

Introduction: Photography's Publics

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The liquid language of photography in the public sphere, which has us 'drowning' in a 'flood of photographs' and caught in an 'image-saturated' environment, suggests a photography culture so vast and overwhelming that the public can neither grasp nor contain it.¹ Whether encountered online, on smartphones, in the news media, in galleries, on billboards or in advertising, photographs seemingly surround us, submerge us and seep into our pores.

Photography and Its Publics approaches the extraordinary number and variety of photographs in the public sphere not as a cause for alarm but as a call for critical understanding. The book shows that, far from being an uncontrollable deluge that has swamped an unprepared public, photographs have long been an important means through which we define who and what constitutes the public sphere. Here publics are conceived as dynamic realms of visibility, discussion, reflection and contestation amongst strangers of different race, age, gender, social and economic status. Publics involve yet exceed the limits of families, interest groups, identities and communities. The book brings together leading experts and emerging thinkers who consider how photography has changed the way we understand, represent, address and locate these publics. Through analyses of the referential and imaginative qualities of photography, the transnational circulation of photographs, protest, violence, emotion and the ethics of spectatorship, the authors provide new insights into photography's productive role in the public sphere.

Photography and Its Publics contributes to a growing body of photography history and theory that seeks to propose new approaches to the medium's social and political implications. These approaches have emerged in response to decades of seemingly relentless criticism of the supposed failings of photographs and the fraught politics of their production

and consumption. Photographs, we have been told, objectify their subjects. They fail to motivate meaningful social change, cannot be trusted to tell the truth, are tools for exploitation, are a form of representational violence, and in their sheer number and fetishization of suffering have created an epidemic of compassion fatigue.² Susie Linfield is amongst a group of contemporary scholars who have come to recognize that such ‘antipathy to the photograph now takes us only so far’.³ In an effort to escape this negative theoretical bind, work on photography has sought increasingly to consider the more constructive qualities of photographs and photography practices, particularly in relation to civil society and human rights. Contemporary scholars are considering how the ideas, practices and products of photography give form to civil society, defined by Ariella Azoulay as the ‘interest that citizens display in themselves, in others and in their shared forms of coexistence’.⁴ *Photography and Its Publics* advances such agendas by arguing that the public realm is not just a space in which photographs are shared, circulated and viewed amongst strangers.⁵ Rather, it maintains that the circulation and reception of photographs have significant implications for how the public is defined, how its boundaries are demarcated and how its composition and operation may be rethought.

Defining the Public Sphere

Definitions of the public sphere have historically been characterised by a certain idealism, which emphasises civility, egalitarianism and democratic participation. Jürgen Habermas’s influential book, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, first published in German in 1962 with its English translation following in 1989, famously framed the public sphere as a realm for debate, the exchange of ideas, open participation and engagement.⁶ It is understood as the fundamental forum within modern liberal democracies for communicative interaction, contestation and the formation of public opinion. Thinking about the public

sphere in this way helps us to grasp how it is constituted by flows of communication, as well as how it contributes to a normative political theory of democracy.⁷ The public sphere has been conceived as a ‘vehicle for marshalling public opinion as a political force’, for holding governments accountable and ensuring that its actions reflect the will of the citizenry.⁸ The public also involves a collection of institutions, traditionally linked to the state but not necessarily so, that structure possibilities for communicative access. James Bonham consequently describes the public as a ‘space “in-between” the formal political institutions and civil society’.⁹ The democratic public sphere must ‘manifest commitments to freedom and equality in the communicative interaction in the forum’.¹⁰ This involves speakers treating each other with equal respect, and people recognizing their common status as members of a public.

In the years since Habermas’s book was published, several aspects of his approach to the public sphere have been challenged and adapted. A number of theorists and commentators, including Nancy Fraser and James Bohman, have pointed out that while claiming to represent universal interests, Habermas’s model of the public sphere was underpinned by the values of the bourgeoisie and is fundamentally exclusive. The public sphere involves a large number of realms of interaction, and these realms are not equal in terms of the access or impact that they afford. Rational deliberation and debate are individualistic social practices, and classes other than the bourgeoisie are traditionally less comfortable with these practices, giving them a disadvantage in the public sphere and making them less likely to be heard and to participate.¹¹ Thus, despite its historical association with ideals like the common good and shared interests, the public sphere may be formed in a way that delimits participation around gender, sexuality, race or religion.¹²

An awareness of these issues also underscores how it is impossible to maintain a clear distinction between the public and private domain. Feminists and queer theorists have

stressed how the private is fundamentally political, and therefore informs the public in key ways. While there may be physical thresholds that articulate the distinction between public and private domains (such as the threshold separating the home from the street), ‘private’ thoughts, identities and subjectivities, have important consequences for how public spheres are formed and function.¹³ In turn, public discourse is also integral to identity formation.¹⁴ Identities and the structures that support them at once inform the types of public communication that are produced, amongst which are photographs, and affect access to public communication, its interpretation and response. Understanding the porosity between the public and private is critical for photography. Images consumed in private may help to constitute publics by communicating values and ideas about how society should operate, informing identities and fostering a sense of belonging.

