



“Take This Picture”:
Humanitarianism and the Politics of Photography
in the Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo

Aubrey P. Graham
Emory University
Anthropology
Dissertation
2016

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Date

APPROVAL SHEET

“Take This Picture”:
Humanitarianism and the Politics of Photography
in the Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo

By

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**“Take This Picture”:
Humanitarianism and the Politics of Photography
in the Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo**

By Aubrey P. Graham

MA, Emory University, 2012

MA, School of Oriental and African Studies, 2009

BA, Colgate University, 2006

Advisor: Peter Little, Ph.D.

An abstract of
a dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the
James T. Laney School of Graduate Studies of Emory University
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ABSTRACT

“Take This Picture”: Humanitarianism and the Politics of Photography in the Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo

By Aubrey P. Graham

At the turn of the 20th century, iconic humanitarian photographs of violent mutilations and abuse incited international action against Leopold II's regime in the Congo Free State (now Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)). Today the legacy and power of humanitarian photography remain prominent in the DRC. As the eastern region of the country enters its third decade of conflict and humanitarian crises, the provincial capital of Goma continues to host one of the world's greatest densities of aid agencies. Like the more than 25,000 international aid agencies operating across the globe, nearly each of these organizations produces photographs to witness situations, account to donors, and advertise the agency's work in the Congo. While academics have addressed humanitarian images for such aspects as their ability to catalyze Western funding and intervention, little is known about the “in the field” interactions and the local implications that these practices and pictures instigate. In this dissertation I show how these humanitarian images and the processes that create them do not occur in a vacuum; rather they articulate with the region's entangled histories, actors, social and political dynamics, and existing local visual norms.

This dissertation addresses the fine-grained interactions and implications of humanitarian photographs within both the social and political scape of the eastern DRC and within the norms and expectations of the region's booming local photographic industry. Through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and visual methodologies, I engage photography as an anthropological topic of study and as a lens through which to engage the surrounding social and political dynamics of the region. I argue that photography speaks to the social dynamics of Goma and the surrounding province of North Kivu with particular pervasiveness and intensity due to the photograph's ability to communicate widely and with enormous affective power. I show how the process of photography exposes the individual agency and the collective desires of the interwoven social actors who operate within the region. Moreover, I suggest that photography not only provides a lens through which to visualize the tense, expectation-plagued relationship between the Congolese residents and the humanitarian industry and their practitioners, but also is a practice that heightens tensions and frustrations between the two groups.

In this dissertation, I employ the “photographic landscape” as a conceptual framework through which to examine humanitarian and local photography within the political, historical, and social contexts of the eastern DRC. After establishing Goma as a place of volatility and opportunity, I use this framework to explore the region's local and humanitarian photographic cultures and economies. I then go on to engage the social and political dynamics that arise as these respective visual fields intersect. In the overlapping space of local and humanitarian visual norms, I examine the clashes and creolizations that arise as individuals and organizations equipped with often-divergent visual expectations struggle to harness the camera and the material photograph to their desires and needs. Throughout this dissertation's six chapters I simultaneously engage photographs as objects and as processes. In so doing, I expose the networked matrix of power, agency, and imagination that operates across the eastern DRC's space of protracted conflict and humanitarian intervention. Moreover, through my photographic methodologies and the included sets of photographs, I encourage a critical visual viewership in anthropology and the production of sensory and visual knowledge.

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The majority of the research that fueled this project occurred from August 2013 – August 2014. However, this dissertation is the product of research that has taken place from 2009 to the present (2016). This research would not have been possible without the generous help from my committee, Emory University, research institutions, friends, family, colleagues, and its innumerable participants. There are too many people to name within this space, but to every individual and institution that helped to make this possible, thank you.

First and foremost, many heartfelt thanks go out of my dissertation committee composed of Peter Little, Corinne Kratz, Anna Grimshaw, and Bruce Knauft. Peter, thank you for supporting me (and my project) from the very beginning. And to Cory, Anna, and Bruce, thank you for coming on board and remaining outstandingly helpful, critical, and supportive. Near the close of my first year at Emory, each committee member consented to be a member of my committee during what felt like an insurmountable crisis. I had no idea how to make my photography legible to an academic audience. In part, it was a crisis of language; I didn't have the required fluency to make the necessary connections. I knocked on doors and clamored for support and any articles, examples, or techniques that might enable me to make the connections between the image and the research. Each member of this committee stepped forward and outlined a path they believed would be helpful; each of them encouraged both the necessary academically rigorous engagement and the creative photographic methods and outputs. Moreover, I owe each committee member enormous gratitude for the careful, critical readings of each draft of this dissertation and every grant proposal, article, and application that came before it. And Cory, thank you for insisting that I be a better writer and actually pay attention to grammar.

