in anticipation of the dominant.

The week had started with the editor-in-chief noting that "there's lots of interest in Darfur. Let's not downplay it." All week Christophe tried hard to get information on the arrangements for UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's upcoming visit to Darfur. So, on the day when he could draw attention to the front-page placement of the AFP child's funeral image, Christophe tried to advocate for his photographer. He indirectly voiced his displeasure that the AFP text editors responsible for coverage of Africa were not keeping him abreast of updates.[26] Instead, he had had to reply on information from competitors: "We have information from AP about Annan's trip but by the time I was able to ask, there were no more places on the plane." Later that day, when the photographer called in to ask whether he should leave Darfur or wait for Annan, Christophe responded with flattery by telling him about the *Independent*'s cover and reporting the praise he had received at the morning meeting. He did not know how to advise the photographer because he had not been able to guarantee him a spot on the plane. Once off the phone, he angrily confided to one of the desk editors, "I'm sick of this story with the Africa desk. It's a UN trip, the NY bureau should have details. I've been asking for days and have gotten nothing at all. The problem is that the people upstairs don't care if we get only one spot on that plane because if there's only one spot they'll get it, not us, and they know that. We can't have photos if we're not there!!"

When he received a fax with the list of journalists approved to be on the flight with Annan, Christophe became livid and started typing a message to his counterpart, an editor in text. "Now, this is a war!!" he told another editor on the desk, escalating the constant struggle over limited financial resources at the news agency. "There are lots of photographers on this list but not one AFP person!" Just when he got Marie, his supervisor, to sign off on his angry e-mail asking if AFP intended to miss the opportunity to cover the Annan trip, the Washington bureau called saying that, regrettably, there was no more room on the flight. "We've known this was coming up for a week now. Are we a team or not? I've got a photographer who has spent weeks on this story, gets a double page in the *Independent,* and I can't even get a correct schedule on the UN trip. We were the only ones in Darfur. We've got our photos everywhere and yet you're not doing anything for us," Christophe said angrily into the phone. Once again, he expressed his frustration with what he believed regional editors, who had risen out of text and now oversaw budgets, routinely forgot, that is, one of the key ways in which the infrastructure for producing a photograph is different than that of a text dispatch: "Text can always recuperate information, but we need to physically be there!"

Credibility in a war of images

For a long time, getting to an event or its aftermath and finding a timely way to transmit an image back to headquarters was the primary challenge for wire service photo departments. The AP website brags, "There is no place on earth too remote for same-day news picture transmission." Yet today the challenge is no longer simply to offer a representation but to offer a validated representation chosen from the overwhelming number available. Knowledgeable and appropriate selection from among the 5,000 news images generated every day by AFP and its partners is much of the service AFP provides. First, not all images sent in by photographers end up on the wire, even if it now only takes seconds, not minutes or longer, to "transmit" an image onto the wire. In an age when digital cameras allow photographers to take hundreds of images at an event with minimal financial costs per image, unlike when they shot rolls of film, editors on the desk receive several images that are nearly identical and pick the better ones. Often, the photographer will do the first edit before transmitting, and the editor will validate a selection of what is transmitted and post them on the wire. Photographers often send in captions that are then edited and validated. Second, even though they expect each news publication to customize its news selection for its particular readers or viewers, wire services "push" different images and stories to different parts of the world.[27] Deciding which part of their worldwide subscriber network would be interested in a particular story or set of images is another one of the services a wire service offers. Hence, despite the stated ideal of universal coverage, understanding the visual tastes and norms of regions and distributing images with careful regard to frontiers is key to the way the AFP photo department sees its mission.

When the new bureau chiefs (almost all of whom had risen up on the text side) were visiting the photo department, one of them asked Marc, the senior photo editor, "What about images that might shock, what do you

do with them?" Marc replied, "Well, we've got a variety of clients. If you send it to Germany, they'll hit the ceiling, but in Asia, they might use that same image. There are diverse mentalities on the issues. How do you illustrate a burnt-out church with corpses in an acceptable manner? Clearly, it's sordid. If the event itself is brutal, how do you illustrate it? In *text,* you will write about it, but gruesome events pose a challenge for Photo." Marc had had a long career in AFP and demonstrated expertise in the visual preferences of diverse audiences. This expertise had been acquired over years of considering the different journalistic challenges facing text editors and image brokers and learning from negative reactions to various images sent over the wire to diverse global clients. However, the recent changes in the very infrastructure of representation posed new challenges altogether, as evidenced in the conversation sparked when one of the new bureau chiefs mentioned the video of Nicholas Berg, the American who had been beheaded by Iraqi insurgents a few days after the Abu Ghraib photographs were made public. "They're using images to escalate things, to fuel the war."[28] What seemed disturbing to the editor was that the insurgents in Iraq were circulating images for their own purposes. In other words, changing infrastructures of representation have allowed new image brokers not only to produce but also to distribute images widely and quickly. These image brokers are very unlike traditional competitors like AP or Reuters or even other news agencies or government press officials. That images circulated by such image brokers can dominate the news was a major challenge facing AFP. In the face of these changes, the photo department was constantly struggling to assert the value of its particular expertise and the services it provided.

