

Master's Thesis

**Does Photojournalism Contribute to  
Positive Change?**

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## Summary

The research question for this paper is "*Does photojournalism contribute to positive change?*"

Through a dive into history and semi structured interviews with contemporary photographers I have gained interesting insight in how photography can create change by influencing people who see the images.

Historical examples show how early social reformers used the camera as a tool to create awareness and influence those with power to change. The contemporary photographers also say that they use photography as a tool to communicate, because it is so powerful.

Six documentary photographers with an aim to create change have shared their thoughts with me about their motivation and drive for doing the work they do, how they finance and disseminate their projects, what changes they have observed as a ripple effect of their images and how they see the future for documentary photography.

Although it is hard to measure the effect of photographs, because photography is often just one of many influencers leading to action, my findings show concrete examples on how photographs have led to positive change. In some cases direct change for the persons portrayed, in other cases changed attitudes towards an issue and even changed policies.

## Preface

My master assignment at Volda University College (Høgskulen i Volda) includes two parts: this research paper and a documentary photography production presented as a book with the title "What is happiness for you?" The book presents interviews and portraits of 22 humans on a topic I am passionate about. Well-being and happiness is fundamental for all human beings, and I have been interested in what people themselves highlight as important in their life.

I would like to thank my mentor Stuart Franklin, for inspiration and insight within the field of documentary photography, for challenging me and giving me feedback and input during my work with this master thesis.

I would also like to thank Maru Sanchez and fellow students that I have consulted, and Olav Urdahl for encouragement, comments and review along the way. And also a big thank to my friends for encouraging me.

A huge thank also to the documentary photographers I have interviewed in my research for this paper, and the portrayed people in the book that have shared their time and thoughts with me.

The work with this master thesis and documentary project has taught me a lot and given me knowledge that I will use in my future work and coming projects. Especially when it comes to defining the scope of the project and narrow down the task to make it manageable. This has been an interesting and educational process, at times out of the comfort zone, which is good, thanks to Høgskulen i Volda for the opportunity to widen my horizon.

Liz Palm

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# PART I

## Introduction

*"If we are no longer of the opinion that "a photograph in and of itself is going to make any difference", then why make photographs?" (Ritchin, 2013, p. 101)*

I got interested in the topic in this research paper while writing my essay "Documentary Photography as a Tool to Raise Awareness" while attending the course "Documentary Photography" at Volda University College in 2015.

This opened my eyes to how concerned photographers use their camera to tell stories we need to see, and to reach out to the people and policy makers that have the power to influence the situation and life of a group of people or a society; How engaged photographers with a camera seek out to document a situation to provoke change. Sometimes risking their lives, having an insecure financial situation and often working against strong and powerful forces.

"I believe that photography plays an important role in shaping democracy and advocacy" Stuart Franklin says in his book "The Documentary Impulse", continuing "Photography (and journalism) practiced respectfully has the power to educate us all towards a greater understanding of, and empathy with, others". (Franklin, 2016, p. 9)

Through this paper I will look into to the history of photography and also contemporary photojournalism to investigate photographs role in shaping public opinion and contribution to change.

### **This master consists of a production and a theoretical part**

My master is divided in two parts: a production part and this research paper. The production part, which is a documentary photography project, is related to a topic I'm passionate about: happiness and well-being. Portraits of 22 persons; interviews and photographs, are presented as a book.

My aim is to look more closely at a universal topic that humanity has discussed since the time of Aristotle: What makes us happy and which ingredients help us to live a good life? UN has put human well-being on the agenda and 20th March has since 2013 been the International Happiness Day.

There have been a lot of research around this topic and there are many who claim to have the answers. Our material standard has increased, at the same time so many people struggle in their life, and are depressed and stressed. I'm interested in what people themselves highlight as important in their life to be happy and inspired.

I have approached each person who said yes to be part of my project with six questions: What is happiness to you? Do you have any role models? What inspires you? How do you charge

your batteries? Do you have a dream? Which advice would you give to others to have a good life?

My aim is making the audience reflect on their own life when they see the project, and be aware how they prioritize their time and recourses. (Project description in the appendix)

## My research question

The scope of this research paper is to investigate how documentary photographers use photojournalism as a tool for change.

I want to narrow the selection down to photographers working consciously towards a cause. Photographers working with long-time projects aiming at contributing to awareness and change. My target group is therefore documentary photographers who are also activists.

What is their motivation? What drives them to continue this work? Do their stories contribute to change? How do contemporary documentary photographers finance and disseminate their stories? And how do they see the future for documentary photographers?

I have phrased my main question for this research paper as:

***"Does photojournalism contribute to positive change?"***

By positive change I mean the photographers intended effect.

By photojournalism I mean visual storytelling using photographs to capture and depict reality.

To get closer to an answer I have divided my main question into four:

1. What is the motivation for documentary photographers?
2. How do they finance and disseminate their work?
3. What differences does their pictures make?
4. How is the future for documentary photography?

## Documenting for change

The use of photography to advocate for change started in the nineteenth century soon after its invention. One of the best known of these early photographers was Jacob Riis, a Danish emigrant to United States, who used his camera to visualise the living conditions for the tenement workers in New York. It is described further in part II.

Robert Coles refer to the work of the Farm Security Administration during the Great Depression in the 1930s, where photographers used "the camera as an instrument of social awareness" (Coles, 1997, p. 109)

Another example is Eugene Smith with his story "Nurse-midwife" published in LIFE magazine in 1951, causing thousands of dollars to pour in and making the midwife Maude Callen's wish come true: to build a clinic. This was before all the NGO's used pictures to raise

money to their organizations. Readers of the magazine got moved by the story, which triggered their action. (Goldberg, 1991, pp. 182-183)

The term "concerned" was linked to photography by Cornell Capa in 1968, when he introduced the exhibition and book "The concerned photographer" (Capa, 1968, no page). He defines the words by referring to Lewis W. Hine: "There were two things I wanted to do. I wanted to show the things that had to be corrected. I wanted to show the things that had to be appreciated." (ibid)

Activism is defined as "The policy or action of using vigorous campaigning to bring about political or social change." ("Activism", 2019)

For me activism is a positive word. It means dedication for a cause one believes in, it means prioritizing and it means fighting for others.

A documentary can be described as "a depiction of the world by a photographer whose intent is to communicate something of importance - to make a comment - that will be understood by the viewer". (Bogre, 2016, p. 2)

In "Photography as Activism" Michelle Bogre is writing about early activism and the work of documentary photographers in the same way Vicki Goldberg and other authors write about concerned or social documentary photographers. Different words are used to describe the same; photographers who use their camera because they want to raise awareness and change something in the society.

"Activist photography is intent and process. It is an act and a filter through which a photographer perceives the world. It is a passionate voice and a moral vision" and further on "an engaged citizen with a camera". (ibid, p. xii)

It seems to be a nuance between the words. Not all concerned photographers intend to use their camera to make a change directly, but more to shed a light on a situation and give input in the public debate and insight in what is happening in our world. The difference may be whether they continue the work beyond shooting their photographs?

"Maybe activist photography begins at the point that a photographer thinks beyond the photograph, or when the photograph is not the end" (ibid, p. xv)

Documentary photographer Marcus Bleasdale says in an interview with Michelle Bogre "the photograph itself is not the end. It is only the first step in a process to enforce change" (ibid, p. 7) "The camera is my tool, I use it to educate, inform, and influence policy" (ibid, p. 81)

"Advocacy should continue beyond the photographs", says Ed Kashi (ibid, p. 104)

Both Bleasdale and Kashi, who both see themselves as activists, say that they see their images only as a part of their work to succeed with their mission. They continue working for the cause after the photographs are shot. This is the selection of documentary photographers I want to learn more about.



## Changed media landscape

Until the end of the twentieth century, photographers were mainly dependent on magazines and printed media, and publishers to get their stories out. Today, in a time where publishing is possible for everyone in a rapidly changing media landscape, I want to know more about how documentary photographers disseminate their photographs, and in particular those who advocate for change.

Documentary photographer Walter Astrada welcomes the new opportunities:

"When there were only a few magazines, there were far fewer working photographers. The new web platform and sites that appeared in the late 1990s and that have propagated in the twenty-first century have supplanted television news and challenged print media, but they also have created new distribution opportunities for photographers to publish work" Astrada says in an interview with Michelle Bogre in 2010 (Bogre, 2012, p. 46).

During the last decade social media has also expanded, giving even further opportunities for dedicated photographers to spread their work. One example is the image of Alan Kurdi, discussed later.

## Method

To get closer to my question in this research paper, "Does photojournalism contribute to positive change?" I will first look at the history. Look to earlier documentary photographers and the impact of their pictures. The photography history since the mid of the nineteenth century is comprehensive. Social reformers early on used cameras to visualise their causes. I want to pick some of these examples and look at how they contributed to change.

I will then approach contemporary photographers to learn more about how they work in our time. I could choose quantitative or qualitative interviews. The quantitative method is mainly used to give numbers and overview, as demographics, while the qualitative method is designed to give insight and reflections from the interviewees. (Grønmo, 2016, p. 139)

The quantitative interview would give me the ability to approach a large number of photographers, and is a timesaving and cost-effective method. But I would get limited information from each of them and not much flexibility, since the variables and alternatives have to be set in advance.