Crucially, then, the public sphere is neither homogenous nor unitary. A collection of strangers together constitutes a public by expressing a plurality of perspectives and interacting with one another. ‘The point is’, according to Andrea Brighenti, that ‘just as the public does not belong to the state or any formal institution, it does not belong to any specific social group, either’.¹⁵ Debate and contestation ensure that the public sphere is dynamic and changeable. Chantal Mouffe and Nancy Fraser are amongst those who consider the implications of contestation, diversity and the fluid boundaries of the public sphere.¹⁶ ‘Counterpublics’ may form to challenge the norms and assumptions of the public sphere, and may encourage alternative ways of mobilizing public opinion. Fraser notes that counterpublics have a dual character. On the one hand, they function as spaces for an ‘engaged withdrawal’ and regroupment. On the other, they operate as bases from which to develop activities directed towards the wider public, with the aim of provoking change.¹⁷ When they are effective, counterpublics may work to influence government decision-making.

Photography and/in the Public Sphere

Although Habermas did not address photography directly in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, he was very critical of the mass media for supporting private interests, undermining the possibility of reasoned public discourse, and transforming a ‘culture-debating’ public into one of passive cultural consumption. To Habermas, the mass media draws ‘the eyes and ears of the public under their spell but at the same time ... [deprives] it of the opportunity to say something and to disagree’.¹⁸ A similar analysis, warning of the demotivating, anaesthetizing potential of photographs, became something of an orthodoxy in photography criticism between the 1970s and 1990s. Just one example is Susan Sontag’s critique of photographs of suffering by Sebastiao Salgado. For Sontag, their mass circulation leads viewers to feel that human suffering is so vast and overwhelming that political intervention would be a waste of time.¹⁹

However, idealistic approaches to the public sphere, such as those that privilege the common good, risk keeping us in a theoretical bind that holds photography to impossible standards. Richard Butsch describes twentieth century liberal political theory’s three main claims about the function of the media in a democracy: ‘to act as watchdog over the state as an independent fourth estate; to act as an agency of information and debate for citizens to participate in their democracy; and to act as the voice of the people to the state.’²⁰ The idea that photographs and photography practices should similarly function in the public sphere inevitably leads to much disappointment. Photographs have ultimately failed to hold states responsible for their crimes, are not independent of power, and cannot always claim to be the voice of the people. Moreover, these high hopes fail to acknowledge how photography operates as a mode of cultural communication and a medium of visibility in the public sphere.

In order to understand more fully photography's contribution to the public sphere, it is critical to further extend approaches to the public grounded in literary cultural formation, reason, public opinion, democratic institutions, and face-to-face communication.²¹

Photography's status as a visual medium, and the ease with which photographs circulate in print and online, make them ideal means for establishing relations between strangers and constructing the public sphere as a realm of visibility, discourse and debate. In their book *No Caption Needed*, Robert Hariman and John Louis Lucaites argue that iconic photographs accordingly 'provide the public audience with "equipment for living" as a public'.²²

Photography and Its Publics reveals how other types of photographs, including news photographs, social media, stock images, activist, government, and art photographs, provide audiences with other forms of 'equipment for living' as a public. While there is much diversity in these photographic practices and the publics that they help to create, there are a series of commonalities grounded in the particular qualities of the medium that offer insights into the value of photography in constituting and understanding the public sphere.

Visibility, Recognition and Emotion

Issues of visibility have become increasingly prominent in contemporary studies of the public sphere.²³ Like other modes of publicity, visibility is contextual and underpinned by a range of social, political, economic and material factors. Drawing on conceptions of the public as a realm where people can be seen, heard and recognised by others, Brighenti argues that the public should be 'imagined as a register of interaction, a regime of visibility'.²⁴ Regimes of visibility are constitutive of the public sphere in a number of ways. One way relates to the public sphere as a mode of visibility where actors can be observed by others. Here, visibility should not be limited to that which is seen, the gaze or visuality. Visibility also speaks to the disclosure of a variety of opinions and perspectives through participation in debate, as well as

the opening of political power to the scrutiny of public opinion. It is therefore important not to limit photography's contribution to regimes of visibility simply to the subjects pictured in photographs. Photographs contribute to the formation of the public sphere as they circulate within it, by helping to render people and ideas visible to others and make demands for the greater public presence of certain issues. In other words, photographic visibility involves the visual, discursive and imaginative qualities of photographs in public.