An enormous thank you is also due to the Emory University's Visual Scholarship Initiative (VSI). Thank you to VSI for providing a constructive, critical, thought-provoking space to engage creative work through which to forge institutional acceptance of the scholarship we all produce. A huge thank you is due to Sarah Franzen, Sydney Silverstein, Sasha Klupchak, Andy Ditzler, Anna Grimshaw, Jason Francisco, and Joey Orr for supporting this project and inspiring me to continue pushing academic limits with my photographs. The Emory Center for Ethics and its Ethics and the Arts Program (run by Carlton Mackey and supported by Mika Pettigrew) deserve ample thanks for helping facilitate my exhibition "Portraits in Disneyland – Stories from Mugunga III" that grew out of this research and Chapter 5, specifically.

An enormous thank you is due to Lora McDonald for her fabulous organizational skills and overwhelming support within the department and also when I was in the field. Thanks are also due to my Emory peers Amanda Mummert, Howard Chio, Daniel Coppetto, and Randi Cappelletti for helping to see this project through and fielding innumerable discussions concerning this project, life, and the logistics of surviving the dissertation.

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Fieldwork in the eastern DRC would not have been possible, or pleasant, without the help and kindness of the innumerable people I have encountered, come to know, and whose stories and images have informed this project. Unfortunately, they are too many to name individually here. Particular thanks, however, are due to the photographers of Studio Creatif – to Renard, Patrick, Emmanuel, Alan, Mumbere, Crispin, David, and thank you for not only your insight but also your friendship. Thanks are also due to the staff of Maji Matulivu (Patrick, Domina, Francoise, Faby, Adelaire, Antoine, Chasa, Elkon) for being ever helpful and wonderful friends from 2009 onwards. Thank you especially to each and every individual who willingly engaged with my photography and helped to train me both to see and understand through the lens of a humanitarian or local photographer. Special thanks are due to every individual who participated in my co-creative portraits method from Mugunga III Internally Displaced People's camp. Also thank you to the UNHCR and the Congo Refugee Network for helping secure my permission to research in the camp. Additionally thank you to Lynne, Imani, Stewart, Emilie, Mama Furaha and the Lununga family, Bella, Freddy, Fabrice and the Kabantu family, Kipère, Chi Chi, and Dario.

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Last but not least, thanks are very much due to the following: to my family for the constant support and perspective. To Marlena for getting me interested in Africa in the first place and constantly encouraging my research and growth ever since; To Chris for seeing me through the long haul of writing the various drafts of this dissertation; and to Walker for patiently waiting for me both to come home from the field and to stop writing. I promise I'll throw your ball now.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

1. ADF: Allied Democratic Forces (Rebel Group)
2. ADFL: Alliance of Démocratique des Forces pour la Libération du Congo- Zaïre (Rebel Group)
3. AW: Aid the World (International NGO Pseudonym)
4. BDGEL: Roundabout “*des bancs*” (of the banks) in Goma
5. CNDP: *Congrès National pour la Défense du Peuple* (Rebel Group)
6. CNR: *Commission Nationale pour les Réfugiés*
7. DDT: *Démocratie et Développent pour Tous* (local NGO pseudonym)
8. DGM: *Direction Générale de Migration*
9. DRC: Democratic Republic of the Congo
10. FARDC: Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo (Congolese Army)
11. FDLR: The Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda
12. FIB: Force Intervention Brigade
13. ICC: International Criminal Court
14. IDP: Internally Displaced People
15. INGO: International Non-Governmental Organization
16. INSTIGO: Institute of Goma (University)
17. ISO: International Standards Organization (stands for film’s sensitivity to light).
18. LNGO: Local Non-Governmental Organization
19. M23 : *Mouvement de 23 Mars* (Rebel Group)
20. MONUSCO: The United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

21. NGO: Non-Governmental Organization
22. OCHA: United Nations Office of Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
23. PAM: French Acronym for World Food Program
24. RCD-GOMA: *Rassemblement Congolaise pour la Démocratie* (Rebel Group)
25. RPG: Rocket Propelled Grenade
26. RRMP: Rapid Response to Movements of Populations (Group NGO action)
27. SGBV: Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
28. TRY: International NGO Pseudonym
29. ULPGL: *L'Université Libre des Pays des Grands Lacs* (University)
30. UN: United Nations
31. UNHCR: The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
32. UNICEF: United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
33. UNIGOM: University of Goma
34. WFP: World Food Program

A NOTE TO THE READER

This is a tale of images and words. It is a study of humanitarian photography set within one of the world's densest aid spaces – the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). It is equally a study of humanitarian photography within a space inhabited, enlivened, and made regularly visible to itself through a rich tradition of local photography. Most studies of humanitarian photography focus upon post-production publication and circulation of images that often privilege Western actors and agencies. Instead, my work dives into the fine-grained processes, politics, and implications of photographic creation located at the intersection of two social zones – that of international humanitarianism and equally that of the resident Congolese.