As I want the photographers to elaborate on how they work, I need to have the opportunity to have follow-up questions, which would be difficult in a questionnaire. I therefore chose a qualitative interview technique. As this is a time consuming method, I have chosen to include six interviewees, and I will have the ability to go more in depth with each of them. (ibid, pp. 167-173)

## Who to interview?

The list of documentary photographers doing important and compelling visual stories is huge. There are 50 active photographers only in Magnum Photos, 28 photographers in VII and 300 photographers linked to Majority World, just to mention a few photo agencies. And of course there are thousands of documentary photographers worldwide not represented by any agency.

I want to seek out photographers who want to make a positive change with their pictures, as described above. I want to search for freelance photographers who themselves set the agenda for which causes they're involved in, and not employees in newspapers or NGOs.

I have chosen my subjects through books I have read, projects I have come across through Internet search and tips from other photographers. I want to interview photographers from different continents and also have a gender balance.

## Semi structured interview

I have chosen five open-ended questions, which means it is not possible to answer yes or no, but they have to explain and elaborate, and my questions should be neutral and simple, not to be misunderstood.

I have chosen these questions:

- What is your motivation to be a photographer?
- How do you finance your projects?
- How do you disseminate your stories?
- Do you have 1-2 examples of how your photographs have made a change or influenced someone?
- How do you see the future for documentary photography?

## Validity

The validity expresses how suitable the data material corresponds to the researcher's intentions with the survey and data collection. (Grønmo, 2016, p. 241)

To consider the validity of the collected data I should ask myself in advance if my questions will give me the answers that make me able to analyse and discuss the data and present a conclusion.

I feel that the design of my semi structured interview with a few predetermined open questions to the photographers, will give me the answers I need, to learn more about how the photographers work and in which degree photojournalism contribute to positive change from the photographers view.

I have considered the questions carefully, to find a way to gather valuable and relevant information from the contemporary photographers.

## Reliability

The reliability of the collected data refers to whether or not you will get the same answers by using the same method again; will the research method produce consistent results. (Grønmo, 2016, p. 241)

Ensuring reliability is easier for quantitative than for qualitative interview methods. (Larsen, 2012, p. 81) The interviewees may be influenced by the situation or by the person conducting the interview. Maybe another interviewer would have posed different follow-up questions for example.

Another aspect is the accuracy of the data. I record all the interviews that are not done by email and transcribe them to have the whole conversation and the quotes precise.

A consideration to make is also whether the interviewees respond open and honestly, when it is not anonymous.

In my approach to the photographers, it may be the questions about positive effects of the pictures and if the work helps someone that might give false answers, since the photographer might hope to see a change. His/her goal may influence how they answer. In some cases it could be difficult to measure the effect, as it may be other elements that influence outcome as well.

The question about how they finance their work could also be sensitive, as there could be different ways of surviving economically, and maybe other ways of income than that is not related to photography work. Maybe the photographers do not want to share this information.

An advantage with the qualitative method is that it erases the possibilities of misunderstanding questions, since the content can be clarified and elaborated instantly, and follow-up questions can be posed.

## PART II

### The concerned photographer

*"Almost from the time it was invented, photography was recognized by both photographers and social activists as a great activist tool for people who wanted to expose social injustices"* (Bogre, 2012, p. xiv)

I am very fascinated by the 180 years of photography history and how photographers very early began using images to raise awareness and shed a light on injustice and inequality between groups of people.

Documentary photographers tell stories about people who are victims of critical circumstances and situations, mostly created or controlled by other humans. Many also share stories on climate change and man's negative impact on our planet.

Photography was soon after its invention linked to "humanitarian". A phrase that denoted "all that is concerned with benevolence toward humanity as a whole, with human welfare as a primary good" and used to "designate someone who advocates action for such ends" (Fehrenbach & Rodogno, 2015, p. 7).

In the first century of the photography history, some of the camera users were social reformers and humanitarians, not photographers by profession. They used photography to depict atrocities and injustice as a wake up call to other parts of the society or other part of the world. Both in Congo and Biafra (see next chapter), missionaries were the authors of some of the first visual evidences of the horrible tragedies happening in the two countries on the African continent. (Fehrenbach & Rodogno, 2015). They used religion as a united force to awake the sympathy for the converted population in the location they preached their beliefs. By using photography combined with facts, they raised money from their congregations back home.

As cameras became available to more and more people, the use of it expanded to science, anthropology, medicine, portraiture and celebrity photography, visual evidence, propaganda, expedition and travel documentation, war photography, and also social reform. (Marien, 2014)

Early on, people saw the opportunity to use this unique technique that made it possible to freeze an actual moment, and use it as a more truthful presentation than paintings or words, to depict an event or situation.

*"Almost from the time it was invented, photography was recognized by both photographers and social activists as a great "activist" tool for people who wanted to expose social injustices".* (Bogre, 2012, p. xiv)

Photographs are still used as evidences today, to support a view, but not as objective as it was perceived in earlier days. Documentary photographers who work for social change do not see

themselves as objective. They have their point of view. "I am a professional so I seek honesty, but I am not objective" says Stephen Shames. (ibid, p. 6)

Many activist projects start out as an assignment. As Stephanie Sinclair's project on child marriages and Jonathan Torgovnik's project on mass rape on Tutsi women in Rwanda. (ibid).

It is easy to understand that photographers, who meet people that share their stories and give insight into a society and how they are affected by an issue, want to dig deeper and learn more, and also let the world know about it. Some photographers have the chance and willingness to do that; the time and effort and resources it takes to move on.

## Critics

Almost fifty years ago Cornell Capa wrote:

"No day passes without someone questioning the power of photographs to cause change. As a photographer, I have my own positive opinion. However, in response, simply consider the role of the written word, which has had a longer track record. Has *it* managed to cause change? Images at their passionate and truthful best are as powerful as words ever can be. If they alone cannot bring change, they can, at least, provide undistorted mirror of man's actions, thereby sharpening human awareness and awakening conscience" (Capa, 1972, no page).

Photographs make us see and understand, even if we are not capable of rescuing the people portrayed. As Fehrenbach & Rodogno (2015) refer to in their book "photographs have been essential to moral progress and to the history of human rights in the twentieth century" (Fehrenbach & Rodogno, 2015, p. 93). Susie Linfield is one of them. Photographs "bring us up close to those experiences of suffering in ways that no other form of art or journalism can" (Linfield, 2010, p. xv).

The image of Alan Kurdi, discussed later, is a good example of that. The photograph of the drowned little boy evokes emotions. It makes me feel closer to the story; it goes straight to the heart. I understand it more because I see it.

Some critics say that photography's visualisation of atrocities and suffering do not contribute to any change. Susan Sontag is one of the critics of photography. In her book "On Photography" she describes how she as a child was horrified by images from the Nazi camps Bergen-Belsen and Dachau. As we are flooded with pictures of atrocities, she questions if we reach a saturation point and get compassion fatigue.

"To suffer is one thing; another thing is living with the photographed images of suffering, which does not necessarily strengthen conscience and the ability to be compassionate. It can also corrupt them. Once one has seen such images, one has started down the road of seeing more - and more. Images transfix. Images anesthetize." (Sontag, 1977, p. 20)

In her next book "Regarding the Pain of Others" she continues, "Compassion is an unstable emotion. It needs to be translated into action, or it withers. The question is what to do with the feelings that have been aroused, the knowledge that has been communicated. If one feels that

there is nothing "we" can do - but who is that "we"? - and nothing "they" can do either - and who are "they"? - then one starts to get bored, cynical, apathetic." (Sontag, 2003, p. 90)

Truly photojournalism has not erased suffering or atrocities to happen, but how could one tool have that power to change the behaviour of humans? Especially since the driving force and aim for our behaviour vary so much and we have different belief systems and values. I believe we need photographs to understand the world.

Photographs are also only one element in shaping our viewpoint in a world with messages and influences from all angles. Goldberg (1999) argue that no photograph change anything by itself. An image need a context to be understood and as an audience we also need facts to understand the story, and often we would like to change something but do not have the power to do so, or know how we can contribute.

"A photograph has power only if the right people see it in the right context at the right time". (Goldberg, 1991, p. 16)

Robert Coles problematizes the act of documenting people and societies, both because the observer bring in her preconceptions and background when looking at others, but also to gain recognition herself for the pictures and stories from the field. One of his interviewees says "we do our documentary work and we get recognition, and we build up our careers - and they, there's nothing in it for them" (Coles, 1997, p. 83) The view of seeing documentary work as exploitative is also shared by some of the portrayed people. As one America farmer said: "they said we should just go about being as we are; but they wouldn't let us be as we are... They kept on trying to get us to say we're in bad shape... What will the people who see the pictures think? ... They will pity us. I'd like to talk to every one of them. I'd like to tell them that we're in trouble... but we're not the way they want to point us out to be". (ibid, p.167).

A minister in a black community in Mississippi was positive about the documentary work, because they needed help, but was also worried: "will they "document" our tears, but not our smiles?" (Coles, 1997, p. 169) He is concerned about the way they will be presented, if only their troubles and rough time will be documented, not the good times and their pride and efforts to make everyday life as best as they can.

A community might be dependent of the photojournalist to convey they stories, but they do not have any control on how the story are depicted and are vulnerable of one-sided presentation and stereotyping. It is a power imbalance between the portrayed and the storyteller. This is also a challenge Yan Cong points out, discussed in part II.

## **The first humanitarian photographers**

In my research for the first social documentary photographers that made impact with their images, Jacob Riis, Lewis Hine and the photographers within the Farm Security Administration is often referred to.