"That's why sourcing images is very important," Marc assured the new bureau chief who raised the issue of images escalating the war. "The source is really fundamental. If I have any doubts about the source, I won't put the image into circulation." As the infrastructure of representation changes and an ever-increasing number of images are distributed online from a wider variety of sources, Marc addressed the concerns of the new bureau chiefs by acknowledging a growing need for nodal points where images get examined for their credibility and appropriateness. Below, I discuss three incidents that occurred during the summer of 2004 that underscored the ways in which professional image brokers working within a wire service photo department were struggling with the changes in the infrastructure of representations.

Beheading hierarchy

On a Saturday morning (June 19, 2004), when things should have been slightly quieter than on a weekday, Marie, the Inter Desk manager, was ready for the morning meeting well in advance. The entire management team, even those on vacation, had spent the previous night trying to decide how to respond to the distribution of very graphic images showing the decapitation of a U.S. engineer in Saudi Arabia. Not bothering with the elevator, Marie, and I behind her, climbed four flights of stairs and went directly to the editor-in-chief's office, Marie with uncharacteristic trepidation. He was on the phone and visibly angry and pointed for Marie to go upstairs to the meeting room. For once, he skipped the dominant question and asked more pointedly, "Who decided to transmit the decapitated man's photo on the wire? . . . Should we have posted the image? Should we recall it? Photo was the problem. It was posted on the Internet on Drudge [the Drudge Report website], but should *we* have posted it?"[29]

The real issue was that the chain of command had broken down. The Nicosia office responsible for distribution to Middle East clients had decided not to post the images at all, but the editor on night duty on the Inter Desk in Paris not only had overridden that decision but also had sent the images to clients in the Middle East, as if directly challenging the Nicosia bureau chief's decision. Slowly, it became clear that the worldwide distribution of the image of the severed head not only might make AFP vulnerable to attack for disseminating gratuitously gruesome imagery but also, perhaps even more critically, it illustrated a collapse of hierarchy within AFP. In other words, what was at issue was not merely the politics of representation but a crisis within the wire service, the industry, and global politics.

By Monday morning, the release of the severed-head photo had been thoroughly debated. The director of the photo department went upstairs with Marie. The routine question had returned: What is the dominant?

The Inter text editor replied, "In a video broadcast yesterday, Al-Qaeda threatened to behead the South Korean hostage Kim Sun-il, captured last Thursday, if South Korea does not cancel plans to send 3,000 additional troops to Iraq. They've given them 24 hours."

The editor-in-chief brought the conversation back to the decapitated American, his tone significantly calmer than it had been on Saturday: "Those images were easy to find on the Internet. It's a question about the functioning of the Politics section. The Fallujah images, for example, automatically appeared on websites that get AFP feed. It's one thing if we put it on the wire, another if we distribute them directly to the public. But AP also posted all three images."

Pierre, the photo director, was decidedly nonchalant, "We've distributed so many severed heads on the wire. I mean ever since Louis XVI, we've seen so many men decapitated. This one was part of the news. Our business is B2B [business to business]. It's for our clients to decide whether or not they want to publish the image. For those websites who automatically show our images [such as Yahoo! News], the responsibility lies with them."[30]

Finally, the editor-in-chief once again highlighted the real crisis: "It's up to us to make sure that the hierarchy decides, the editorial chain needs to be respected." In other words, there was debate in the organization about whether AFP had a responsibility to its subscriber network of news outlets, each of which decided what was appropriate for its local market, or directly to news consumers who might encounter the images on a website receiving the raw wire feed. Similarly, there was debate about the journalistic value of such violent images. However, particularly after he had been appeased by the knowledge that a competitor had also run the images, the AFP editor-in-chief underscored what, for him, was the crux of the matter: a crisis caused by the linear chain of authority, the editorial hierarchy structured by the wire, being bypassed. Another crisis altogether, of course, was that the images were not supplied by a traditional image broker, such as a competing wire service, but that the terrorists, like the soldiers responsible for producing and circulating the Abu Ghraib photos, were amateur image brokers whose images dominated headlines. Yet the transmission of those images was as subversive as their content in that, at least initially, it bypassed the infrastructures that had traditionally circulated news images. Each time terrorists made political demands in the form of direct-address videos and promised and delivered photographs of severed heads, photos that were then validated as they circulated through reputable news infrastructures, they succeeded not only in performing violent acts but in controlling the news images representing the events as well.

Eventually, the editor-in-chief turned to Marie and asked what other news she had. "Excellent photos of European Cup football that are completely decent," she replied, and the tension was diffused. Photographs of sporting events constitute the majority, if not the most journalistically prestigious, of the images produced by wire services. Getting access often relies on finances and reputation, as sports organizations require accreditation of all photographers. Sport photography offers it's own challenges, but professional sports is an arena in which professional brokers almost always control the production and distribution of images. An amateur might capture an occasional shot of fans or a ball out of bounds, but accredited photographers who work for wire services or sports magazines are the ones optimally placed to get the best shots.