I have attempted to write this dissertation as a process - not just a process of writing, but as a process of discovery in reading and viewing. While the introduction explains the structure and background of the research, in Chapter 1, I backtrack to the beginning (August 2013) of my most recent year in Goma. Within and across the ensuing chapters I introduce the reader to the context of the region and its photography in a way that loosely parallels my process of learning. In the final chapters, I draw out the discoveries that arose near the end of my fieldwork and during the writing process. In this way, I have written to provide the reader with the skills not only to engage the space of the eastern DRC but also to “see” the images and examples I include through the various cultural lenses discussed below. To facilitate this engagement, I use ethnographic episodes composed of photographs, fieldnotes (trimmed and edited for brevity's sake), conversations, and thickly described vignettes to help evoke a sensory experience of the region. In certain cases, as in chapters one and five, these episodes shape the chapter structure,

while they punctuate broader arguments in the rest of the dissertation. Importantly, to distinguish fieldnotes from quotes and interviews, I have both offset and italicized them.

The following chapters unite a range of photographic methodologies, images, and textual analysis. This combination of image and text builds from Anna Grimshaw and Amanda Ravetz's call to engage "a genuinely visual anthropology that is not about the pictorial representation of anthropology. [But which] instead is a process of inquiry in which knowledge is not prior, but emerges and takes distinctive shape through the very "grain of the filmmaking" (MacDougall 1998, 76 in Grimshaw and Ravetz 2005, 3). By replacing "filmmaking" with "still photography" what follows is an experiment in both form and function.

In the ensuing entanglement of photographs and text, I draw from John Berger's approach to presenting image-based arguments. In *Ways of Seeing* (1973), Berger offered a range of photographic and textual essays. He intended his fully photographic and pictorial essays to raise as many questions as his more textual engagements. To allow images to motivate questions and critical reading, he made critical choices about when to include captions and explanations. Within this dissertation, I have made a similar decision. While all the images appear in the list of figures, not every photograph carries an explanatory caption. I hope that readers will embrace each photograph's inherent ambiguity, which does "not lend itself to being dealt with in any definite way" (Edwards 2001a, 9). As each reader brings their personal experience and ways of seeing to the image, I hope that they will do more than just look; I hope they will "watch" the photograph. For Ariella Azoulay to watch a photograph is to see it as "more than what is printed on photographic paper" (2008, 14). The photograph represents an interaction – an event. Deeply engaging the image means attending to the representation on the page as well as the dimensions of time, movement, and interaction that created it.

I have carefully curated the following photographs and text so that the images do more than solely "support" the surrounding words. In so doing, I resist the assumption that images are merely auxiliary to writing (Piault et al. 2015, 176-180). Rather, through the following

entanglement of images and text, I strive to provide readers with a fine-grained engagement of the space, people, and politics of the eastern DRC, while also facilitating readers' critical viewing skills. My hope is that for each reader the images, text, and their complex interaction will yield knowledge about desire, intention, and politics across the region's photographic landscape.

Finally, in the following pages, readers will encounter a range of individuals and organizations set within the volatily conflict-addled and politically sensitive area of Goma *et environs* (the approximately 30 square kilometers that ring the eastern DRC city). During my research, I received verbal permission for the creation of each research photograph. Such authorization included the acknowledgment that I may publish the images and their associated stories in my dissertation, articles, exhibitions, on the Internet, and in books – all of which might be visible across the world. In all cases where an individual expressed any worry about the reproduction of their image, their image was not used. Moreover, to reduce any potential harm I have used pseudonyms for most agencies and individuals. Where persons are too identifiable, or in certain cases where I have judged that there is little to no risk, women, men, and organizations sport their original names.

Onward.

SECTION ONE
INSECURITY, PHOTOGRAPHY, AND CONFLICT IN GOMA

INTRODUCTION

Since 1996, the conflicts in the Congo (DRC) have claimed more lives — about 6 million — than any other human-caused calamity since World War II. The epicenter of the conflict has been situated in the eastern Kivu provinces (North and South Kivu), with the infrastructural and economic heart continuing to pump in the burgeoning provincial capital of Goma. Set at the crossroads of licit and illicit trade routes, humanitarian intervention, and rebel operations, Goma, Democratic Republic of the Congo is a city of many labels. On one hand, the city has earned the title of “*siège de rébellion*” (seat of rebellion) (Vlassenroot and Büscher 2011). For the past 20 years, the populations of Goma and the surrounding provinces have experienced two international wars and ongoing conflict involving more than 40 rebel groups who have used that space to launch attacks against the Kinshasa-based government and each other.

On the other hand, Goma is the site of rampant non-governmental organization (NGO) action. The city has earned the title of “NGOpole” (Büscher and Vlassenroot 2009) and a “humanitarian hotspot” (Duncan 2014); it even occasionally garners the nickname “NGOma” (“the ‘N’ is silent”) from the humanitarians and researchers who work there. Each of these sometimes-cheeky designations speaks to the outstanding density and influence of the humanitarian industry housed in this particular urban space hemmed in by a lake, a volcano, cycles of ongoing conflict, and the highly contentious border with Rwanda. In broader context, since 1994 Goma has continuously hosted the biggest humanitarian operation in the DRC and one of the largest in the world. In 2013-2014, during the research for this project, the United Nations

Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA) estimated the density of organizations to equal more than 100 international agencies, 300 local partner organizations, and 13 United Nations offices.