Jacob Riis migrated from Denmark to the United States, where he became a journalist. With his book "How the Other Half Lives" produced in 1890 and lantern-slide lectures with his

photographs, he wanted to visualise the poor conditions in the slums in New York and attract the attention of the wealthy, who had the power to improve the living conditions in tenement housing. His work had great influence and led to massive urban renewal of the housing conditions. (Light, 2000, p. 192; Marien, 2014, p. 203) Riis did not get the response he wanted with written reports, which is why he picked up photography as a tool to communicate. Goldberg (1991, p. 168) refers to Riis as an effective reformer averting a cholera epidemic in 1891 by photographing and documenting sewage contamination.

A few years later Lewis Hine started his work with a camera. Hine was a teacher but left school "to pursue work as a documentary photographer working for social justice" (Smith-Shank, 2003, p. 34). Hine shot more than 5000 photographs of children at work for the National Child Labour Committee in United States from 1906 to 1918 and "his photo stories were used as propaganda for a good cause" (Smith-Shank, 2003, p. 35). His imagery is recognized to be a crucial contribution to get public attention and establish child-labour laws. (Goldberg, 1991, pp. 174-177)

Hine is seen as a pioneer in using camera as a tool for change. "Social documentary photography was still in its infancy early in the twentieth century, yet Hine gave it canonical form" Vicki Goldberg says. (Goldberg, 1999, p. 9)

During the Great Depression in the 1930s president Franklin Roosevelt established the Farm Security Administration (FSA). The aim was to fight rural poverty in the United States. FSA recognized the power of photography, and Dorothea Lange was one of the photographers they hired to visualise the poor conditions in the rural areas. Her most famous photograph, Migrant Mother, was taken in a pea picker's camp in Nipomo in California in 1936. It was a picture of Florence Thompson, a mother of seven children, and it has become the iconic image of the Depression. (Goldberg, 1991, p. 136; Partridge, 2013, p. 6)

Lange's pictures were printed in magazines and newspapers and exhibited in galleries. The particular pictures of Florence Thompson gave immediate and concrete effects; funds poured in from the relief authorities and twenty thousand pounds of food rescued 2500 people from suffering and starvation. The government also set up camps in the area to provide housing and sanitary facilities for the worn-out migrants. (Goldberg, 1993, p. 137; Partridge, 2013, p. 6)

The three photographers mentioned above are just a few examples of photographers that early on used the camera as a tool for change.

## **Examples from photography that led to change**

*"If a documentary photograph evokes emotion, it can compel action" (Bogre, 2012, p. 38)*

In this chapter I will elaborate on a few historical and current examples within conflict, crisis and climate change where photographs has been used to communicate and raise awareness.

## Changed attitudes towards refugees

One of the latest examples that made great impact is the picture of Alan Kurdi, the drowned little boy who did not make the boat trip across the Mediterranean Sea. Photographer Nilüfer Demir shot the picture of the dead body on September 2, 2015 at a Turkish beach. "Demir's pictures changed - overnight - deep-felt attitudes towards refugees in Europe" (Franklin, 2016, p. 9). It instantly changed how Europeans talked and wrote about refugees and how everyone suddenly wanted to help, with i.e. donations and housing. And also how policies changed: "The British Prime Minister, David Cameron, spoke of how moved he had been by the pictures and promptly announced a plan to take in several thousand refugees from the civil war in Syria". (Ibid)

As the iconic image of the boy lying face down at the beach went viral in social media and were covered in the press worldwide it "inspired countless reactions of indignation and protest, most of them evoking Kurdi to advocate for more humane responses to the refugee/migration crisis". (Olesen, 2018)

Within 12 hours the image appeared on 20 million screens worldwide. "Initial postings by a handful of journalists soon went viral with 53,000 tweets per hour" (Guardian, 2015). Claire Wardle at the Tow Centre for Digital Journalism is referred in the article: "2015 was the year the Syrian refugee crisis hit the European consciousness, but it's easy to forget that this was not the case before the Alan Kurdi image (...) The photo of Alan Kurdi galvanised the public in a way that hours of broadcasts and thousands of column inches weren't able to do" (Ibid).

In an interview with Independent, Laura Padoan says "I've worked for the UNHCR for more than seven years and, to be honest, this is the most generous response I've seen in terms of the way it has touched people and their willingness to offer help on a very personal level." (Merill, 2015)

Everyday it is published pictures of crisis and conflicts, but suddenly one image touches us tremendously. This image has similarities with the buried couple from Rana Plaza, discussed later. I think these pictures wake us up because we can identify with the victims in the pictures and we understand how fragile we are, and that we are the same humans.

## The man-made famine in Biafra

In July 1967 the Nigerian Civil War started, often referred to as the Biafran War. The Igbo people fought for secession from Nigeria, who responded with a blockade, causing starvation and the death of more than 1 million people. (Cookman, 2008).

"Gilles Caron was among the first western photojournalists to cover the crisis (...) Photographs from his April trip, published in the May 4, 1968 edition of Paris Match, were the first major reportage of the war in the Western Picture Press." (ibid) Other photographers soon followed. Magazines and newspaper worldwide printed pictures of starving humans looking like skeletons. McCullin shot some of the most iconic images from Biafra. "During 1969 anti-war demonstrations in Europe, the crowd used his pictures of the Biafran crisis as



banners to call for an end to the conflict." (Franklin, 2016, p. 95) One of his pictures were printed on posters and fly-posted around London.

Also artist protested and marked their point of view; both John Lennon and the boxer Dick Tiger returned their MBE medal to the Queen because of Britain's involvement in the war. (ibid, p. 97) Through their protests celebrities spread awareness and influenced public opinion.

Visual evidences of the brutality happening in Biafra were disseminated and used to create awareness and action, and emergency aid operations were carried out. "Biafra was a landmark event in the history of documentary photography". (Franklin, 2016, p. 93)

"It was the Biafran war that led to a rethinking of humanitarian aid and inspired the founding of Doctors Without Borders in 1971". (Linfield, 2010, p. 50) The Jewish physician Bernard Kouchner, co-founder of the NGO, went to Biafra himself with the French Red Cross after seeing photographs from the famine. Missionaries were among the first to disseminate stories and photographs from the crisis in Biafra. They got support from Christian organizations and also the Jewish community, seeing the similarities from Holocaust. "The images from Biafra reminded countless contemporaries in Western Europe and the United States of the photographs taken during the liberation of the Nazi concentration camps; fears of an "African Auschwitz" abounded". (Fehrenbach & Rodogno, 2015, p. 252) This is why many Jewish activists got involved in the protests against the atrocities in Biafra.

Those who witnessed the atrocities influenced their followers and congregations with photographic evidences and resistance spread.

## **Vietnam War**

Images from the Vietnam War, or the American war as it is named by the Vietnamese, are glued to our collective memory; The Napalm Girl by Nick Ut, shooting of the Viet Cong officer Nguyen Van Lem by Eddie Adams, women and children crouched in a canal to cover from Viet Cong fire by Horst Faas, the list of iconic images from the war is long.

The long-stretched country in Southeast Asia has an intricate history of conflicts; it was under French colonial rule since the 19th century and invaded by Japanese forces during World War II. Later Vietnam was divided in two. Ho Chi Minh, who was inspired by communism in China and Soviet, claimed control over Hanoi and the north. The south part was still administrated by France, leaded by Emperor Bao Dai. Both leaders wanted to unify Vietnam as one country, but they had different ideas about the model; tied to communism or western culture. (Spector, 2018)

When France was defeated in a battle in 1954 the country was formally divided in two and within few years the country was a battlefield supported by China and Soviet in the North and United States, Australia and other anti-communist allies in the south. US supported South Vietnam out of fear that communism would spread, and president John F. Kennedy intensified their military intervention from 1961. (History Editors, 2009)

Anti-war movements build up, as reports and photographs poured in from the war, and in the late 1960s hundreds of marches and protests took place. The anti-war movement used pictures as their weapon. One of these was Eddie Adam's picture of General Loan shooting a Vietcong captive in Saigon in 1968. The image won a Pulitzer Prize and appeared in books, magazines and posters. (Goldberg, 1991, pp. 226-229)

An image from the My Lai massacre in 1968 by Ron Haeberle, of a group of dead people printed in several magazines both in US, Japan and Europe, was also used as an anti-war poster with the text "And babies?" in protests both in America and Europe. (ibid, p. 231-236)

The antiwar movement against the Vietnam war, which started in 1964 and escalated in 1967, mobilised students, organizations, politicians, Vietnam veterans, artists, celebrities, leaders and citizens in general. (Zimmerman, 2017) Many tools and methods were used to raise awareness about the atrocities, and photography was one of them.

More than 58,000 American soldiers were killed in the war. Documentary photographer Constantine Manos came across a funeral for a killed soldier in South Carolina 1966, and one of his images, of a black woman crying, was used as a protest poster all over Europe he says in a video interview. (Macdonald, 2017) The picture showed how the war affected ordinary people. Images like this bring the conflict closer; it is no longer something happening on the other side of the globe, it became reality in the everyday life of the American people.

As described above, images related to the war were used by others than the media. Another example is how the picture by John Paul Filo of two women who knelt down by the side of one of the four killed students in an antiwar demonstration at Kent State University in 1970. The image appeared on posters, buttons, T-shirts, record-album covers (Goldberg, 1991, p. 237-239).