At the coffee bar that morning before returning downstairs, I asked Marie why she had prepared a folder of photographs of severed heads to take upstairs to the meeting. It was clear that the event had ruffled her. "No one's disturbed if it's Arab or black heads that are cut off, but if it's a white man's head, especially an American, look at the uproar. It's more and more this all the time. It's a war of images." Marie, like many professional image brokers I met, was more than aware of competing politics of representa-

tion. Her statement could serve as a commentary on the terrorist's decision to put the gruesome photograph of the severed head into distribution—the circulation of comparable violent images was forcing professional image brokers to consider reasons other than regional standards to explain why certain images cause shock and alarm and others do not. Hence, the war of images in the world, by circulating through AFP, prompted some within the agency to reflect on the war of images being waged in the name of the free transmission of information. Editors have long made decisions about what to publish on the basis of perceived public impact, carefully weighing shock value or gratuitous violence against perceived political or social significance. Yet here, a new kind of image broker operating in a system entirely outside that of the professional photojournalism industry was prompting those discussions. In other words, this was a different case than that of an amateur image getting picked up by a wire service or of citizens taking photographs on their own cell phones, cameras, or other digital devices and sending them to press outlets. Those amateurs still operate within the logics of witnessing an event and submitting their representation to an established press institution for validation and circulation. At best, they provide alternate illustrations for a dominant determined by the press.[31]

Terrorists operating as image brokers in a war of images, by contrast, are staging events whose impact depends on the circulation of their representations; the images themselves compete as potential dominants with other events covered by professional press institutions. A gruesome news image of a beheaded U.S. engineer has far more impact than a text dispatch of yet another Westerner being kidnapped and murdered precisely because, as Marie noted, images of decapitated white heads are far scarcer than those of severed nonwhite heads in the visual history of documentary photography. Hence, the terrorists, as image brokers, rely on the same logics at work in the newsroom in terms of leveraging stereotypes.[32] By the time Marie and I came downstairs, when the editors on the desk asked if there had been complaints at the meeting upstairs, Marie revealed a position very different from the one she had voiced on Saturday, when the image initially circulated. "I'm for transmitting everything. Even if it's gory. That way, no one can say they didn't know. We supply images. Even if it's ugly, this is the way the world is." Momentarily, she seemed to have resigned herself to the role of the wire service photo department as a mere supplier of images.

Dominating the dominant and sovereign images

Another reason it is critical to keep in mind the changing infrastructures of representation and journalism more broadly is that the war on terror began at a time when increasing online readership led to a decrease in subscriptions to publications and advertising revenues. As

is well documented, this trend eventually led to the disappearance of many journalistic publications (Boczkowski 2004; Henry 2007; Meyer 2004). Yet, at the same time that news publications of all kinds were experiencing financial challenges brought about by online distribution, the demand for images increased. Decades of journalistic practice meant that a visual representation of an event was required for the event to be registered as significant. Furthermore, whereas limited physical space in a print publication meant that not every article would be accompanied by an image, online versions of publications allegedly had no space concerns and, so, every news story could be accompanied by images. This dual challenge to produce more images with less funding also affected wire services, which were dependent on subscriptions from news publications. Increasingly, publications and wire services shut down all but the most essential foreign bureaus. Instead, they might send a few journalists and an editor or two to an event itself to set up a temporary bureau. Effectively, this increased the significance of anticipated dominants, as reporting decisions were made before the event. Just a few days after the beheading incident, AFP's anticipated dominant concerned the activities of the U.S. government and its allies.

"Qu'est-ce que c'est le dominant?"

"Well, today we start with a surprise. Iraq is dominant because the Americans transferred sovereignty two days earlier than anticipated. We didn't get advance notice. Blair, who is in Istanbul for the NATO summit, made an announcement."

Like news teams elsewhere, everyone in the room had expected the NATO summit in Turkey to dominate the headlines of the day, and attention had been focused on Istanbul. In other words, the anticipated dominant had been dominated. Producing an alternative dominant was relatively easy because most eyes, in this case, the collective efforts of image brokers, were already focused on the NATO summit and accredited photographers were in place. However, because Iraq is not a NATO member, Iraqi representatives were not at the event at which their own country's sovereignty was being announced.

The photograph that circulated widely as a representation of this event was a strange news image on many levels. To begin with, it was a "handout" photograph. Typically, handout photographs are images provided to journalists by the military, a government institution, or a corporation. They are images shared by an interested party and distributed free of charge. Throughout my fieldwork, editors saw them as images that needed to be collected in case no other way emerged to illustrate what they showed (such as handout photographs from NASA on space missions), but they were sober about their journalistic value. Yet the handout photo from the White House the morning of the Iraq sovereignty announcement got widely distributed because there was little else at the NATO summit that visu-

ally indexed Iraq. The photograph shows a note from the U.S. national security advisor, Condoleezza Rice, to President George W. Bush that was passed to the president by Donald Rumsfeld during the NATO summit. It reads, "Mr. President, Iraq is sovereign. Letter was passed from Bremer at 10:26 AM Iraq time—Condi." A second note on the same piece of paper, supposedly in the hand of George Bush, reads: "Let Freedom Reign!" This news image is a rather curious visual document that forces viewers to consider the issue of who is being addressed in what only looks to be a personal communication between two individuals. It is a photograph of a seemingly casually penned note confirming the delivery of an official letter in an altogether different location than the NATO event. Even though images of Paul Bremer formally exchanging documents with Iraqi officials before leaving Iraq were available, they were not widely published. What was documented and circulated as confirmation of a transfer of sovereignty and celebration of freedom was a photograph of an informal, handwritten note. In fact, Iraq was barely present in this documentation of its newly regained sovereignty. Hence, even on the day when Iraq was the dominant, it was the U.S. handout photo that dominated the visual journalism. U.S. government authorities as image brokers trumped the wire service in terms of what got played in the publications. Furthermore, the photograph showed what appeared to be a note serendipitously intercepted by the camera, creating an illusion of free access and transparency.