As a result, this once-sleepy port town and its surrounding agro-pastoral lands has experienced enormous economic growth and urbanization, making Goma *et environs* (the approximately 30km surrounding the city) home to approximately one million residents. As the city grew over the past 20 years, the region developed into a complexly interwoven social setting that combines aid, humanitarian workers and organizations, rebels, soldiers and armies, journalists, displaced individuals and people making lives in the midst of the divisions and interactions that define the social contours of these sectors and domains. While some middle class, working class, and displaced Congolese individuals work within, or receive aid from the broader humanitarian system, many do not. Nonetheless, around the humanitarians' high walls, razor wire, and locked Land Cruiser doors, they resourcefully craft a life. Looking to the future – to their “projects” as such plans are called - entrepreneurs start businesses, couples get married, craftsmen construct houses, and individuals jockey for the ability to gain from the more than one billion-dollar annual aid industry.

In this dissertation, I argue that in the world of Goma and the surrounding province of North Kivu photography speaks to the social dynamics of the region with special pervasiveness and intensity. I propose an understanding of photography as a practice that permeates and crosscuts all of Goma's various sectors and helps to reveal their dynamics, separations, and interactions. In particular, I explore how photography functions as a critical tool for charting the dynamic social and political space of Goma *et environs* as well as the broader space of North Kivu. As the process of photography exposes the individual agency and collective desires of the interwoven social actors who operate within the region, I suggest that it can provide a lens through which to visualize the relationship between the region's Congolese residents and the humanitarian industry and their practitioners.

Photos of Congolese war victims and humanitarian-aided survivors have continuously stoked the media fire in the region, increasing the flow of both funding and humanitarian contracts – a significant part of the region’s economic lifeblood. Humanitarian projects, outreach, meetings, and reports hardly function without constant photographic documentation and posting. Being photographed is one of the principal ways — in some senses, *the* principal way — through which many Congolese interact with the staff, projects, and money of the billion-dollar aid industry in and around Goma. And yet, photography in the region exists beyond the realm of international NGOs where the Congolese become subjects in images frequently consumed by distant others. Rather, photography is part of the lives of Congolese themselves, though in a very different way. Local photographers and photo studios are ubiquitous across the city and the province. Well-posed photographs of family and friends taken by other Congolese photographers claim space on the walls and in the albums of residents’ homes in Goma and the outlying areas, including in the makeshift shelters of the Internally Displaced Peoples camps. On the surface, these images - and the self-representation of eastern Congolese of themselves - contrast dramatically with those of humanitarian photography and the NGOs.

Yet, as this study reveals, the act of photography also brings these two seemingly divided social zones and populations into regular contact,¹ opening spaces and avenues of communication and interaction. In the space in front of the camera, Congolese residents are able to temporarily scale the high dividing walls and craft imaginative, future-oriented “bids” for inclusion or exclusion within the humanitarian system. For their part, humanitarians employ carefully choreographed photography of the Congolese as a means to draw attention to pressing issues and prove their relevance to donors, placing the image at the very heart of the region’s economic circulation and ongoing humanitarian intervention.

¹ These zones function somewhat similarly to the conflicting racial dynamics that Max Gluckman analyzed in colonial South Africa. Gluckman argued that the cohesion and temporary stability were possible due to membership in a single economic system, albeit an unequal one (Gluckman 1940/2011).

In this dissertation I examine the dynamics of “local photography” (popular images created for the consumption of the Congolese residents), and “humanitarian photography” (images created for use within the humanitarian and non-governmental organizations). Through a conceptual framework that I call the “photographic landscape,” I address the particularities and intersections of the region’s social zones. A primary objective is to chart the power and role(s) of photography in such a tense, divided space of protracted humanitarianism and conflict. By engaging the entangled histories of the region, the nuanced (often unspoken) expectations about photographs, the detailed ways in which each social zone creates their images, and what happens when those expectations and processes intersect, this research answers the following interconnected questions:

- What norms, processes, and goals compose local and humanitarian photographic cultures and the resulting material images?
- What do such practices and expectations say about notions of subjectivity, agency, and resistance both within their respective zones and in the spaces where they interact?
- What role does photography play as a means of communication between Congolese and humanitarian actors within the highly differentiated social realm beset by cycles of violent conflict and humanitarianism?
- What do these photographic actions and images reveal about the broader social fabric that makes up the eastern DRC and the world of humanitarian aid?