Artists, musicians and celebrities all over the world shared their opinion and through their position reached a lot of people through art, music and film. I recall Buffy Sainte-Marie's "Universal Soldier" which was written in the sixties, and John Lennon's "Imagine" from the seventies. I will assume the artists were influenced by the photojournalism from the war, combined with testimonies from the returning soldiers and television.

Events and stories can be more fully described through television; still images are often ambiguous and need a context, such as a caption. But still photography is effective: with just one glance you have already perceived it. The most powerful images become icons and are printed on posters, clothes, book covers, flyers etc.

Vicki Goldberg states that even though "television news has produced many memorable moments and exerted untold influence, photographs are, by and large, more fully and easily remembered" (Goldberg, 1991, p. 213). Images can in one frame be part of our collective memory. The frozen moment of a photograph stays in my memory more easily than a sequence of frames, as in a video.

LIFE wrote that Nick Ut's picture of the Napalm Girl "more than any other single image made America conscious of the full horror of the Vietnam War". (Goldberg, 1991, p. 244)

## Ending the atrocities in the Congo Free State

Leopold II, born in 1835, was the king of Belgium from 1865, when his father died. He is most known as the tyrannical ruler of the Congo Free State from 1885 to 1908, a region he was able to control by convincing the international community that he was involved in humanitarian work. (Hochschild, 2019)

Leopold's reason for his interest in Congo was the natural resources, as ivory, rubber and minerals. Through the use of enslaved Africans, who were forced to work under harsh conditions and mutilated or killed if they did not meet the impossibly high targets, the king made a fortune exploiting the country.

It is estimated that half of the population died during this period of forced labour and gruesome treatment of the Congolese people. Leopold created his own army to control the workers and his leadership in Congo is referred to as a humanitarian disaster.

As missionaries were welcomed to Congo, eyewitnesses documented the atrocities happening in the country. Pictures obtained from missionaries, among them Alice Harris (Fehrenbach & Rodogno, 2015, p. 59), were used together with journalism, especially by journalist and humanitarian Edmund Dene Morel to exert pressure to demand action to end the horrific slavery in the Congo Free State. Missionaries, merchants and humanitarians cooperated to advocate human rights through the Congo Reform Association (CRA) led by Morel. But it was not until they started to use photographs in 1906, that their effort led to action and protests throughout England and United States.

"At the centre of the campaign, in lantern lectures and numerous publications, was the photographic image of atrocity" (ibid, 2015, p. 67). Through lantern slide lectures, publications, pamphlets, books, exhibitions, and articles in newspapers and magazines missionaries and the CRA used photographs to spread their message to stop the exploitation and violence in Congo, which eventually led to surrender, and Leopold had to yield his private property in Congo to Belgium in 1908.

The same method was used here as by Jacob Riis and the early social reformers: photography combined with facts and stories as a tool to influence those with the power to change.

The visual evidence of what was happening in Congo is referred to as "the first nongovernmental, humanitarian campaign to use atrocity photographs to mobilize sustained, international protest" (ibid, 2015, p. 65).

Susie Linfield also refers to the imagery used in Congo in her book "The Cruel Radiance":

"The intimate connection between an international human-rights consciousness and the photograph is especially evident when we look at one of the earliest humanitarian movements: the Anglo-American campaign, founded in the late nineteenth century, to stop King Leopold's crimes in his personal colony, the Congo." (Linfield, 2010, p. 48)

Photographs have an important role in advocating for human rights, as they also do today, for example through Rune Eraker's latest project, discussed later.

## Consumption and waste

Two of the many photojournalists that has approached the negative effects of our consumerism today is Taslima Akhter and Chris Jordan. In two different ways they do convey the consequences of the lifestyle in our modern world.

The distance between the consumer and the worker is often huge. The availability of cheap and simple materials and low cost production make it easy to produce cheap products. In sweatshops relatively unskilled employees work long hours with low wages and poor working conditions, as we have seen in documentaries and articles.

In 2013 a garment factory collapsed in Sarvar, Bangladesh. Taslima Akhter, who presents herself as a documentary photographer and activist (Akhter, n.d.), had already portrayed the garment workers and their working conditions since 2008, and was there to document the disaster. She took probably the most powerful picture from the ruins in Sarvar: a dead couple embracing each other in the rubble of the collapsed building. The image spread worldwide and raised uncomfortable questions about the consumerism in the Western world.

"The Rana Plaza disaster would have been easily wiped out of everyone's memories, with that dismissive feel of "oh, one of those Asian disasters, they just keep happening," but for one immensely powerful photograph shot by a young Taslima Akhter, a Bangladeshi photographer who paused the frames of time". (Sourav, 2013)

The Rana Plaza factory collapse exposed the dangerous working conditions of the workers, and put pressure on Western retailers to commit to invest in safer work environments and paying fair wages to the workers.

The western brands that had clothes produced by workers injured or killed at Rana Plaza could be traced after the factory collapse, and was therefore urged to take responsibility by pressure groups. "The incident highlighted the plight of millions of low-paid workers making clothes around the world and kicked off a string of efforts to improve conditions in Bangladesh" (Butler, 2015)

The documentation of the disaster did not only lead to stricter security regulations for the factories and but also inspired to a number of articles urging consumers to support fair trade and to be responsible consumers.

One of the concrete results was that the trust funds for compensation to the families affected by the collapse met its target. "After more than two years of negotiations involving backroom deals, activists chaining themselves to shops, global petitions and statements by G7 leaders, the Rana Plaza donor's trust fund has finally met its target of \$30m (...) to provide adequate compensation to the families of the 1,134 people killed in the collapse and the 2,500 severely injured survivors". (Hoskins, 2015)

In 2015, two years after the collapse, Fashion Revolution Day launched the social media campaign #WhoMadeMyClothes (Hebburn, 2015), and they also hosted the event "Ethical Fashion 2010: a New Vision for Transparency" (Cabrera, 2015) Many forces work for better condition for the workers in the supply chains and in April 2019, six years after the Rana

Plaza collapse, Fashion Revolution week runs as a campaign to raise awareness among customers and encourage us to be a part of the pressure against the big brands. (Donovan, L, 2019)

It is not possible to prove how much Akther's photography influenced what happened after the collapse, but it is no doubt the image is a very powerful contribution. News about a collapse and the number of dead people is sad, but when we see this picture it reaches our emotions in another way, we see people like ourselves, who died in their struggle for life.

The other photographer I want to mention within the same topic is Chris Jordan, who uses photography to raise awareness on consumption and waste. "My work is about the behaviour that we all engage in unconsciously" he says. (TED, 2008)

Chris Jordan illustrates statistics to visualise consumption and plastic waste, addiction to drugs and other signs representing an unhealthy sides of the American society.

One of his projects is documentation of what he found in the stomach of dead baby albatrosses at Midway Atoll in the Pacific Ocean. The dead birds are photographed from above and look like an art piece with just feathers and the plastic waste making the shape of the bird. I saw this photographs exhibited at Preus Museum in Norway in 2018, and it made huge impact on me.

"The nesting chicks are fed lethal quantities of plastic by their parents, who mistake the floating trash for food as they forage over the vast polluted Pacific Ocean (...) These birds reflect back an appallingly emblematic result of the collective trance of our consumerism and runaway industrial growth." (Jordan, 2011)

Chris Jordan is among the artists presented by the web initiative Art Works for Change, who highlights this works on consumer waste production and says that his Midway project "draw our attention to the innocent victims of our excess" (Artworks for Change, n.d.)

The albatross pictures that started as a still photography project has now become a film and has it's own website where it is possible to watch the movie for free and donate money. (Jordan, 2018) Chris Jordan and his team want to create awareness about the negative consequences of our consumption, and make us more conscious consumers.

The two photographers mentioned above is only two of many activists who aim at making us understand how our behaviour have an impact, and aspiring to make us more responsible.

We see initiatives from governments these days, several countries have banned plastic bags, circular economy is on the agenda and social movements are speaking up for lower consumption and reuse.

Photographs visualise the consequences of our behaviour that we would otherwise not see, because it is far away from where we live.

## Interviews with contemporary photojournalists

*"I don't think I can change the world but if I can inspire the person that can then I have done my job." (Giles Duley)*

In the following I will present the feedback from the six contemporary documentary photographers I have interviewed.

All quotes are personal comments from the interviews, according to list in Appendix.

### Giles Duley

The British photographer Giles Duley started as a music and fashion photographer. But after 10-15 years he gave up photography and became a care-worker at age 30.

"I was a full time carer for three years. Through that I felt in love with photography again", he says. Giles was looking after a guy with autism, and realised he could tell his story through photography. And this led him to documentary photography.

"I realised I could use photography to tell people's stories. (...) This was the motivation for me to do the work I do." Duley sees himself as a storyteller, not a photojournalist. "I do what I do not to be a journalist, but to make a difference. (...) I am using my camera and my writing as a tool to help other people. I see it much as being like a doctor or lawyer to help human right cases. I have a skill that is I can tell stories. (...) My main goal is to find engagement in different ways".

In the beginning he funded his own projects. "I was still working as a care worker and I would work for three months without a day off, save enough money and then go away for a month to take photographs." Duley wanted to be an independent photographer. "Rather than taking commissions I find other ways funding my work".