Silenced visuals

Two days later, on July 2, 2004, however, Iraq dominated again and, this time, the dominant was so large that there was little room left on front pages for any other stories. Former Iraqi president Saddam Hussein had made his first appearance in court. The morning meeting at AFP mainly focused on preparing the best coverage possible.

"The event of the day is Saddam's appearance before the Iraqi court. It's going to be pool coverage, both text and photo. A U.S. news magazine got the pool slot but there might be a chance to photograph Saddam later, perhaps at the airport. Let's update our profile of Saddam, see what we have in the archives." In pool coverage, one journalist is given access to an event but shares his or her coverage with multiple media outlets. This allows other professional journalists to have access even when there is not enough physical room for them to be present or when access is limited for other reasons. Typically only one of the three wire services might get pool access to an event and be required to share its coverage immediately. However, it was slightly unusual for coverage of an event of this importance to be given to a photographer on assignment for a U.S. magazine.

Downstairs, Marie had no idea why a wire photographer had not gotten the pool, and some editors speculated

that the U.S. photographer might have had connections to those in charge of the trial. Christophe suggested that because CNN would also be at the event, perhaps AFP Photo should get a TV grab. In other words, because there were no images of the event to edit being sent in from AFP photographers, Christophe decided to get stills of TV coverage of the event, thereby lessening the risk of subscribers looking elsewhere to illustrate an important news story while waiting for the pool photos, which would only be released after the event. His decision shows how strongly those on the photo desks felt the need to keep the wire current and to have news images of major events up as soon as possible.[33]

There were constant discussions about the importance of keeping the AFP newsroom a commercial-interest-free environment. Although retail sale of individual photographs was tolerated, it was handled by a few employees (the Retail Sales Cell) seated apart from the others and was seen as a suspicious activity that risked corrupting the entire newsroom with profit-making goals. Remember the 1957 statute on one of the entryway plaques demanding that AFP never come under the influence of any ideological, political, or economic group. Yet, in events in which access is limited, commercial influence enters the AFP newsroom in the form of cable news coverage. Until the pool photos of the Saddam trial had been released, AFP could only release screen grabs from CNN or silent visual excerpts from CNN's coverage. Yet it would turn out that CNN's coverage was itself under the influence of the U.S. military, an entity that had increasing power as a broker in the war of images.

Convinced there was nothing better for an anthropologist to do, Christophe positioned me in front of a screen to watch CNN diligently. "When you see a nice shot of Saddam, press this key and get us a TV grab we can put online." And so, my hands on the key, I watched CNN with rapt attention. The coverage was bizarre; CNN and Al-Jazeera cameras had been allowed into the courtroom, yet what viewers were being shown was not live coverage. While news viewers waited for the images to be released, reporter Christiane Amanpour stoked anticipation by narrating what the images would show. The audio recordings of the trial were not released at the same time, and so, in many ways, Amanpour's voice-over preceding the images created suspense and established her ultimate authority on the spectacle. The absence of immediate images meant Amanpour, intentionally or not, made the most banal descriptions seem like breaking news. She told audiences that Saddam had been wearing a gray suit jacket, a very starched white shirt, a belt, brown trousers, brown socks, and highly polished black shoes and that he still had a beard, though more neat and tidy than it had been when he was pulled out of his hole in December (CNN 2004e).[34] The absence of live coverage and the delay of the video footage not only created anticipation and further heightened the sense of spectacle but also established Amanpour's description of what she had

seen as an event in and of itself. Her report began, "Well, I've just rushed back from the courtroom to this convention center, where we're going to get the video distributed. So let me tell you about what we just saw" (CNN 2004a).

What Amanpour saw is relevant, because, although clearly there was a translator working with her, she made a point of saying in her initial reports later that day, "We're still waiting for the full translation of this because this all was in Arabic" (CNN 2004c). Therefore, her report focused on what the trial looked like. Eventually, the video was distributed, and viewers got to see what Amanpour had told us she had seen.

I worked at capturing several grabs of Saddam Hussein in the courtroom. Each grab showed the entire screen, complete with the red "Breaking News" banner across the top, "First Images of Saddam Hussein From Today's Proceedings" along the bottom, and the permanent CNN logo with stock quotes below it. The tab on the bottom read "The New Iraq" and included a picture of the revised Iraqi flag. After all, just three days earlier, on June 28, the United States had handed sovereignty back to Iraq. As I focused on the screen to choose the moment that best captured Saddam's attitude (completely influenced by the narrative Amanpour had given of the images before they had been aired), I noticed a text imprinted on the video footage of Saddam that read "Cleared by US military." Christophe printed out the TV grabs as I made them. Looking over at the printer, I noticed that in one particular grab, the words "Cleared by the US military" appeared directly on Saddam's forehead, as if announcing his acquittal. Others, at CNN or perhaps in the military, must have noticed the odd and emphatic political commentary unintentionally conveyed by the visuals, because less than two minutes later the text had been changed to a more precise message: "Video Cleared by US Military."

Within minutes, Christophe had put several of the grabs on the wire, and the photo editors on the desk began discussing the trial. Only when looking at the printouts of the TV grabs did I notice that the CNN visuals were effectively resonating with Saddam's jeering comments to the judge about the illegitimacy of the court. "Oh, the coalition forces? So you are an Iraqi—you are representing the occupying forces?" (CNN 2004e). After all, despite the tab reminding viewers that sovereignty had been handed over to "the New Iraq," it was the U.S. military that had cleared the video of the trial. It was the U.S. military that had censored the trial in the first place: Robert Fisk of the *Independent* reported that a U.S. admiral had told camera crews that the judge had demanded that there be no sound and ordered them to unplug their sound wires.[35] Another criticism was that the one Iraqi journalist present was not allowed to remain in the court for much of the proceedings. According to Fisk, "The only thing the Americans managed to censor from most of the tapes was Saddam's comment that 'this is theater—Bush is the real criminal.'" Indeed, there are

no transcripts in English that contain this line, although a similar formulation appears in the article written by *New York Times* correspondent John Burns.