This dissertation answers these questions across the introduction and six subsequent chapters. In this introduction, I both situate this research within the socio-political context of the eastern DRC and launch the analytical framework – the photographic landscape and its visual fields - through which I engage the region and its diverse forms of photography. After mapping out the image-based layout, context, and this research’s theoretical entanglements, I offer a broad-based discussion concerning my choice and use of methods. The rest of the chapters have been organized into three sections with two photo and text interludes. Section 1 explores the conflict scape of Goma. Section 2 addresses the dynamics of the photographic landscape’s local visual fields, respectively addressing local and humanitarian photography. Section 3 delves into the frictional social politics situated in overlaps of the local and humanitarian visual fields and their

expectations. Throughout, by simultaneously engaging photographs as objects and as processes, I work to expose the networked matrix of power, agency, and imagination that operates across the eastern DRC's space of protracted conflict and humanitarian intervention. Moreover, by providing the viewer with both sets and individual photographs, I encourage a critical viewership and the production of sensory and visual knowledge.

Section 1: In Chapter 1 I explore an ethnographic episode concerning a singular contentious photograph created by journalist Simone Schlindwein. In so doing, I plumb the power of photography within the region's matrix of interconnected actors, organizations, and histories of conflict. While contextualizing Goma, this chapter also serves to provide insight into the politics of how the region's local and international actors diversely interpret and strive to control photographs. In Interlude 1, I then provide an introduction to Goma via both visual and textual tours of the city and its various social zones.

Section 2: Chapter 2 addresses the norms and genres of the local visual field. This chapter situates current popular photography produced both by studio photographers and *photographes ambulants* (mobile photographers) in Goma within the context of colonial and early African photographic production. I explore the contemporary interactive and imaginative norms that encompass the local image. Moving to the other end of the photographic landscape, Chapter 3 attends to the structural dynamics of the humanitarian visual field. I engage the global change in humanitarian representational content from historically "negative" to "positive" depictions while outlining a recent history of aid in the eastern DRC. Set within the accounts of global humanitarian image trends and the particular dynamics of the last two decades of international intervention in and around Goma, I explore the humanitarian politics of current aid photographs with an emphasis on the ideal content they should contain and the work they are expected to do. Before beginning Chapter 4, I employ Interlude 2 to chart the trials and tribulation of creating humanitarian aid images through an ethnographic episode in which I was asked to create a "before" photograph for TRY International, a large NGO based in Goma. Chapter 4 steps outside

of the aid office and the notion of “ideal images” and enters the field, where humanitarian images are produced. By engaging the photographers who create the images and the tactics they use to construct them, I probe the way in which distinct photographic narratives are carefully choreographed within the humanitarian visual field. This chapter also raises a discussion of my method of shadowing photography as I investigate the embodied knowledge that shapes humanitarian photographers’ actions and image content.

Section 3: Chapters 5 and 6 engage the circulation and collision of local and humanitarian images, imaginaries, expectations, and actors across the overlapping local and humanitarian visual fields. In Chapter 5, I situate photography within Mugunga III, an Internally Displaced Peoples camp located just outside of Goma. As I explore the histories and politics of displacement in the eastern DRC, I connect the region’s humanitarian power dynamics and hierarchy with the local survival and success strategies of the displaced. Within this chapter, focused specifically on the aid-heavy space of the camp, I also explore my co-creative portrait method as a means to address the flow and mutability of representation across the local and humanitarian fields. Chapter 6 extends the previous chapter’s analysis of the humanitarian camera-as-contact-zone into the spaces outside of the current humanitarian action. In so doing, I investigate the nuances and implications of a friction-producing situation in which humanitarian photographic policy and local subjective desire and expectation of the image clash. In the first half of this chapter, I attend to the locally crafted *negative humanitarian imaginary* and the expectation that particular humanitarian images carry for the Congolese photographic subjects featured. In the second half, I address the practical constraints on the production and circulation of humanitarian images. By engaging aid photography as a powerfully communicative practice and object, I tie the local engagement with the humanitarian camera into the volatile and powerful politics of aid and the ongoing frustration and self-reliance that shape the region.

Importantly, in conducting this project I have chosen to focus on photography as a subject of study and as a research method. In the space of this dissertation, I am not able to also

address humanitarian or Congolese film, though such research would compose a valuable addition to this work. This research on still photographs inevitably shares similarities with videos of the region, and many of my conclusions and arguments may well apply to the analysis of moving images. However, the still photograph has the power to freeze a complex interaction into a single representation. The very singularity of the photograph makes it simultaneously powerful and ambiguous. The photograph isolates, fetishizes, and has the ability to “cut-off” (crop out) parts of life thereby shaping a thing that is often perceived as some form of truth or evidence (Pinney 1990). Conversely, one of film’s great powers is that ability to contextualize. Metz writes, “Film lets us believe in more things, photography lets us believe more in one thing” (1985, 88). Belief and expectation play central roles in this project, and the singularity of the still image enables me to probe how meaning is made and engaged in relation to very specific photographic genres, poses, and inclusions. Moreover, the still photograph houses a representation constructed of the various, yet precise, purposeful intentions of its makers. At the same time, meaning is dependent upon its location, movement, and the subjectivity of the individual who gazes upon it (Edwards 2012). As will become clear in the following pages, these distinctive qualities of the still photograph shape its position both as subject of study and a means through which to probe the social dynamics of the interaction between the humanitarian enterprise and the Congolese people in Goma *et environs*.