Duley stepped on a landmine in Afghanistan in 2011 and lost both legs and one arm while at work as a photographer. Three years later he went to Lebanon with Handicap International to document the Syrian refugees. (O'Connor, 2017) "One of the stories I wanted to tell was about civilians caught up in conflict (...) Maybe I have some unique now to bring to photography; I have gone through the same experiences as those I document."

Duley is currently working on the long-term project "Legacy of War", which is documenting post-conflict communities in several countries; to look how war still impact people.

He believes in using a variety of channels and finding different ways to disseminate the stories. "A lot of people say photojournalism is dead. I think what they mean is photojournalism in magazines is dead, photojournalism with newspaper as income is dead. (...) When I started, if I my work appeared in the newspaper, only the people that bought that newspaper saw the work. Now I can reach people all across the world. Yes you have to be rethinking how you can find funding, you have to be rethink about how you get noticed among all the other photographers that are working."

Duley works with charities and NGO's on long-time projects. He prefers to brainstorm together with the organizations on how to do the work, then raise funds together, and after a year present the work as an exhibition and book. The work will also be spread through the NGO's channels.

"I do not do an exhibition in a normal way. In my last exhibition I said I wanted a 1000 people to sit and eat with us. The exhibition was in October in London and over ten nights we had a 100 people around a table and every night we had a supper club serving food and I would give a talk. (...) I do school visits during the day and in the evening having the supper-club. 1000 is not a big number but 1000 who actually sat with you, ate with you, listening to those stories, looking at those photographs, understood the stories behind the photographs. That has a much bigger impact than having 10.000 people just walk through an exhibition."

Duley also uses his old contacts from the music photography period. "I work with the band Massive Attack and they show my pictures in their live-shows. Then your photographs are playing in front of 50000 a night which is again a different way of engaging. We did that last year, and that was really powerful."

I ask Duley if his photography brings any change. "I remember years ago somebody came into an exhibition and they said do you think you can change the world with your photographs. And my reply was I don't think I can change the world but if I can inspire the person that can, then I have done my job."

Duley says his images can impact in lots of ways. "I had a letter from a guy in Australia, five years ago, and in the letter it says dear Giles Duley I just want to let you know I've got into Brisbane medical school. He struggled at school, he struggled at home, he was told he was not smart enough, but he wanted to let me know he's got a scholarship and he was going to study to become a surgeon. He wanted to thank me because it was one of the photographs I took that inspired him. It was a photograph I took in Afghanistan, he said; I have that photograph on my wall, and every time I struggle at home, every time I struggle at work, at school, I look at that photograph and it reminds me of why I wanted to be a surgeon".

"That's just one person impact, but honestly, if I knew that would be the result when I set out, that would be enough. If one person will be inspired by my work to do something that would be everything I can hope for. ", Duley adds. "I think we all have to believe that the images we create, like throwing stones and ripples, we will not see how that changes people, we have to believe it does, so it was great having one person actually telling me how it changed their life."

Another story with more direct impact is a story Duley did of Ava and Khoulood, two Syrian refugees in Lebanon. "I did a talk about them in San Francisco, and that led on to me connecting to Random Acts, a charity that used the photographs and story (...) and finally raised a quarter million. I was charged of the whole process of rehousing them, running that funding, one family was relocated to France and one family was relocated to Holland, the money that was left over supported another three families."

Duley never promises to the people he photograph that it would change their life. "But if I can find a way to use those images for people that are most in need, of people that are most vulnerable, then I will", he says.

He is positive about the future for photojournalism. "It has never been easier for me to reach people, through the Internet, through many mediums so the reach of photojournalism is fantastic", he says.

His advice to young photographers is "to find a story nobody else is telling, and tell it your own way". He says photojournalism is in a huge shift. And he see more awareness with photojournalism today; "people who believe their photograph is about creating change and helping the people in the imagery as opposed to purely documenting a scene".

Duley thinks a challenge today is that we don't have gatekeepers anymore; photo editors and people working on the news desk, who can provide and help with the ethics of photography. He gets upset when photographers are manipulating images to win awards. That is a result of the lack of mentorship of young photographers, he says.

## Rune Eraker

Norwegian documentary photographer and activist Rune Eraker picked up the camera as a tool when he was about 19. He wanted to use photography as a way to communicate and he is still analogue. Eraker was raised in Japan and has also lived in Netherlands and England, and he says the meeting with different cultures gave him a political consciousness and viewpoint, which he uses to choose which stories he wants to convey.

"My life has been dedicated to activism, through nonviolent actions", Eraker says. During his years living in Amsterdam in the eighties, he became interested in art and other photographers work, which developed him as a photographer.

"I became very conscious about what I told, not only that it was a nice picture", he says. He travelled the world with Amsterdam as a starting point, using his time as photographer and writer. He was connected to the photography agency Hollandse Hoogte, which funded his work published internationally.

In the nineties he began exhibiting his work in small galleries, but a big shift came in 2001 when Eraker had an exhibition at Stenersen Museum in Oslo, a prestigious art gallery.

"I was the first living photographer given the opportunity to have a large solo exhibition in an art museum in Norway", he says. Several exhibitions followed, and he understood he now had the opportunity to work on long-term projects, focusing on one theme.

His last exhibition "Tell the world about us" at Nobel Peace Centre in Oslo consists of 107 photographs, and is the result of four years work. Rune visited 15 countries; hunting for stories and pictures, and the projects is about lost liberty and human dignity.

The project started with a note Eraker got from an inmate in a prison in Colombia in 2001 that had just a few words, the message that is now the title of the exhibition.



"This is the project I am most satisfied with", he says. "When I choose to exhibit, each image must be strong". Eraker puts an effort to bring back good pictures from each location he visits. This has been a difficult project, getting access to the prisons and people. And he also says he has to be careful which pictures he shoot and exhibit because some people cannot be recognized. Being recognised as lesbian in some countries could mean propaganda and punishment.

I remember I visited the exhibition. The image that moved me the most was a picture of a woman, a mother of two, that was convicted 30 years because of a miscarriage.

"The art spaces are among the last quiet rooms in our society. Our society is so busy and noisy, while galleries and museums give you the room to digest the images and many choose to revisit the exhibition", he says.

To finance this project Eraker has collaborated with Amnesty, and he has printed and mounted the whole exhibition himself.

Since Eraker is no longer doing commissioned work he has to find funding for his projects otherwise. He applies for grants, art scholarships, give lectures, sell signed copies of his photographs and also publish photo stories in magazines. Galleries also pay to have the exhibitions on their walls, and his earlier exhibitions is still touring.

When I ask Eraker about the effect of his work he says it is difficult to measure. "The only effect I can measure or record is if I meet someone saying that the exhibition changed how he/she view things".

Being one of 7 1/2 billion, he says he understands his impact is marginal. But he says that hundred of thousands readers may see his pictures printed in magazines and maybe 100.000 will see the exhibition, and if he can saw something that gradually can change an attitude, he has contributed to something.

Eraker is optimistic about the future but says commitment is necessary.

"I see a larger drive for political projects in Europe now than in the nineties", Eraker says. "Then being a magazine photographer was highly ranked and people earned a lot being a freelancer. That part has collapsed in the whole Europe. For those still wanting to be a documentary photographer, they must be political interested or ally with organizations having money".

Rune collaborates with organizations once in a while, but he never does commissioned work documenting their work or employees. He wants to be independent.

"But you have to cope with economical insecurity", he adds. He has worked like this for decades, and is very dedicated to his causes.

## Yan Cong

Chinese photojournalist Yan Cong works mostly on long-term project on women's issues, rural China and China's relation to its neighbours. Cong has a journalistic background, yet has photography as her preferred tool.

"Photography is a very powerful tool to communicate across language barriers, and at the same time I like its ambiguity", Cong says.

"Photography also allows me to visit different places and people, to know and understand them better. It's like a ticket to foreign places and strangers' life", she says.

Her motivation is divided in two: to make an impact with her images, but also to make connection with people and places she would otherwise not have the chance to get to know.

As a freelancer Cong has diversified sources of income. For her long-term projects she relies on grants, but she also do editorial assignments, NGO and commercial work, teaching and licensing her work. She also assists other photographers as a fixer.

"I see this as a way to collaborate with photographers I look up to, to learn how they work when they're in the field, and also to earn some money in that process".

The dissemination of her stories depends on the story and the intension of her work. "I do a mix of media publication, exhibitions and campaigns in partnership with NGOs", Cong says.

She wants the general public to have access to her work, online or print.

"But I realise, if I really want to create meaningful impact with my work, just putting it out there, may not be the best way to do it. It's better to do exhibitions or a well-thought out campaign with targeted audience in mind, and to make sure that people who come to see the work will get the message I want to convey", she says.

"Hopefully the audience, although a small group of people, will be moved to take actions in the future to push for changes", Cong adds.

One of her projects is on Cambodian women migrating to China for marriage.

"In 2016, I put up exhibitions of the photos I took of a Cambodian woman's life in China in universities and villages where women tend to be approached by traffickers. The local NGO who I worked with told me that they've never seen visual documentation of trafficking victims' life in China", she says.

Her intention was to give an understanding of the living conditions in China. "I don't know whether any woman who saw the exhibition made an informed decision to not come to China".

Cong says the Cambodian woman portrayed in the project wanted her story to be told so that other women won't be tricked and trafficked like her. The portrayed woman was not able to see the exhibition herself but was very moved by the messages Cong collected for her from the visitors. Cong asked them to write down a greeting to the women in the images, and gave it to her later.