White House spokesman Scott McLellan's comment that "what is important is that Saddam Hussein and his band of oppressors are facing justice from the Iraqi people in an Iraqi court" seemed gravely at odds with the coverage of the proceedings. Beyond the obvious act of military censorship, two things are of interest to me: the role of limited access and the role of the still photographer. The *Guardian*'s headline the following day deemed the Saddam court coverage "shambolic" because so few members of the press had access. Furthermore, even though CNN's footage was made available to other broadcasters, Amanpour claimed she was there not as journalist for CNN but in a "unilateral" capacity; Peter Jennings likewise claimed not to be representing ABC. Having access to what some called "the trial of the century" became a feather in veteran star journalists' caps; hence, the limited access and the importance of the news event were mutually constitutive. For years afterward, the *New York Times* website underscored that John Burns was "the only Western print reporter to witness the start of Saddam Hussein's trial." Amanpour claimed the story among the top ten of her career, adding, "There were only a handful of journalists in the cramped quarters, and I was among the exclusive few—one pool reporter, me and one other journalist. There were just a few cameras there from Arab television stations" (CNN 2004b). Despite their linguistic advantage, in her telling, the Arab journalists operating the cameras disappear behind their cameras. Other journalists had to rely on interviewing those who had been in the courtroom, sources that seem especially problematic journalistically given that there was no audio anyone could rely on for reporting and none of the three reporters who briefed the remaining press was fluent in Arabic.

There was, in fact, another journalist in the room, an American, the pool photographer—chosen by the deputy director for Coalition Operations. Yet in the various tellings of the trial, the photographer is completely erased, even though her images "played" everywhere in the following day's coverage per her pool agreement. Like the cameras that belong to Arab television stations whose microphones had been unplugged, the photojournalist seems to have been there merely as a visual recording device. Photographers are often forgotten.[36] In this situation, a courtroom spectacle was the anticipated dominant and, because of the linguistic limitations of the reporters in the room, all that could really be reported on was what the trial looked like. And yet, a visual-knowledge producer was rendered invisible, and, with her, part of the labor of knowledge production behind the news was also effaced. What the exclusive press access did is also create a situation in which the demand for images was due to the importance of the event: the former head of a nation being brought to trial. Yet, although U.S.

coalition forces had just days earlier handed over the nation's sovereignty to its new leaders, they continued to wield sovereignty over the images of the former leader's trial.[37]

What all three of these examples emphasize is AFP's struggle to maintain its credibility as a source of news amidst changing infrastructures of representation. That dominants must be visualized and AFP must have images on the wire to illustrate them meant that, in all three situations, the agency was reduced to circulating images produced by another image broker, whether a terrorist, the U.S. government, or the U.S. military via CNN. Even when the appropriate person at AFP in Nicosia decided, on the basis of his regional expertise, that the decapitation image was too gruesome for Middle East audiences and therefore should not be circulated in the region, an editor at Paris headquarters overrode that decision, reflecting much controversy over what AFP's role was in this changing journalistic landscape. Accreditation and access had become even more critical to news coverage, but even the most exclusive access could be trumped by censorship. Finally, in all three cases, the labor of professional image brokers was effaced even as the events emphasized the power of imagery. These images (whether produced by terrorists or governments or cleared by the military) dominated not because they were better representations than those produced by a wire service, or because the events were too remote for a wire photographer to get to, but because AFP was shut out of the infrastructure necessary to produce a representation in the first place.

Crises of visualization

The uncertainty and flux I observed at AFP in the summer of 2004 and in the broader world of international photojournalism during my fieldwork in 2003–05 reflected anxieties precisely about who dominates not only headlines but also the very infrastructures of media representation. Battles over how things are visualized were about dominance within the political world that the images supposedly reflected, within the image industry, and also within AFP itself.

As the examples above demonstrate, speed alone no longer guarantees success for a wire service. Valery himself told me that the editor of the future would need training not only in aesthetics but also in methods of determining which amateur or citizen images of an event to use. In other words, new challenges arise from an abundance of images. Editors told me that, although getting to the news site first remains important, it is now also important to be the source that has professional image brokers, both photographers who can take images and editors to evaluate and validate them, close to events so that they can understand images in context and gather citizen-produced images, if necessary. Speed is assumed. The competition

is over quality, though what constitutes a good image has shifted from a strictly aesthetic and informational sense to a rubric that incorporates other factors. These include accurate methods to test the credibility of sources and understanding of infrastructures of credibility, how other nonjournalistic entities who now act as image brokers online function, and how credibility and authority can also be created by validating and circulating images.

The number of new image brokers who used the Internet as a way to circulate all kinds of images, some of which then got further circulated by established wire services and news publications, made the consequences of changes in the infrastructures of representation starkly felt. Ultimately, a key question seems to be how authority and accountability can function when digital circulation on the web makes it difficult to gauge who an audience for a particular image might be (whether a wire service is merely a B2B provider or directly feeds an online public though news aggregators that stream the wire feed with minimal, if any, editing). Moreover, how to provide credible news images that convey important visual knowledge to global news audiences in a digital environment, without contributing to an escalating war of images, continues to be elusive.