A PHOTOGRAPHIC LANDSCAPE AND THE CONTEXTUAL SCAPE

The *photographic landscape* provides conceptual scaffolding through which I examine the politics of photography in the eastern DRC (Figure 1 below). The use of the landscape metaphor references the unifying yet diverse terrain upon which photography is created, circulated, and consumed. Specifically, I use the photographic landscape as an analytical and organizational tool with which to probe the region’s simultaneously independent and interdependent visual fields

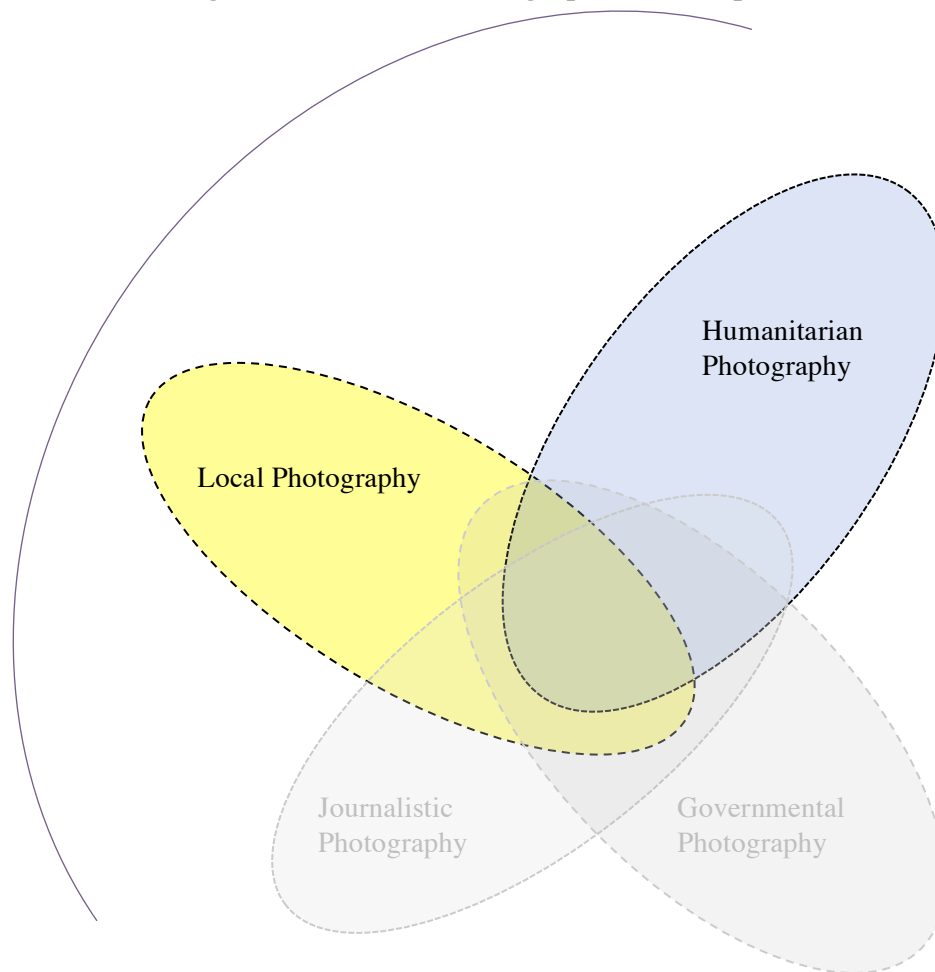
composed of humanitarian, local, journalistic, and governmental photography. The concept of a visual field (which I discuss in detail below) reflects the respective sociocultural structures and perspectives that shape the meaning and flow of photography. Borrowing from Bourdieu (1993), each visual field – be it local, humanitarian, journalistic, or governmental - represents a theoretical photographic “field of action” complete with its respective agents, social positions, and norms that shape subjectivity and are shaped by actors’ agency. While porous and terrifically amorphous in shape, these fields compose social spheres that both reflect and constitute complex social relations. Importantly, no field operates in full independence of the others or of the broader global and regional influences and flows. Rather, they function more closely to Sally Falk Moore’s (1973) notion of semi-autonomous fields. Moore notes that such fields “can generate rules and customs and symbols internally, but that they are also vulnerable to rules and decisions and other forces emanating from the larger world by which it is surrounded” (1973, 720). Each field across which actors maneuver is replete with its histories, politics, social dynamics, and norms. As an assemblage of visual fields, the broader photographic landscape provides an organized way to probe the complex, messy engagement of the region’s local and international actors and the photographs they create and circulate.