Regimes of visibility help to produce publics through social visibility and interaction. Here 'the gaze and recognition of general or significant others becomes central to the constitution of self, of identity'.²⁵ This mode of social interaction may be both inclusive and exclusive. It involves the potential for mutual 'recognition, misrecognition or denial of recognition of the other – in short, [it is] the site where we constitute ourselves as "subjects"'.²⁶ Peter Dahlgren's work on the media and participation in democracy highlights the way that our senses of self are defined through interaction with strangers, involving 'optimal distance, recognition, but not intrusion.'²⁷ Likewise, Lincoln Dahlberg's essay on visibility in the public sphere suggests how photographs may contribute to self-recognition as a form of visibility where 'interlocutors come to more clearly see their own positions, including the inherent limits and contradictions'. This process thereby encourages 'participants to revise (re-vision) their arguments, values, identities.'²⁸ Photographs are critical to this process because they help us to make sense of the world and our places in it in relation to others.²⁹ Whether they encourage audiences to identify with others or the ideas through which publics and counterpublics are formed, photographs encourage us to consider our own place and that of others as members of a public.

A key dimension of *Photography and its Publics* is therefore a consideration of the communicative and relational qualities of photographs and photography practices. It is not enough to map the meaning and circulation of photographs in or amongst the public, as

though these two entities exist independently. We must also consider how photographs contribute to the formation of public opinion, and photography's status as a social medium. Photography is fundamentally a medium of relations. Social exchanges, performances and relationships are embedded in the acts of posing for, framing and taking photographs, publishing, circulating and exchanging them, as well as through patterns of spectatorship. The relational qualities of photography have already been highlighted by numerous scholars, including Azoulay's idea of photography as a civil contract and Margaret Olin's study of photographs in terms of embodied and emotional connections.³⁰ *Photography and Its Publics* contributes to this body of work by proposing an approach to photographic activities and events that involves the active participation of photographers, photographed subjects, publishers, curators, editors, social media users, artists and viewers of photographs, as well as their larger social, political and material contexts.

Emotions are fundamental to the patterns of recognition and relationships forged through photography. Approaches to the public as a realm of reasoned debate have traditionally marginalised the implicitly 'private' realm of emotions. However, this neglect is challenged in contemporary studies that emphasise the significance of emotions in public cultures and the value of emotions in establishing connections amongst strangers.³¹ As Jennifer Petersen writes, these imagined, often emotional relationships with fellow members of a public 'define who is imaginable as "one of us" in the reflexive moment of public subjectivity that constitutes public formation'.³² Emotions have been especially prominent in studies of photography and human rights. Sharon Sliwinski's *Human Rights in Camera* looks at how images make emotional appeals to their audiences.³³ In her account of empire, humanitarianism and photography, Jane Lydon also considers how photographs created 'relations between far-distant peoples' historically by fostering compassion and empathy. These emotions, argues Lydon, help audiences to determine 'who counts as human, and

whom one should feel *for* or with'.³⁴ Their emphasis on the role of images in establishing a sense of emotional connection amongst strangers is useful for understanding photography's publics. Publics go well beyond matters of emotional identification; but emotions are a key part of public culture because they help determine 'whom we relate to as proximate and as distant – in other words, which strangers we care for.'³⁵

Photographs can trigger a range of emotional responses, from joy to empathy and compassion, and from anger to indifference, and these emotions may or may not help to foster social connections or a sense of mutual recognition amongst strangers. When considering matters of emotional recognition, it is critical to acknowledge the ways in which power is implicated in such processes. Recognition is contingent upon social and political hierarchies of race, gender, class, sexuality and national identity, and may ultimately reinforce inequalities and oppression.³⁶ Kelly Oliver argues that the desire to demand recognition from the dominant culture is 'a symptom of the pathology of oppression'.³⁷ As oppression creates the need for the oppressed to be acknowledged by their oppressors, recognition risks perpetuating the very inequalities and hierarchies that people seek to challenge. Fraser consequently insists that the politics of recognition be accompanied by one of 'redistribution' that pays attention to the structural and material aspects of the public sphere.³⁸ Moreover, recognition also risks privileging the subject's own perspectives, for in order to recognise something it must be familiar.³⁹ Lydon summarises this idea: 'The viewer is limited by her own experience and remains unable to truly enter into another person's subjectivity; empathy can thus only be felt as an imaginative identification'.⁴⁰ Sympathy also implies a distance between the person suffering and the spectator, which may run counter to the requirements of a public. These problematics of emotions and publicity are addressed further in this volume, particularly in chapters by Rebecca Adelman and Thy Phu.