I return here to Valery's showing me *Patterns of Global Terrorism* when we first met. What interests me is not so much that, just a few weeks after their circulation, Valery correctly anticipated the historical impact of the Abu Ghraib images or that he was clearly troubled to be seeing the Iraq war through the eyes of U.S. soldiers. Rather, it is that Valery did not seem troubled that he had been told to build his organization's capacity according to the U.S. State Department's anticipated terrorism hot spots.

Rethinking the plaques

The photo department's location meant that its employees always use the back door at AFP headquarters. A very modest entrance, it led to the stairs and the rickety elevator. The plaques in the main entry reminded all of the importance of information traveling freely, knowing no borders, and always being unbiased, its circulation unimpeded by politics, profit seeking, or ideology. Clearly, there is significant friction involved in information traveling, particularly in the form of images, and frontiers can only be ignored at significant costs. Further changes have taken place in the infrastructure of representation since my fieldwork, and many publics worldwide are in the process of debating the value of journalism as publications experiment with new ways of paying for it. The plaques in the official entrance to AFP seem to belong to a simpler model of news distribution, in which wire services had control over the wire and therefore much greater control over the construction of dominants. Yet now, while the infrastructures of journalistic representation, both text and image, are still in flux,

is a critical moment to rethink those plaques and grapple with new codes of ethics that can guide knowledge production in the contemporary world, and the responsible and effective brokering of news images in the age of their digital reproducibility.

Tracing power relations is central to fieldwork involving news images. World order and disorder are highly visual, and anthropological fieldwork at sites of visual worldmaking seems a necessary tool to understand how power fields come to clash or become interlaced or interfere with one another through images themselves.[38] For all the discussions about the work of journalism in the world and the importance of not interfering with the work the free press does in the world, there is still far too little anthropological investigation of the labor of journalistic knowledge production. It is still mostly the work—not the workers and the infrastructures that shape their work practices—that gets the attention. (Notable exceptions to this focus include Bird 2010; Boyer 2005, 2010, 2011; Hannerz 2004; Hasty 2005; and Pedelty 1995.[39]) For all the robust discussions of the politics and work of representations, there is still hardly any fieldwork on the labor behind news images.

The infrastructure of representation is still in flux. Global millions have access to the means of production and circulation of visual representations and are regularly promised opportunities to broker information, especially images, by being "i-witnesses" or citizen journalists. Meanwhile, censorship is rampant and comes in myriad new forms. New economic realities pose severe challenges to what types of journalistic idealism seem possible. Changes in the image industry since my fieldwork have only exacerbated the irony of nearly ubiquitous discussions of the power of images and the decreasing power of professional image brokers. The work of image brokers and the infrastructures it relies on have continually adapted to and been under pressure from a new technological regime. If understanding diverse forms of contemporary worldmaking is one of anthropology's core disciplinary missions, the changing infrastructures behind news images, a key medium through which many imagine the world beyond their experience, are too important to ignore. As I have shown here, news images are highly situated—geographically, institutionally, and culturally—visual products that have the potential to circulate globally as factual, seemingly transparent, representations of the world as it is. Battles over the infrastructures of representation are battles over visual worldmaking. Hence, at this moment, when the visual world order is being reshaped, it is critical to investigate the particular labor practices behind everyday news images to contribute to more robust debates about possibilities for photojournalism and journalism broadly in a digital world and to better understand a widespread vehicle of worldmaking.

Notes

1. Most of the interviews and fieldwork that this article draws on occurred in French. I have translated all speech into English. However, I have left this particular expression in French because the concept of having "a dominant"—a noun that is awkward in English—is central to my concerns here.

2. Of course, evaluations of importance are never universal. A local fluctuation in rice prices might have far greater significance to millions in Asia than a high-level meeting between two European leaders. Furthermore, the location of headquarters and bureaus might, to some extent, predetermine which regions get more attention. Nonetheless, what I want to underscore here is that, at the level of daily planning meetings, the dominant is discussed as if it were knowledge production of a universally significant kind. I never heard anyone in the meetings actually debate whether a particular story really had global rather than merely regional significance, although this may have happened in meetings I did not attend. For an example of national framings specifically of the war in Iraq, see Ravi 2005 and Dimitrova and Strömbäck 2005.

3. Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (2005) draws attention to how negotiation between specific publications shapes each one's coverage. Wire services too are very aware of their competition. They all cover daily worldwide news, so speed—who has the story on the wire first—is a major basis for comparison.

4. I use the term *Gulf War II* with some trepidation because I do not mean to create a parallel with World War II, a parallel that has been used to galvanize support for the war on terror. However, the initial Gulf War in 1991 was a moment of transition for the photographic representation of war. It was during this war against Iraq that precision-guided munitions (PGMs) received much attention. Cameras mounted on these PGMs, also known as smart bombs, transmitted "a bomb's eye" view of war that minimized representations of collateral damage. Thus, I use the term *Gulf War II* to signal that those inherently violent images of 1991 that conflated the production of an image and a violent act were important backdrops to the 2003 war on Iraq. These camera-equipped bombs had already fused representations and acts of violence.