Since camera technology became portable in the second half of the 19th century, photography has been critical to a range of social efforts across the African continent. Identification portraits made individuals legible to the state. Studios arose and praised the cosmopolitanism of their sitters. Humanitarian interventions employed the photograph to prove atrocity. “In 1877, as these first humanitarian photographs began to circulate the globe, early photographer and humanitarian Thomas de Witt Talmage proclaimed, ‘The human race is divided into almost as many languages as there are nations, but the pictures may speak to people of all tongues’” (cited in Curtis 2015, 29). Today, this notion of the photograph as gifted with the power of speech abounds in and around Goma. Humanitarians, journalists, and the Congolese express the idea of a “good photograph” as one that can speak, as “*une photo qui parle.*”

Une photo qui parle raises the questions of who a photograph speaks to, and what it is intended to say. Images ferry general narratives to their audience (Campbell 2010), but they also make pointed visual statements (Azoulay 2008, 204). Both statements and narratives are patently ambiguous and dependent upon the viewer's personal history and the context of the photograph's placement. While the photograph is granted the power of speech as a material object, the very act of photography also opens a communicative space to the photographic subject, photographer, and any potential bystanders. This dissertation explores both the inter-subjective process of photography and the object it creates. Analysis of the production, circulation, and consumption of the still image provides a lens into the politics of photography in the eastern DRC while offering a means to understand how representation and action draw from, reify, and alter the complex encompassing social context.

Theoretically, the construct of the photographic landscape with its interconnected yet separate visual fields enables me to address the region's range of photographs, actors, and camera-driven interactions through a political economy (Wolf 1982) lens. Thereby, I situate photography within the context of interpenetrating global and local power dynamics. Political economy approaches engage culture and material production as influenced by and influencing of global capital and global power dynamics. While I do not engage Marxist theories of class and capitalist production per se, I lean on the political economy's theoretical focus of the unequal, yet negotiated interactions and entangled histories that shape material production and subjective meaning that such interactions and objects embody for the various actors and institutions involved.

Figure 1: The DRC's Photographic Landscape and its Visual Fields



Scape And The Entanglement Of Structure, Subjectivity, And Agency

The photographic landscape does not exist independent of the eastern DRC's socio-political and historical context. Rather, I understand the photographic landscape and its visual fields to both reside within, and contribute to the region's flexible, frictional socio-cultural milieu. To engage the complexity of histories, actors, institutions, flows, and power dynamics of the broader context, I borrow Appadurai's (1990) theorization of *scape*. Appadurai conceptualizes social space as constituted by fluid and fragmented histories, surroundings, and perspectives that both

interact with and respond to intensifying global flows. Specifically, he argues that *scapes* are composed of:

...Not objectively given relations that look the same from every angle of vision, but rather, that they are deeply perspectival constructs, inflected by the historical, linguistic, and political situatedness of different sorts of actors: nation-states, multinationals, diasporic communities, as well as subnational groupings and movements and even intimate face-to-face groups, such as villages, neighborhoods, and families. Indeed, the individual actor is the last locus of this perspectival set of landscapes, for these landscapes are eventually navigated by agents who both experience and constitute larger formations, in part from their own sense of what these landscapes offer (ibid., 590).

For this research, Appadurai's notion of *scape* provides the sociocultural context within which the photographic landscape occurs. The broader *scape* of the eastern DRC includes but is certainly not limited to its Congolese and international actors, and the various histories, power dynamics, and economies of conflict, humanitarian aid, the border zone, humanitarian space, and the respective local and humanitarian forms of photography. Thus, while I employ the photographic landscape to organize an analysis of the social politics of photography within the region, the contextualizing *scape* is never absent. Rather, by focusing on a particular item (the photograph) and its associated acts (photography) as shaped by and constituent of the broader, ever-evolving *scape* my analysis probes not only the region's photography and photographic actors (photographers, subjects, bystanders), but its enmeshment and frictions with the histories, movements, and daily realities of conflict and international humanitarianism in the particular space of the eastern DRC.

Within this *scape* I explore the interplay of structure and the subjectivity and agency of the region's actors who both traverse the *scape* and in so doing, shape it. Within this dissertation, I engage subjectivity through Sherry Ornter's definition as the "inner states of acting subjects" (2005, 31). Importantly, by engaging photography and its actors within the broader social and cultural *scape*, I follow in exploring the "the ensemble of modes of perception, affect, thought, desire, fear, and so forth that animate acting subjects" as inextricably tied to the "cultural and

social formations that shape organize, and provoke those modes of affect, thought, and so on” (Ortner 2005, 31). Subjectivity is linked to agency through action – through the desire and the power to act. Giddens (1984) emphasizes the critical role that power plays in this equation. He argues that power is a “necessary implication of the local connection between human action and transformative capacity” (in Karp 1986, 136). Karp’s analysis of Giddens’ notion of agency is both succinct and useful here. He writes, “Giddens continually relates power to agency and through power, agency to interaction; he sees power relations as continually produced and reproduced in context, related to the invocation of rules and the mobilization of resources” (ibid.). Agency – the power to act - therefore is intimately bound with not only structures and rules, but the subjective ways of making meaning from one’s physical, social, and political location. Agency draws on individual subjectivity and the structures that shape it. However, agency does more than only respond to subjective desires entirely shaped by structure. Rather, the fluid dynamics and interplay of structure, subjectivity, and agency, show that perception and action shape and change the very structures through which individuals make meaning and act. This entanglement is critical within this research due to the eastern DRC’s social reality of hosting dynamically multiple zones of social life and social actors and their simultaneously separate and enmeshed power dynamics. The humanitarian landscape enables me, therefore to use the photograph to engage ways of meaning making through which I track the mutually independent and overlapping social zones and photographic economies and explore how they shape and are shaped by the very subjectivity they engender.