Other ethical questions arise around public visibility and spectatorship in cases where the subjects of photographs do not have any control over their visibility in public. Idealistic models of the public sphere as a space for participation and open interaction do not allow for the fact that those whose images appear in public and become a focus for public debate may not have entered into this interaction willingly. However, both maintaining the model of the public as a space of open interaction, and locating photography's publics in the interaction between audiences and photographed subjects, risks remaining caught in a system that positions unwilling photographic subjects as passive victims and photography as a tool for exploitation. In order to grasp photography's contribution to the public sphere, we need to widen the focus of discussion beyond the emotional connections (or lack of) between the photographed subject and audience. The contributors to *Photography and its Publics* consider how photographs may trigger connections amongst members of a public through social processes like public exhibitions, discussions, criticism and online social photography. The book addresses the many ways that photographs can act as rallying points, prompting strangers to identify as part of a larger group drawn together by common interests.

Stretching Photography's Publics

Photographic relations are specific forms of social connection that involve both direct face-to-face and mediated modes of interaction. People may interact directly with one another in the process of making a photograph or when viewing it in a public forum like an exhibition or public screen, or they may interact with one another through photo media. Much of the early criticism of photography's supposed failure in the public sphere was underpinned by an asymmetry in which a relatively small group of photographers and publishers produce and circulate images for large, often nonparticipating or nonresponsive audiences. Changes in mobile phone photography and digital communication technologies have altered the

imbalance between photographers and audiences, giving everyone with a camera phone or computer the capacity to be an active producer and consumer of images, to share them in vast numbers, and to communicate through photography in highly dynamic and diffuse ways.

A key difference between mediated interaction and face-to-face encounters in the public sphere – whether they be organized or accidental encounters – is that photographs and photographic practices facilitate encounters with strangers that we are never likely to meet in person. John B. Thompson observes how, in comparison to face-to-face interaction, mediated encounters are ‘stretched’ temporally and spatially, allowing us to engage with people and events from far away and from other times.⁴¹ This has critical implications for the types of publics that photography helps to produce. Such temporal and spatial stretching ensures that photography’s publics cannot ultimately be limited to particular geographical areas. In contrast to unified national publics, photography’s publics involve communication flows and networks both within and beyond nation states.⁴² The long history of global photographic circulation underscores why, long before the internet, photography’s publics were not limited to national contexts.

Given this vast geographic and temporal stretching, it is crucial to distinguish between mass audiences and publics. A mass audience of strangers does not necessarily constitute a public. Publics are collections of people who are engaged in activities that are socially visible to one another either directly or through media. Photography’s publics come into being when strangers engage in collective, reflexive, communicative, publicly visible interaction through or in response to photographs. It is useful to think of the distinction between audiences and publics in a virtual environment. Photography’s mediated publics imply the circulation of images amongst an anonymous audience of strangers in a sphere whose boundaries cannot be strictly controlled.⁴³ Once a photograph goes public, especially online, it is impossible to control who will see it and the consequences of the communication. The Internet has been

heralded as a utopian space for free, transnational and open communicative interaction, as well as realm of egocentric communication and consumption that undermines the kind of political action necessary for publicity.⁴⁴ Bohman emphasises how the internet's capacity to support a public sphere is determined ultimately by how it is used; that is, whether it is used for people to 'make normative claims upon each other in a properly dialogical and deliberative fashion'.⁴⁵ Participation in photography's public spheres also depends on access to technologies, mobility and a range of other factors that delimit the conditions, character and extent of public participation. Although online publics are not necessarily linked to the state, they are moreover shaped and constrained by corporations who 'design and control its architecture'.⁴⁶

Extending and challenging Habermas's approach to the public sphere as a realm of reason, open access, and one with the potential for consensus, the mediated qualities of photography's publics open up more messy, distributive, and decentred modes of publicity that may just as likely involve distraction and neglect as participation, debate and contestation.⁴⁷ Photography's online publics are formed from and by aggregate audiences of all those who can potentially gain access to images, and interpret, reuse, repost and rework them. Writing more generally about online communication, Bonham observes that as a result:

In a network mediated by computer interface, we do not know who is actually speaking; we also do not know whom we expect to respond, if they will respond or if the response will be sustained. Thus, while anonymity promotes freedom of expression under certain circumstances, it changes the expectation of communication by making speaker and audience not only indefinite but also indeterminate in its many-to-many form.⁴⁸

According to Bohman, this system ‘permits a decentred public sphere with many different levels’.⁴⁹ Photography’s publics may similarly be seen as distributive, decentred, plural and imbricated. Photography’s audiences can coalesce into publics around single issues, they can be short lived or sustained over a longer period. Although there may be no guarantee of productive exchanges and patterns of mutual recognition, this system also affords opportunities for the formation of publics and counterpublics in or across unlikely places. As Bonham stresses, these distributive publics may also come together to form a ‘public of publics’, in which people may make many different types of claims on one another.⁵⁰ For such a public of publics to form, there must also be communication between them.