5. See Zelizer 2010 and Azoulay 2008 for provocative readings of how specific types of news photographs function in the contemporary world. Differences between text and image, even narrowed to photographic images and prose, is a vast and old topic of commentary. My point is not to privilege photographs within journalism but merely to note that, although the work documentary photographs perform or could potentially perform in the world gets scholarly attention (see Hariman and Lucaites 2007 for a recent example and Sontag 1989 for a classic one), the labor behind them is surprisingly absent in ethnographies of news production. See Machin and Niblock 2006 for a related critique of scholarship on visual journalism.

6. Between March 2003 and October 2005, I conducted fieldwork in the newsroom of a large corporate "visual content" provider; the Paris headquarters of AFP; the editorial offices of two mainstream U.S. news magazines; and an Amsterdam-based international platform for documentary photography, World Press Photo. World Press Photo organizes the most prestigious annual news photography competition and also offers seminars in photojournalism both for top young photographers and for press photographers in the developing world. I also attended Barnstorm, a photography workshop for news photographers founded and run by Eddie Adams, a U.S. photojournalist who made several iconic images of the Vietnam War. My final site of research was Visa pour l'Image, the largest annual photojournalism festival, held in Perpignan, France, which I attended in 2003 and 2004. The larger project is the subject of a forthcoming book, *Image Brokers.*

7. In the realm of documentary photography, the term *decisive moment* is associated with French photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson, whose 1951 book *Images à la sauvette* had the title *The Decisive Moment* when it appeared in English in 1952. Bresson claimed that in photography there is a single fraction of a second that is the creative moment. The photographer's craft, according to Bresson, lies in being able to simultaneously recognize a visually stunning moment and release the shutter to capture it. In professional photojournalism, however, there are many decisive moments that both precede and follow the act of photographing. I was able to observe these decisive moments in the activities of professional image brokers in various workplaces within the industry over two years.

8. In an article based on research at 15 different news organizations, Dominic Boyer (2010) claims that the fast-paced intellectual practice of journalism in the digital age leaves no time for extensive discussions of news stories. However, perhaps precisely because I focused my observations on people whose daily jobs consisted of reporting on, justifying, and defending visual choices, I was privy to many such discussions. Similarly, despite the common wisdom among photographers that the magic of the decisive moment is ineffable or that the creative intuition that allows one to capture it cannot be articulated, by focusing on professional image brokers commissioning, selling, editing, and otherwise evaluating photographers' work, I constantly heard people articulate the value of particular images.

9. For more on how technological innovations raise especially heated debates around the very essence of media and the work they perform, see Gitelman and Pingree 2003 and Larkin 2008.

10. The complex relationship to profit that came up again and again at all of my research sites is outside of the scope of this article but an important element in the larger project. See Frosh 2003 for an extended discussion of the organizational consequences of the rise of the visual content industry. See also Machin 2004.

11. For anthropological discussion of the 2005 Danish cartoons that caused much protest, violence, and controversy, see Keane 2009, Asad et al. 2009, Yilmaz 2007, Hervik and Boe 2008, and Klausen 2009.

12. I am trying to make a claim beyond that suggested by the persuasive literature on representational worldmaking (Goodman 1978; Mitchell 1994) or the constructed nature of facts (Hacking 2000; Latour 2010; Poovey 1998).

13. For an extensive discussion of how the war on terror is inseparable from its visual representations, see Gürsel 2003.

14. See Boyd-Barrett 1980 for a history of the news agencies.

15. See Boyer 2010 for a discussion of the dominance of wire agencies within German news.

16. See Boyer 2010 and Vesperi 2010 for discussions of journalists' attempts to grapple with the digital journalistic regime. Also, see Russell 2010 for a discussion of how, in 2006, its management of a large number of Abu Ghraib images became a way for Salon.com, an online news publication employing journalists mostly trained in traditional newsrooms, to demonstrate what it could contribute to news followers. See also Perlmutter and Hamilton 2007 for a collection of mass communication scholarship specifically on new challenges in foreign reporting brought on by new technologies.

17. In recent years, the 1957 statute has been much debated, as it prohibits AFP from having outside investors. Many, including, most recently, trade unions, oppose such investors as a step in the privatization of the news agency. Discussions continue.

18. See Azoulay 2008 for a provocative reading of early photography history in conjunction with the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen. This same article about press freedom as an inalienable right was immediately invoked by the French prime minister in his condemnation of the November 2011 bombing of the satirical paper *Charlie Hebdo* following its publishing an issue with the prophet Muhammed featured on the cover, serving as guest editor.

19. Only significant events got mentioned in the play reports, and there was no way of knowing which specific images had been used or in what dailies they had been published, because the bureaus gathered the information from the major dailies of their regions and then sent in the aggregated results.

20. Although I cannot discuss it at length here, Janet's comment also points to what was perceived to be an important distinction between wire services and photo agencies in terms of those to whom they provided images—just editorial versus editorial and commercial clients—and the resulting differences in terms of revenues and resources.

21. That he used the expression "il faut pas laisser la place," which literally translates to we "must not *leave space* for" our competitors, highlights the interesting and constant conflation of space and time at a wire service. Marc continued (literal translation), "We must not let those who aren't a part of us open the fields." By this, he meant that, for a wire service, what is critical is initial coverage of an event. Because many clients subscribe to multiple wire services, his belief was that what determined whether a publication used an AFP photo depended on the wire service's ability to provide the first image of the event. So, not leaving an opening for a competitor, although a race in time, translates into a contest over space in a publication.