The easy access to photography technology has made it much easier for everyone to take photographs at any time. "It may feel like a threat to documentary photographers that everyone can document their own life, or issues that they care about. But I think this trend can push us to think more about our personal connection with what we're documenting and how to better interact with our subjects", Cong says.

She says that documentary photographers usually and traditionally are outsiders to the topics and places they document, and this gives ta certain power dynamic between the photojournalist and the documented. By seeing more photographers documenting their own environment, Cong thinks this will help us to better understand the world we live in.

"The future may also be more about how to make sense of all the images that we live with, and weed through those images to find the meaningful ones, and to interpret them", Cong says.

"I think there will be a slow, painful transition for documentary photography, but it's also exciting because it opens up more opportunities to explore storytelling", she concludes.

## **Ed Kashi**

Ed Kashi is one of the photojournalists represented by VII Photo Agency, and has covered topics like the petroleum industry in Nigeria, climate change, refugees in Syria, conditions among sugar cane workers in Latin America and the aging in America.

Kashi believes in the power of photography and how it can change people's minds.

"My motivation for being a photographer stems from a synthesis of my desire to be engaged with the world, to be a storyteller, to be a journalist/reporter, to be a constant student of social and political issues and to synthesize these desires into a cohesive whole that makes the world a better place by raising awareness, capturing powerful moments and creating media that can be used to make change" Kashi says.

He says that dissemination of the work has been drastically altered due to the digital revolution.

"Today, I use both print and digital media platforms, I am my own publisher through my social media channels where I can reach 500,000 people globally without a gatekeeper in the way, and through media that is not just still photography but now includes short doc films and even shorter social media outputs", he says. "Finally, there are the collaborative relationships with NGOs, foundations and other organizations that I partner with or use to distribute my work, which forms the advocacy part of my practice."

Kashi finances his work through commissions, licensing of his work, grants and paying contests, lectures and workshops. Once he used crowd funding, which he says was a success and targeted for a part of his on-going project about chronic kidney disease. "It afforded me a trip with a fellow filmmaker to Nicaragua to make a short film and build my photographic work on that issue", Kashi says.

On my question on how his photography stories had made a change, Kashi says that his work in the Niger Delta Region on oil extraction has two impacts:

"An image I made which was published in National Geographic moved a woman in America to find the young boy in the photo and start paying for him to go to school. My work was used by Oxfam America to promote a congressional bill to require more transparency in extractive industries by touring my work to 10 college campuses across the country," Kashi says.

"My work on a breast cancer survivor in Dallas was published in the NYT Magazine and illicit \$50,000 in direct donations to her family."

He also adds that his photojournalism work are routinely used in major universities and high schools to teach subjects ranging from geriatrics, to social work, to African Studies, Geography and photojournalism.

About the future for documentary photography, Kashi says it is "tricky to disseminate in major media and tougher in the field due to more awareness of the general public to how photography is used vis-à-vis the Internet. By that he means that "potential subjects can be less willing to cooperate to be filmed".

Kashi also adds that even if it in may ways is tougher the future is "full of more opportunities to fund, reach people and work for change".

## **Monica Oreja**

Columbian photographer Monica Oreja is educated within anthropology and journalism and started working with social movements during her studies.

"I started working with the social movement in Colombia, with farmers, indigenous, Afro-Colombian people, who fight and struggle for their rights", she says. Her interest in photography made her hobby into a profession and the camera became her tool to communicate.

"I consider myself as a human right activist working with communication", Oreja tells me. She lives in Norway, working with the Norwegian Human Rights Fund (NHRF) and Radio Latin America, among others.

Her motivation is to praise human right defenders and to show their work and how they fight for their rights. She thinks it is important to tell the world about these brave people. And also empower and connect the human right workers by presenting the work of human right activists in different parts of the world to each other.

One of her stories is from India, where she visited various human rights organizations and activists working for the rights of the Dalit people. "In the Dalit community, the lowest caste in India, they experience discrimination, sexual violence, atrocities against them, a lot of human rights violation against them, just because they come from a lower cast in India".

She was funded by the NHRF and presented her photographs and video stories through their webpage, annual report and also through social media. NHRF also use the videos to

encourage human right activists in other countries to keep up their work, and let them know that they are not alone.

This is the goal of her work, to connect people. When I ask her if she has any examples of change due to her documentary work, she says no. "The atrocities in India, how can we change it? It's something historical and cultural." Her way of change is to give power to the human right activists who are working from the inside.

To fund her documentary work, Oreja work as freelance, but also doing office work within communication and administration. Her collaboration with NHRF and the radio station enables her to disseminate her stories through their network and channels.

"You need passion", she says, to find ways to fund the work you most love to do.

When I ask Oreja how she sees the future for documentary photography, she hope more people will use their camera to show what's going on in their neighbourhood and in their own community. She is a bit sceptical to Western people going to poor communities in Colombia for example.

"I do not like photographers using people in a community just to be a famous photographer and not addressing the bigger issue, to explain what is going on", she says.

She believes in more local stories and looking at other human beings as equal. And she also think there will be more variety in the presentation of the stories: "I think there will be more multimedia", she says.

## **Meeri Koutaniemi**

Finnish photojournalist Meeri Koutaniemi is currently working on a long-term project about female genital mutilation. She sees herself as an activist and human right storyteller. She started her career in India 12 years ago, when she was not accepted as a photojournalist student, and left Finland to start working with her camera. "This experience gave me the feeling that I am able (...) to travel by myself, to work as an investigative journalist and photographer", she says. "It gave me all the freedom to imagine a future were I could be a professional photojournalist".

Already as a child she understood her privileged position, where she did not have to worry about where to sleep or if she would be able to eat or go to school. "This made me realise that if I did not have to use energy on any of those things that people are struggling every day all around the world, I can use that energy to something else."

In her teens she took an interest in human right activism. "That was the time when I was discovering my passion in terms of art and in terms of action."

When she tried to find out her own role in this world, she looked into what she loved and what made her feel alive. "The main question was, how to combine the love for art and the need for political activism. And the answer was to become a photojournalist."

She did research about civil right movements and demonstrations and saw the power of photography in transforming public opinion. The image of the Napalm Girl from Vietnam is for her a good example of how a photograph convinced people that the war was unethical.

Her on going project on female genital mutilation (FGM) started in Kenya seven years ago. There she met Elisabeth, who had fled from her own wedding and circumcision at age nine, and lived at a safe house. Koutaniemi made a story about her life that was published in a Finnish magazine. "I got a call from a woman, who said: is there anything I can do for Elisabeth?" This led to the funding of Elisabeth's career as a fulltime activist, making her a change maker in her own culture.

"Elisabeth started to go around villages, churches, schools, any kind of events where the tribal brothers and sisters were attending", Koutaniemi says. "This young woman was using her personal experience, all the facts that she had been given in school about female genital mutilation to change the minds of her villagers. In that particular moment I have to say that there has not been any more powerful moment in terms of change that you could witness".

Koutaniemi have so far been in eleven different countries investigating female genital mutilation. "I try to go to places where FGM is not usually related to and those places are i.e. United States, Latin America, Asia and Indonesia and Egypt", she says. "The stories are everywhere, it is a global phenomenon; we don't have enough investigation how wide it is because of the taboo".

Koutaniemi is aware that she has to erase her own pre-justice. "As a photojournalist you have to get rid of own reactions and your own judgement for being able to work".

Koutaniemi's inspiration is the people she meets. "They are the ones that have the strength and the persistence and the resilience to show the others what human being is capable of".

Koutaniemi finances her long-time project in various ways: Books, movies, TV-series, magazines, newspapers, lectures and workshops. For example: During her work with a book, she approaches newspapers and magazines along the way and sell every chapter as articles. "One of the first stories I made from Kenya, six years ago, I sold to six different countries", she says. New York Times and L'Express are two of the magazines that have published her work.

When travelling to a country to do research or documentary work, she also does commercial work to finance the trip. When she went to Spain to work on research for a project, she used a couple of days writing a travel story about the island where she was staying. When she went to El Salvador for one month, she used a few days on a story about teen-age pregnancies for a magazine in Finland.

Koutaniemi sees a huge need for documentary photography and storytelling.

"The future is bright because the need for visual evidence is becoming more and more essential in the time of false news and manipulation. That's why young people need to believe in the hard work of seeking the truth by making the right questions".

## PART III

### Discussion and conclusion

The research question for this paper is "*Does photojournalism contribute to positive change?*"

To investigate this question I have searched in books about the history of concerned photography and the use of images to raise awareness, and also conducted semi structured interviews with contemporary documentary photographers. I have divided my main question into four:

1. What is the motivation for documentary photographers?
2. How do they finance and disseminate their work?
3. What differences does their pictures make?
4. How is the future for documentary photography?

Through examples from 180 years of photography history I have learned more about how photojournalism has shed a light on issues in the society and situations for vulnerable groups.

Six documentary photographers with an aim to create change have shared their motivation and drive for doing the work they do, how they finance and disseminate their projects, what changes they have observed as a ripple effect of their images and how they see the future for documentary photography.

Through the work and research for this paper I have seen that the field I have chosen is huge. For another research on the impact of photography I suggest to narrow the field, by choosing one topic within activism photojournalism, for example how photography has made an impact within consumption and waste.

### Search for interviewees

My search for contemporary documentary photographers to interview was more challenging than I thought. Some of the photographers I asked were on travel or very busy, so even if they really wanted to help and share their thoughts, they did not have any time or possibilities to do so. I have approached 25 photographers in different countries, to find six persons. (List in Appendix 1).