The Contributions

Photography and Its Publics examines a range of publics – short-lived and long-lasting, national and diffuse. Whether considering photojournalism, documentary, art, political protest or selfies, the book highlights how different types of photographs form different types of visual rhetorics that have their own logic, modes of communication and forms of spectatorship which come together in the formation of publics. Although the chapters adopt particular regional perspectives, the transnational circulation of photographs is a recurring theme throughout, from photographs of US civil rights conflicts that inform Australian debates about Aboriginal recognition to the travelling exhibition *Chile from Within* produced by American photographer Susan Meiselas. The historical, conceptual and geographical spread of these case studies is intended to underline that generalisations cannot be made of photography or its publics. The contributors draw on their disciplinary knowledge and expertise from media studies, sociolinguistics, rhetoric and public culture, modern languages, history, politics and visual studies to address some of the many mechanisms through which photographs contribute to the formation of publics. Each chapter brings a different approach

to photographs, variously focusing on the idea of photographs as a mode of public address, a medium of visibility, or a means of fostering empathy and collective identification through spectatorship.

Part I begins with a programmatic intervention by Robert Hariman and John Louis Lucaites, who call for a shift in the critical discourse of photography and social change. Their chapter, 'Photography and Public Culture', lays an important foundation for the rest of the volume by calling for a paradigm shift in the critical discourse of photography. In place of the hermeneutics of suspicion that has long dominated photography studies, Hariman and Lucaites assert that there is need for a better understanding of how photography operates culturally as a public art and mode of communication. Diverging from decades of criticism of photography as a tool for power and exploitation, they emphasise how photography operates as a medium for critical reflection and engagement with others. According to Hariman and Lucaites, we must rethink the long-held belief that photography should impel political action and bring about social change – not simply to reject this idea, but to reframe it. Ultimately, their chapter highlights the need to better understand how photography works to constitute public culture by operating as a means of communication. A particular focus is on processes of decontextualisation and recontextualization, which are used to reconsider the relationships between realism and imagination in photographic communication and how they foster audience engagement. Photographs cannot be expected to motivate action, but they can take us part of the way by promoting the 'critical reflection' and 'communicative action' necessary to connect individuals through a shared public culture.

Part II adopts a historical perspective, with three chapters that examine moments when photographs have helped to reshape public cultures in Germany, France and Britain. In 'Photography, Truth and the Radicalized Public Sphere in Weimar Germany', Andrés Zervignón looks at the way that photography practices in Weimar-era Germany promoted the

kind of communicative action that Hariman and Lucaites describe. Zervignón looks at the strategies used in the radical-left magazine *AIZ* (*Arbeiter-Illustrierte Zeitung* / Worker's Illustrated Magazine) to build solidarity amongst workers. Zervignón paints a vivid picture of a period characterised by a heady mix of crisis and image profusion in which new photographic strategies and experiences increasingly divided the public. Ideas of photographic truth were given new form in the photographs and montages that Zervignón discusses. The resultant tension in the meaning of photographic truth was driven by the use of photography as a tool for both propaganda and agitation, simultaneously testifying to a concrete rational truth and a more abstract, emotional one. Connecting these lessons to the contemporary moment, Zervignón asks whether similar processes of escalating image circulation and an emotionally-driven need to believe in truths that are manifestly false are at work in the post-truth public culture of Donald Trump. While Zervignón acknowledges that the precedent of Weimar Germany does not bode well for the present, he is hopeful that lessons about the critical consumption of images will today lead to different results.

Edward Welch turns to post-war France in order to pursue the investigation of how images constitute publics as they circulate in the print media. Focusing on *Paris Match*, the popular photography-based weekly news magazine, Welch considers how the magazine's commercial success allowed it to forge what Michael Warner terms a 'dominant public' and gave it significant influence within post-war France as a result.⁵¹ Its use of photography to shape and frame public understanding was the cause of great consternation to Roland Barthes, who saw the magazine as a key source of the numerous, politically and socially conservative 'myths' sustaining France's dominant social order. At the same time, Barthes's critical engagement with the magazine was the foundation for his pioneering work as an analyst of the photographic image over subsequent decades. In "*Match* nous a raconté une histoire": Thinking with Roland Barthes about Photography, Publics and the Exercise of

Power in Post-war France’, Welch explores Barthes’s response to images in *Paris Match*, and the role they play in asserting particular assumptions about France, its place in the world, and its direction of travel as it negotiates decolonization and modernisation. He draws out the tension inhabiting Barthes’s early reflection on photography, which sees it at once as easily co-opted into doing ideological work through the freight of connoted meanings, and as the most radical, mercurial and unpredictable of semiotic forms, pointing to other possible meanings beyond the ones which appear to tie it down. The mercurial nature of the photographic image provides an opportunity for counterpublics to form, and the ability for them to transform what Bruno Latour terms ‘matters of fact’ into ‘matters of concern’.⁵²