22. Wire services are particularly well positioned to provide coverage of phenomena experienced worldwide. The 2004 Venus transit received global media coverage, as it was the first to take place after the invention of broadcast media. The previous Venus transit took place on December 6, 1882.

23. A small sales team within the photo department at AFP sells individual images to publications that do not subscribe to the wire. This commercial section of the department is the cause of much controversy, as the editors on the desks like to see themselves as journalists who have no financial interest in the images but, rather, serve only the nobler cause of informing the public.

24. I observed Valery's handling of Palestinian news events on other occasions and do not think this comment was in any way an attempt to avoid reporting on Palestine. In fact, what is interesting here is the specifically visual rationale he gave for his decision.

25. Anthropologists such as Lila Abu-Lughod (2004) and Purnima Mankekar (2002) have shown how nonjournalistic media producers imagine and anticipate their audiences.

26. Throughout my fieldwork, I observed constant tension between word and image people. For an extensive discussion, see Gürsel 2010.

27. For example, the *New York Times* might promise "All the News That's Fit to Print," but, of course, what that means is all the news that the editors imagine might interest the paper's readers. See Gürsel 2010 for a discussion of how a particular imagined reader's interests, tastes, and supposed emotional reactions figure into editorial discussions at news magazines.

28. Mass communication scholars Brooke Barnett and Amy Reynolds argue that the media is central to terrorist activity, adding, "Breaking news is the new vehicle to transport the terrorist message" (2009:1). See Nacos 2007 for an extensive analysis of the uneasy and controversial yet key relationship between the media and terrorism.

29. See Barnett and Reynolds 2009:82 for a discussion of how the editor of the *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review* justified his decision to publish some of the less graphic images.

30. For a fascinating discussion of how wire service feeds on the Internet play into the planning processes and imaginations of local activists, see Amahl Bishara's (2010) analysis of multiple interpretations of the appearance of an image produced in Bethlehem on Yahoo! News. See Kuntsman and Stein 2010 for a discussion of the Israeli state's use of social media during the May 2010 flotilla crisis and of how state forces and activists both use live online feeds—often the same ones—to frame events for audiences.

31. There are differing views on whether who the image broker is makes a difference. One journalist wrote about the release of the video of *Wall Street News* journalist Daniel Pearl's beheading "that the video was produced by terrorists rather than journalists is a mere detail. After all it depicts what happened, which is the most elemental definition of news" (Kennedy 2002:81).

32. They are also using photographs of specific bodies to represent an entire nation or larger group, a common practice in photojournalism, as evidenced in the news image showing the Hungarian women in folk costume or Marie's concerns about how the images of the sangomas watching Venus's passing would be interpreted. For discussion of this practice of indexing bodies but representing social bodies, see Gürsel 2010:50–51.

33. One day, Valery shared with me his business plan to create a company that would just take screen grabs of television coverage of events. He joked with his colleagues on the desk about how he was gong to make a mint editing at a distance with no staff, few costs, and no photographers.

34. The only other report from the courtroom immediately makes it apparent that even the most mundane description is constructed. "After six months' imprisonment, his [Saddam's] hair was unkempt, his beard gray and straggly, and his favored Italian hand-stitched suits replaced by cheap store-bought jacket and pants provided by the Americans for the occasion" (Burns 2004: 1).

35. Peter Jennings, also present in the courtroom, confirmed the order to unplug mikes. Some reporters disobeyed this order, and the censors only managed to delete some of the sound so the crews were able to get some audio to their headquarters.

36. See Zelizer for a compelling historical account of how, from the beginning of widespread use of photography in news publications, photojournalism was seen as merely an "adjunct to word-journalism" (1995:87).

37. The peculiar staging of this event and the inchoate and highly interdependent nature of Iraqi soverignty were also apparent in the setting of the trial in a building that had been part of

Saddam Hussein's palace. According to CNN's report, the U.S. military had had the courtroom renovated and, in fact, just a week earlier, the space had been used for a hearing related to the Abu Ghraib prisoner-abuse scandal. The Iraqis had asked that there be no symbols of Iraq's new sovereignty, such as flags, visible in the courtroom. Saddam's legal custody had been handed over to the Iraqis, but coalition forces were still responsible for his physical security (CNN 2004d).

38. I have benefited greatly from the work of art historian John Tagg. In his seminal *Burden of Representation,* he enjoins researchers of photography to turn their attention to "the conscious and unconscious processes, the practices and institutions through which the photograph can incite a phantasy, take on meaning, and exercise an effect" (1988:4) and explicitly warns, "the object however is not to replace a social explanation with a discursive analysis, but rather to trace the relation between the two" (1988:23). As a cultural anthropologist, I have read this as an interdisciplinary call for careful fieldwork on practices and institutions of representations.

39. The variety of the articles anthologized in *The Anthropology of News and Journalism*, edited by S. Elizabeth Bird, promises much new research in the field. There are many studies of individual photographers and their work and volumes of interviews with multiple photographers, such as Ken Light's *Witness in Our Time: Working Lives of Documentary Photographers* (2000). The focus on the individual image producer's life and the reliance on his or her self-description through interviews, however, often leave out the larger institutional contexts of the person's work and the mundane aspects of everyday labor. (An important exception is Schwenkel 2009, which deftly situates Vietnamese photographers' recollections of their work during the "American war in Vietnam" within discussions of the production of transnational knowledge, tourism, and memory of the war.) Meanwhile, there is a dearth of anthropological work on the practices of professional image brokers who are not photographers.

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