The interview with Giles Duley was done by Skype, while I met Rune Eraker and Monica Oreja face-to-face, since they both live in Oslo. I recorded all the interviews and then transcribed them, to have all the quotes correctly. Ed Kashi and Yan Cong preferred to answer my questions by email.

The answers from Meeri Koutaniemi are a mix of a lecture I attended with her in Oslo and follow-up interviews by email and phone.

The photographer's countries of origin are Norway, China, England, USA, Finland and Colombia. I am pleased to have a gender balance of three men and three women.

### **Passionate photographers**

What the six photographers I have interviewed have in common is a deep passion for the work they do. They have a desire to shed a light on issues they hope would be different, they seek to inspire and influence the audience who see the pictures. In their projects they focus on people who are victims because of other people's actions. People who suffer after conflict and war; people who fight for their rights and are exposed to injustice, people who has to confirm to rituals because of cultural beliefs, people who pay the price for globalisation and consumerism in the western world.

The contemporary documentary photographers, like their colleagues in earlier days, use the camera as a tool to communicate; to reach out and raise awareness. They are storytellers, and being a photographer is a choice, not because of the art of it but because they see how photographs communicate so strongly, and are very committed to the issues they cover.

Monica Oreja came into photography through social movements, Meeri Koutaniemi wanted to use her interest in photography to be a human right storyteller, Ed Kashi want to make the world a better place and create media that can be used to make a change. Giles Duley's goal is to find engagement and Rune Eraker says that he is content if he can saw something that can gradually change an attitude.

The photographers I have talked to also highlight the encounters with people they meet when they work with their projects. The people they portray create huge impact on the photographers themselves, and of course that increase the dedication to do something for these people. Rune Eraker says a note from a prisoner many years ago was the beginning of his last project, he could never forget it.

### **Creativity in funding their work**

It takes courage and stamina to work as a photojournalist and activist. The cause is so important for the activist photographers that they sacrifice financial stability for their cause.

The six photographers mention various ways of funding the work they do: lectures, workshops, licencing their work, exhibitions, commercial work, working as fixer for other photographers, assignments, grants, crowd funding, and collaboration with NGOs.

They are not employed by a magazine or newspaper or NGO, because they want their freedom to choose the viewpoints they prefer. They work with long-time projects and dig deeper into a topic than what is possible within a short assignment.

Their passion and drive to work with their stories and projects do that they also have a drive finding other ways than normal salary to fund their work, and they are creative in doing so.



## The choice of channels

The photographers are conscious about which channels they use to reach their target audience.

Rune Eraker and Giles Duley see the art gallery as a perfect arena to present their pictures and stories, because that gives intimacy with the audience. The galleries also give the opportunity to arrange events, like Duley did on his exhibition. He wants the audience to understand the story behind the images, and he also does school visits to educate students about the issues he cares about.

In early time of photography lantern slide lectures were used to educate the audience and make them understand, such as the images from the slaves in Congo. Today photography still have the power to convey stories and touch people, despite the wide use of television and video. Documentaries are very powerful tools that can make us understand a topic in depth, but it does not replace photographs. We have to choose if we want to watch a video, but an image is consumed in the same moment you have seen it, and can easily touch us and evoke feelings instantly.

It is important though, that the images is presented in a context, photographs can be very ambiguous and need an explanation.

Eraker's exhibition in Oslo was guided by captions to convey the powerful stories, and there were also guided tours through the exhibition. I remember I was deeply touched by a story about a woman, a mother of two, who was imprisoned for 30 years because of a miscarriage, because El Salvador prohibit any kind of abortion.

Yan Cong put up exhibitions related to trafficking of Cambodian women to China in universities and villages where women tend to be approached by traffickers. But she doesn't know if she actually prevented any of the women of being tricked.

People will rarely report back to the photographer on how they were influenced by an image. I often go to exhibitions and get moved by pictures, but then I tell friends about it, not the photographer.

Goldberg (1991) says that images have to reach the right people to be powerful, and that is certainly true. It would not help anyone directly if Cong had her exhibition in Norway. Maybe other photographers could choose arenas more carefully to approach a certain target group.

Duley is conscious about using different arenas to reach out to new groups, such as his collaboration with the band Massive Attack where his pictures were shown at live concerts.

Ed Kashi highlights the collaboration with NGOs who make him also reach their target groups. In this way organizations provide both financial contribution to make it possible to work on long-term projects and provide a larger audience for the stories. It is a win-win situation for the NGOs and the photographers.

The contemporary photographers highlight the possibilities with the use of Internet today, where there is no gatekeeper who decides which stories will be spread, but where anyone can

present their own stories. But the same time they are competing to get people's attention among the enormous amount of images out there.

Today images from crisis and conflicts are used by organizations and activists all over the world aiming at encourage action. According to NonProfitAction there are 10 million NGOs worldwide. The causes that call for action are endless.

I see a lot of photographers using Social Media, such as Instagram, to share picture-stories with captions to explain the story. This way they can engage directly with the followers for example by answering comments.

There are pros and cons of having a gatekeeper. It may ensure the quality and the ethics of the stories, and prevent false news. On the others side, a biased gatekeeper may choose only to publish stories within a specific view. Today, in a world with fewer gatekeepers, there are more possibilities for photographers to share their perspective independently and reach an audience that was not availability before. An issue may be presented from different angles, and people, both inside and outside a society can share their the story how they experience it.

The risk of rapid sharing of stories in Social Media can lead to dangerous situations, for example images of people within the LGBT community (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) can be life threatening for the persons portrayed in countries where homosexuality is forbidden.

### **Inspiring others to act**

I was a bit concerned that the photographers I interviewed would take credit for huge changes as a result of their pictures. But I now feel the opposite, the photographers were very humble when it comes to their contribution to change and mention only concrete situations where they for sure know their stories have led to positive change.

The photographers are conscious that their stories are part of very many other influences, and it is often difficult to measure the degree of contribution to change.

When Giles Duley was asked if he thought he could change the world with his pictures, he replied that if he can inspire the person that can make a change he has done his job.

This is exactly what all the photographers say. They tell stories about how their images have touched someone, who then act and contribute to change. The photographers are aware that their pictures cannot alone change the world, but they hope their stories will touch a few people who can use their power to make a difference.

Through early history we also see images used in communication inspiring others to mobilize. The early photographers raised awareness with the aim to reach the wealthy and the politicians who had the power to change, as the tenement housing in New York by Jacob Riis or the exploited slaves in Congo photographed by missionaries. Activists and reformers saw the effect of using photographs to illustrate facts and stories; it evoked feelings and contributed to action.

The changes occurring as a result of photojournalism can be divided in direct and indirect changes, meaning changes for the portrayed people in the image or changes related to an issue.

Examples of direct change is Ed Kashi's story on how an image published in a magazine led to the funding of the boy portrayed to go to school and Giles Duley's story on how two Syrian refugees got help to move out of their hopeless situation because an organization raised money using his pictures.

The Nurse-Midwife story by Eugene Smith from the fifties is also a good example on how documentary photographs encouraged readers to donate money and the midwife could build the clinic she was dreaming about.

Giles Duley reflects on whom the photographs may help. He never promise anything to the people he photographs. Even though he has seen that on some occasions his pictures has contributed personally to the specific people in the pictures, the photographs maybe rather raise awareness about the cause in general, which is indirect change.

One example of that is when an image by Duley inspired an Australian guy to become a surgeon, because he wants to help others. Or how Lewis Hine's documentation of children at work eventually led to establishing child labour laws.

The strings of changes kicked off after the Rana Plaza factory collapse in Bangladesh is also an example of indirect change; regulations for the work conditions for the garment workers and better safety at the factories.

Another example is Monica Oreja's pictures of activists in one country encourage activists in another country to keep on with their fight for justice. They feel united in their cause for human rights, and feel stronger together. Indirectly her images contribute to change by inspiring the activists to continue their work for vulnerable groups in their societies.

Meeri Koutaniemi's story on how an article led to the funding of Elisabeth, the circumcised girl who became able to be an activist in her society in Kenya is an example of both direct and indirect change. Her picture led to the direct change in Elisabeth's life, but will also have indirect impact by her reaching out to local communities with the information on the negative effect of female genital mutilation, which may change the minds of her fellow villagers because of her personal story.

Photographs can contribute to changed attitudes over time by raising awareness about an issue and transforming public opinion, like the pictures from the atrocities in Congo and Vietnam. Imagery from the Vietnam War led to anti-war movements that lasted 10 years before the war ended.

There are also images that have given instant impact like the one of Alan Kurdi, the little drowned boy at the beach that changed the attitudes towards refugees over night.

As we have seen images can influence both directly and indirectly, slow and instant. Sometimes the change is very concrete, an action that can be measured, but more often the images is part of a mix of voices in the society that shape our mind and opinion.

Photojournalism has not put an end to war, nor removed exploitation of people or managed to achieve equality and human rights for everyone around the world. The camera is used by photographers, storytellers and activists to shed a light on issues they care about, and where they hope to influence someone to take action.

We have seen images of the refugees fleeing from their countries for years, and it has been spoken of as a refugee caravans. But then suddenly, the little drowned boy appeared on the front pages. If that will not create emotions we would not be human anymore. One innocent child awakened us and made us understand that each of the human beings in the refugee stories is one history and life. Not just statistics.