The potential for counterpublics to create ‘matters of concern’ by mobilizing photography is the subject of Tom Allbeson’s chapter on the British anti-nuclear campaign. In ‘Visual Activism: Photography, Counterpublics and the British Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament in Post-war Britain’, Allbeson explores the role of photography in the British anti-nuclear movement from the establishment of the British Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) to the Cuban Missile Crisis. Photography was central to this mass social movement, being both an established facet of news reporting and a medium which, in contrast to film or television, could be easily mobilised and disseminated by campaigners themselves. While protesters orchestrated public spectacles like the Aldermaston marches to maximise media coverage for their cause, campaigners used photographs and photomontages to raise awareness of the threat and implications of nuclear war. These diverse initiatives constitute the development of a sophisticated culture of visual activism to promote a critical perspective on foreign policy and international relations in the early Cold War, opening up an alternative ‘vision’ which served as a counterpoint to the ‘illusions’ promoted by governments. Allbeson analyses the photography of Roger Mayne (commissioned by *Peace News* and the *Observer* to cover the first Aldermaston March in March 1958), the use of

photographs in the CND newsletter *Sanity*, and the photomontage work of F. H. K. Henrion, which helped to establish some of the key visual icons of the anti-nuclear campaign. Allbeson argues that this visual activism represents a notable effort to forge a counterpublic intent on communicating new perspectives and recruiting members to alternative communities of interest in Britain.

The largely national historical focus of Part II widens in Part III, which addresses how the national and transnational circulation of photographs overlap. Melissa Miles's chapter, 'Photography, Aboriginal Rights and the 1967 Australian Referendum', underscores the importance of photography as a medium of visibility in redefining the public sphere, and considers photography's place in transnational conceptions of the public in Australia. The chapter focuses on the 1967 referendum for change to the Australian constitution, which has acquired extraordinary significance in Australian social history as a turning point towards greater recognition for Aboriginal rights. Central to the overwhelming success of the 'yes' campaign was its strategic use of photographs. Photographs of Aboriginal children were recurring features of posters, handbills, pamphlets, newspapers, public meetings and protests, and became an emotive focal point for debate. While being embedded in the particular political and colonial context of Australia, these photographs are contextualised by other international photographs of racial conflict in Birmingham Alabama and South African anti-apartheid protests. Together, these images reveal much about the transnational qualities of photography's publics, their roles in redefining national cultures and how we might reconsider who counts as a member of the public.

Chapter 7, 'A Little History of Photographic Displacements: from *Chile from Within* (1990) to *Chile desde adentro* (2015)', examines the transnational qualities of photography's publics by exploring the various iterations of a photographic project over time. Ángeles Donoso Macaya offers a close reading of the book and exhibition *Chile from Within* and

Chile desde adentro, produced in collaboration between American Magnum photographer Susan Meiselas and a group of Chilean photographers. This documentary project was conceived at the end Chile's dictatorship (1973–1990), initially for an international audience. By bringing together previously little-known photographs that circulated independently in Chile, the project displaced the former meanings of the photographs and developed a new story of Chilean history, society and culture. Donoso Macaya looks at the importance of public modes of exhibition and publication within Chile, as well as outside it, in coming to grips with the traumas of the dictatorship, and in producing new democratic publics in its wake. Through an analysis of the exhibition and book, she elucidates the strategies used to foster the debate and contestation through which the photographs' audiences transformed themselves into post-dictatorship publics.

Part IV builds on consideration of the national and transnational qualities of photography's publics by addressing questions of international human rights, emotion and the ethics of international spectatorship. In 'Afterimages of S-21: Distant and Proximate Spectatorship and the Legacies of Cold War Human Rights,' Thy Phu focuses on the infamous mug shots from the Tuol Sleng prison in Cambodia to raise questions about distance and proximity in spectatorship. Debates about the links between photography and human rights have positioned distance as a challenge to be overcome when viewing photographs of suffering. However, Phu is critical of how distance facilitated a 'selective unseeing' in the context of Cold War human rights that allowed some implicated states to distance themselves morally and politically from the Cambodian genocide. This issue of distance is contrasted with concepts of proximate spectators, who have a closer subjective, spatial, emotional and experiential connection to these events. These proximate spectators suggest other ways of reckoning with human rights abuses and discourse that may lend themselves to a wider sense of shared responsibility, intimacy and proximity. Phu looks at

how survivors engage with tourists and visitors at the site of Tuol Sleng, now a genocide museum, as well as the work of contemporary Southeast Asian diasporic artists Binh Danh and Dinh Q. Lê, who use the prison portraits in their work. Phu argues that these works suggest how proximate spectators might provide new ways of addressing politicized discourses of human rights, and new ways of conceiving photography's publics and their links to visibility.

In contrast to Phu's argument about the power of emotions in forging connections amongst strangers, Rebecca Adelman's chapter, 'Hospitable Looking: Towards a Different Way of Seeing the War in Syria', is critical of processes of photographic identification. Adelman turns to heavily circulating photographs from the war in Syria, including photographs of casualties of Assad's chemical weapons, the young Omran Daqneesh bloodied and seemingly impassive in the back of an ambulance, and toddler asylum seeker Alan Kurdi lying lifeless on a beach, and addresses the political and social reaction to these photographs internationally. Adelman questions what it means for audiences to identify with the suffering of others from far away. While acknowledging how emotions often help to constitute publics, Adelman argues that the connections that we may feel with a person in the photograph are an imaginative identification with the image, rather than an affective exchange with the person in the photograph. She is critical of photographic identification and recognition, arguing that it encourages a mode of spectatorship that privileges emotional response over an ethical one. In its place, Adelman proposes an alternative model of spectatorship 'activated by the sense of unknowability, unfamiliarity, and distance'. Grounded in an ethics of spectatorial hospitality, her approach counters the dispersed, fragmented qualities of publics built on emotional identification with a public forged through attachment and obligation.

Comprising Part V, the final two chapters focus on photography's vast online publics. They propose new ways of approaching mass photography practices and structures, and the publics that they help to constitute. In chapter ten 'Is Commercial Photography a Public Evil? Beyond the Critique of Stock Photography', Paul Frosh argues that massive stock photography archives like Getty images are fertile ground for new modes of cultural and political analysis. After mapping how the stock photography industry has been transformed in response to profound cultural, commercial and technological changes, Frosh examines the 'generic' stock images that form the non-descript backdrop of consumer culture, populating billboards, brochures, websites and magazines with clichés and stereotypes. Frosh's analysis poses a persuasive challenge to popular assumptions about what photographs do in public culture. Questioning the hermeneutics of suspicion that has long dominated popular conceptions of stock photography – and criticism of photography's place in the public sphere more broadly – Frosh argues that generic images should not be read simply in terms of their supposed standardization and commodification of social relations. Rather, Frosh proposes that as stock photography creates an ambient image-environment that fosters 'habituation' to the presence of different types of strangers, it can be more productively conceived as an important agent of connectivity and pre-publicity.

The closing chapter, 'Selfies and Recontextualisation: Still life Self-imaging in Social Media', moves into another form of online media publics by examining the role of selfies in producing and mediating social connections. Michelle Zappavigna and Sumin Zhao adopt a social semiotic perspective to understand selfies as a form of social photography that builds certain types of connections amongst strangers through interaction, imagined identification and recirculation. The authors focus on what they term implied or inferred selfies and still life self-images. In these photographs, the photographer-subject's presence and perspective is implied indirectly through traces of their own body, shadows or reflections rather than the

face, or through their connection to personal objects. Their chapter thereby diverges from the emphasis upon mediated face-to-face interaction, which pervades discussion of modern public spheres, media and screen cultures.⁵³ Instead, it argues that the particular visual structures of implied or inferred selfies make them amenable to processes of recontextualization, which have implications for how mutual identification and social solidarity are produced in social photography. While viewers may not necessarily identify with the photographic subject based on gender, race or nationality, they ‘rally around more constrained communal features via processes of “ambient affiliation”’.⁵⁴ The idea of ‘ambient publics’ is raised as a kind of provocation for rethinking the possibilities of media publics. Ambient publics are not necessarily defined by identification with a particular issue, but coalesce around more limited forms of affiliation that may be brief, diffuse and dispersed. Zappavigna and Zhao suggest that these ambient publics are not necessarily more or less disengaged forms of publicness, but new modes of public culture that capitalise on digital technologies.

The book ends with an epilogue paying tribute to another key partner in the project, who passed away in 2017 before it could be brought to fruition. Andrea Noble was to be an editor of this book, and was a dynamic, engaging and very thoughtful contributor to the ‘Photography and Its Publics’ symposium on which it is based. Noble’s work reflected several of the project’s key concerns, from the role of photographs as vehicles and triggers for displays of emotion to the transnational circulation of photographs in the complex geopolitical landscape of the Cold War. Building on the spirit of conversation and collaboration that was such a strong part of Noble’s work, *Photography and Its Publics* sets out to open up new insight into photography’s vital role in defining public life.

Endnotes

¹ See, for example, Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (London: Penguin, 1978), 21; Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (London: Penguin, 2004), 105; Siegfried Kracauer, 'Photography [1927]', in *The Mass Ornaments: Weimar Essays*, ed. Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 58.