The same happened when the image of the dead couple from the collapse of the building in Bangladesh was spread around the world. The issue about the conditions for the garment workers was not new, but one image from the accident that killed 1134 garment workers put the supply-chains and ethical trade on the agenda.

This tells us that it is only certain images that evoke strong feelings and create change.

Another question is whether these images impact our behaviour as consumers. Our emotions are evoked but do it materialize in action that can change the situation for the garment workers for the better? Or do we put that responsibility on the brands. The garment workers in Bangladesh still have low wages and bad working conditions. Do we become apathetic, because we don't feel we can do anything, as Susan Sontag said?

Above I have mentioned some concrete examples of positive change, but there could also be negative changes; photographs can be exploitive, in the meaning that some photographers build up their career and get recognition, but do not contribute to the cause they are depicting. It seems that the photographers that are also activist are not within this group. They use the photographs to raise awareness; nevertheless it could occur that they bring their preconceptions and support stereotyping by only telling one side of the story.

Dangerous situations for portrayed activists in countries with no freedom of speech could also be negative consequence of photography, especially these days where images spread quickly through social media.

### **The future for documentary photographers**

The photographers interviewed in my research see new possibilities for storytellers within the media landscape today: The technique is easy accessible, Internet makes it possible for everyone to spread their stories.

However Giles Duley sees it as a challenge that we do not have the gatekeepers such as photo editors anymore, which in earlier times functioned as mentors and preserved the ethics of photography.

It is a dilemma; while today's unlimited possibilities in disseminating stories provide great opportunities, it also raise questions about the credibility and the source and angle of the stories. Today anyone can share anything; fake news and propaganda appear side by side with

factual stories. Meeri Koutaniemi highlights the need for documentary photographers who seek the truth and provide visual evidences and storytelling as a counterpart to false news.

As the opportunities to create and share stories are increasing we can experience various angles from the same issues, and societies can be depicted both by people living there and outsiders. Yan Cong and Monica Oreja see more possibilities for people documenting their own neighbourhood, opposed to documenting "the other". Oreja believes that local stories will bring more equality by looking at other human beings as equal.

The huge possibilities do both give advantages and disadvantages. The credibility can be at stake because different type of senders may use the same narrator language although they have different agendas: to educate or persuade. At the same time there may be less stereotyping and we can better understand the world when stories are told both from inside and outside.

Giles Duley says he sees a change in that photojournalists today are more concerned about creating change, not just documenting. This is also related to the nuance I saw in the use of descriptions in part I, between activist photographers and concerned photographers. The photographers continue working beyond the photography part by being concerned about how they present and disseminate the story.

Rune Eraker emphasizes the larger drive for political projects in Europe these days compared to the nineties. I think it is interesting how he sees the financial challenges of being a documentary photographer today as a driving force to sift out the most dedicated people who are willing to find ways to work for the cause they believe in.

Ed Kashi points at how sharing photographs and stories through Internet can make potential subjects less willing to be portrayed. In some cases it can be dangerous, for example if a subject portrayed is a human rights activist in a country where freedom of speech is disdained.

## Reflections

Findings show that photographs have influenced people from the very first social reformers started to use the camera to document issues in the nineteenth century. Concrete examples show how photographs can lead to direct or indirect change by influencing and inspiring people who see the images.

Photojournalism has not put an end to conflicts, crisis and challenges, nor erased all suffering and atrocities, but how could one tool have that power to change the behaviour of humans?

Nevertheless this research presents several examples on how photojournalism has contributed to positive change, which give a positive answer to my research question: "Does photojournalism contribute to positive change?"

I think documentary photographers do an important job in putting issues on the agenda, being a voice to influence the policies that shape our world, and sharing images and stories that can be inspire people to use their power to change. History shows that it is necessary. Movements

in the nineteenth and twentieth century show examples where it was not until they started to use photographs their effort led to action and protests and changed policies.

The visualisation of what is happening in the world can educate us to be more conscious and can see something that can change attitudes, but these changes are often difficult to measure. I will go back to Cornell Capa (1972) who said that photographs can "provide undistorted mirror of man's actions, thereby sharpening human awareness and awakening conscience".

The photographers I have interviewed see themselves as a vehicle and messenger, and how their stories can be the bridge between the people or society they depict, and those that can contribute to change.

To investigate this topic further, I would suggest looking at how photojournalism contributes to change from other perspectives. One opportunity is to approach humanitarian organizations and investigate which effects they observe when they use images and photographs in their ongoing work to raise awareness and get support from donors. Another aspect that would be interesting to know more about is the changes for those portrayed in the pictures, for those cases where it is possible to go back and look at the effects and changes.

It could also be interesting to measure the impact within a specific target group, such as the students Cong wanted to reach through the exhibition with images of the Cambodian woman trafficked to China.

This is a field with endless possibilities for further research. As the photographers say, it is difficult to know the exact influence of photojournalism. Their passion will anyway be the drive to continue the work.

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## Appendix

1. Informants for research interviews
2. Project description - photography project
3. List of documentary photographers approached for interview

## **Appendix 1 - Informants for research interviews**

Date and name of documentary photographers interviewed in this paper.

- Giles Duley, English - interview by Skype 19th January 2018
- Rune Eraker, Norwegian, personal meeting 3rd October 2018
- Yan Cong, Chinese, interview by email 15th November 2018
- Ed Kashi, American, interview by email 16th January 2019
- Monica Oreja, Colombian, personal meeting 13th March 2019
- Meeri Koutaniemi, Finish, lecture and personal meeting 15th March 2019, follow up by email 1st April and Phone Call 2nd April 2019

## Appendix 2 - Prosjektbeskrivelse dokumentarfotoprojekt

### Hva gjør deg glad?

20. mars er den internasjonale lykkedagen. Siden 2013 har "The International Day of Happiness" stått i FN-kalenderen for å markere viktigheten av menneskers livskvalitet.

Temaet gjør meg nysgjerrig, fordi lykke er så fundamentalt, og noe de fleste mer eller mindre streber etter. Et raskt googlesøk på "Råd for lykke" gir over ti millioner treff. Jeg er ikke den eneste som er opptatt av temaet.

Det er gjort mye forskning på hva som gir et godt liv, og det er mange som påberoper seg løsningen for tilfredshet og glede; materielle ting og tjenester av alle slag, kurs, reiser, selvhjelpsbøker og religiøse trender.

Et 75-år langt Harvard-studie startet i 1938, og har fulgt en gruppe mennesker gjennom hele livet, for å se nærmere på hvilke faktorer som påvirker helse og tilfredshet og gir et godt liv. Resultatene er presentert både i bøker og foredrag. I dag går studien videre ved å studere barna til den opprinnelige gruppen.

I Bhutan måler de ikke velferd i BNP men bruttonasjonallykke. De vektlegger innbyggernes livskvalitet framfor kun økonomisk utvikling for landet.

### Intervju med mennesker

I 2017 kom Norge på toppen blant verdens lykkeligste land. 156 land rangeres hvert år i "World Happiness Report" etter hvordan innbyggerne vurderer lykkenivået sitt. Statistikk og presentasjoner er en ting, jeg ønsker er å komme nærmere temaet. Jeg ble nysgjerrig på hva som faktisk er viktig i folks liv. Jeg laget en plan om å intervju minst 20 personer, og det ble 22, om hva lykke og et godt liv er for dem.

Det ble mange interessante og givende møter, med intervjuer og fotografering. Vi snakket om hva som gir lykke, hva som inspirerer og lader batteriene, om rollemodeller og drømmer og også hvilke råd de vil gi til andre for et godt liv.

Målsetning er å få leseren til å reflektere over sitt eget liv og hvordan egne prioriteringer og innstilling kan påvirke livskvaliteten og tilstedeværelse av lykke.

Dokumentarfotoprojektet er presentert som en bok, med fotografier og sitater av alle de portretterte. Formatet på boka er 25 x 25 cm og leveres som et PDF-dokument. Sidene er designet med en person per oppslag og bør derfor ses sammen, men jeg sender likevel en PDF som er eksportert som enkeltsider på grunn av lesbarheten når det skrives ut.

Online versjon: <https://indd.adobe.com/view/0d5ffeb2-5c72-41e7-b5f7-0fda0cadbb38>

### Appendix 3 - List of documentary photographers

List of documentary photographers I asked for interview to the master thesis

Navn	Epost	Svar	Intervju	
<b>Giles Duley</b>	x	Ja	x	
<b>Rune Eraker</b>	x	Ja	x	
Taslina Akhter	xxx	Ja		
Yan Arthus-Bertrand	x	Nei		
<b>Yin Cong</b>	x	Ja	x	
Brent Stirton	xx	Ja		
Lisa Kristine	xx			
Chris Jordan	x			
James Shitlow Delano	x			
Gideon Mendel	x			
Tima Kurdi	x	Nei		
Ami Vitale	x	Nei		
<b>Ed Kashi</b>	x	Ja	x	
George Steinmetz	x			
Zahele Muholi	x	Nei		
Stephanie Sinclair	xx			
Meridith Kohut	x			
Meeri Koutaniemi	xx	Ja	x	foredrag
Nichole Sobecki	xx			
				Vil svare senere
Maria Turchenkova	xx	Ja		
Cristina Mittermeier	x	Nei		
Heather Agyepong	x	Nei		
Lisa Krantz	x	Ja		
Monica Orjuela	x	ja	x	
Valeria Scrilatti	x			