² See for example, Sontag, *On Photography*; Julian Stallabrass, 'Sebastiao Salgado and Fine Art Photojournalism', *New Left Review*, no. 223 (1997); Martha Rosler, 'In, Around, and Afterthoughts (on Documentary Photography)', in *The Photography Reader*, ed. Liz Wells (London and New York: Routledge, 2003); John Berger, 'Photographs of Agony', in *The Photography Reader*, ed. Liz Wells (London and New York: Routledge, 2003); Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*; Abigail Solomon-Godeau, 'Remote Control', *Artforum International* 42, no. 10 (Summer 2004): 61–4; Mark Reinhardt, Holly Edwards, and Erina Duganne, *Beautiful Suffering: Photography and the Traffic in Pain* (Williamstown: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

³ Susie Linfield, *The Cruel Radiance: Photography and Political Violence* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010), 24.

⁴ Ariella Azoulay, *Civil Imagination: A Political Ontology of Photography*, trans. Louise Bethlehem (London: Verso, 2012), 5.

⁵ For commentaries on these issues of circulation, see Thierry Gervais, ed. *The 'Public' Life of Photographs* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2016).

⁶ Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989 [1962]).

⁷ Nancy Fraser, 'Transnationalizing the Public Sphere: On the Legitimacy and Efficacy of Public Opinion in a Post-Westphalian World', *Theory, Culture and Society* 24, no. 4 (2007):

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⁹ James Bohman, 'Expanding Dialogues: The Internet, the Public Sphere and Prospects for Transnational Democracy', in *After Habermas: New Perspectives on the Public Sphere*, ed. Nick Crossley and John Michael Roberts (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 133.

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¹² See, for example, Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Public Man, Private Woman* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 282–303; Carol Pateman, 'Feminist Critiques of the Public/Private Dichotomy', in *Public and Private Social Life*, ed. Gerald F Benn and Stanley I. Gaus (London: Croom Helm, 1983); Johanna Meehan, *Feminists Read Habermas: Gendering the Subject of Discourse* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

¹³ Peter Dahlgren, *Media and Political Engagement: Citizens, Communication, and Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 75.

¹⁴ Craig Calhoun, 'Introduction: Habermas and the Public Sphere', in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig Calhoun (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), 1–50.

¹⁵ Andrea Brighenti, *Visibility in Social Theory and Social Research* (Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke, 2010), 117.

¹⁶ Fraser, 'Transnationalizing the Public Sphere'; Chantal Mouffe, *On the Political* (London: Routledge, 2005), 48; Chantal Mouffe, 'Democracy or Agonistic Pluralism?', *Social Research* 66, no. 3 (Fall 1999): 745–58.

¹⁷ Nancy Fraser, 'Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy', *Social Text* 25/26 (1990): 68.

¹⁸ Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 159 and 171.

¹⁹ Susan Sontag, 'Looking at War', *The New Yorker* (9 December 2002),

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²¹ Ibid.; James Curran, 'Rethinking the Media as a Public Sphere', in *Communication and Citizenship: Journalism and the Public Sphere*, ed. Peter Dahlgren and Colin Sparks (London: Routledge, 1991), 27–56.

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²³ Cara A. Finnegan and Jiyeon Kang, "'Sighting" the Public: Iconoclasm and Public Sphere Theory', *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 90, no. 4 (2004): 377–402; Ari Adut, 'A Theory of the Public Sphere', *Sociological Theory* 30, no. 4 (December 2012): 238–62; Maria Rovisco and Anastasia Veneti, 'Picturing Protest: Visuality, Visibility and the Public Sphere', *Visual Communication* 16, no. 3 (2017): 271–7; Lincoln Dahlberg, 'Visibility and the Public Sphere: A Normative Conceptualisation', *Javnost – The Public* 25, no. 1–2 (2018): 35–42.

²⁴ Brighenti, *Visibility in Social Theory and Social Research*, 109 and 117.

²⁵ Ibid., 27.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Peter Dahlgren, *The Political Web: Media, Participation and Alternative Democracy* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 55.

²⁸ Dahlberg, 'Visibility and the Public Sphere', 38.

²⁹ Robert Hariman and John Louis Lucaites, *The Public Image: Photography and Civic Spectatorship* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 3.

³⁰ Ariella Azoulay, *The Civil Contract of Photography* (New York: Zone Books, 2008); Margaret Olin, *Touching Photographs* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012). See also Julia Hirsch, ed. *Family Photographs: Content, Meaning and Effect* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981); Marianne Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory* (Cambridge: Harvard university Press, 1997).

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³² Petersen, *Murder, the Media and the Politics of Public Feelings*, 10.

³³ Sharon Sliwinski, *Human Rights in Camera* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011). See also Linfield, *The Cruel Radiance*.

³⁴ Jane Lydon, *Photography, Humanitarianism, Empire* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 1.

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³⁶ Kelly Oliver, *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 9; Wendy Kozol, *Distant Wars Visible: The Ambivalence of Witnessing* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 65.

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⁵⁰ Ibid., 152.

⁵¹ Michael Warner, 'Publics and Counterpublics', *Public Culture* 14, no. 1 (2002): 88.

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