A GOMA SCAPE: OF PERIPHERY AND POROUS BORDERS

Before diving into the details of the photographic landscape and its visual fields, let me first outline a basic understanding of the eastern DRC’s contextual scape. There are of course many ways to describe the eastern DRC and address the violence and the now rampant

humanitarianism.² In this work however, I attend to the particular dynamics of the region as a *borderland*, set far from the control of the Congolese government and existing just a stone's throw from the border with Rwanda (and with Uganda in the north of the province). Mark Duffield writes:

The idea of the borderlands [...] is a metaphor for an imagined geographical space where, in the eyes of many metropolitan actors and agencies, the characteristics of brutality, excess and breakdown predominate. It is a terrain that has been mapped and re-mapped in innumerable aid and academic reports where wars occur through greed and sectarian gain, social fabric is destroyed and developmental gains reversed, non-combatants killed, humanitarian assistance abused and all civility abandoned (2001, 309).

While Duffield sees borderlands as spaces preyed upon by hegemonic global power dynamics which silence and abuse the population, others including myself engage such spaces more through more dialectic analysis. The periphery is simultaneously capitalized upon from the outside, but also engaged meaningfully by the population who resides within it. As such, borderlands commonly compose sets of binaries. They are spaces that “don't fit” due to their “peripherality” or their “perceived backwardness” (Rosaldo 1988). Yet they are simultaneously spaces that are “denied and demanded by the socially powerful... marginalized yet strategic” (Coutin 2003, 171). For the endogenous actors, borderlands represent “interstitial zones of deterritorialization and hybridization” (Gupta and Ferguson 1992, 48). Ultimately, while volatile and capitalized upon by the world's powerful actors, these sites are also places of creative bricolage and innovation. From an ethnographic perspective, I engage Goma *et environs* through a lens that both engages the hegemonic power-wrangling stakeholders and the diverse population which navigates the region's volatility while thriving on movement, flexibility, and opportunity facilitated by their very borderland position.

² David Newbury (1992, 2009), Philip Reyntjens (2009), David Van Reybrouck (2014) among many others have written volumes committed to the detailed histories of the region, its social dynamics, and conflicts.

Goma *et environs* has occupied a borderland-like space since pre-colonial times. The region around Goma and the border with Rwanda belongs to the broader Kivu Rift. During the pre-colonial era David Newbury (1980; 1992) argues that this region marked a division between major cultural zones. To the east were the highly stratified and centralized states that ran from Lake Tanganyika to the Nile, while to the west smaller more mobile groups resided within the forests of the Congo basin. The area of what today composes the provinces of North and South Kivu was peripheral long before European powers drew the colonial borders. Importantly, the area sat on the fringe of the powerful Rwandan kingdom,³ and from approximately 1600-1900 the populations of the region capitalized on their slightly liminal, peripheral position to facilitate trade in everything from gold, fiber bracelets (used as currency), agricultural and pastoral products across the region (Newbury 1992; 2009). As a periphery situated between distinctive zones, flexibility and mobility became aspects of the region that continue to reverberate.

Colonial pens drew Congo's borders during the 1884-1885 Berlin Conference delineating Ruanda-Urundi and the Congo Free State (1884-1908) a personal concessionary holding of King Leopold II. This land later became the Belgian Congo (1908-1960), the Republic of the Congo (1960-1971), Zaïre (1971-1997) and finally the Democratic Republic of the Congo (1997 – present) (see Figure 2). While much of the Kivu Rift was mapped inside the space of the Belgian Congo, trade, shared lineage, and ethnicity that traversed the nation-state borders connected the populations near the frontier more closely with the countries to the east. Moreover, the Belgian colonial form of direct rule, where colonialists separated the country into hierarchical administrative units and assigned colonial functionaries to implement a singular native policy, meant that the far-off Kivus remained largely out of sight and out of mind. Following thousand-year old trade routes that reached as far as Sudan or across central Africa to the Indian Ocean,

³ The Rwandan Kingdom came into existence in approximately the 11th Century, and ran to the start of colonialism in 1885. The two decades preceding colonialism saw a significant increase in territory (reaching further into the Kivus) and stress on the Kingdom under King Rwabugiri (see Newbury 1978, Packard 1981, Newbury 1992; 2009).

Kivians carried out an illicit second economy (MacGaffey 1991) of internationally valuable items including coffee, ivory, timber, palm oil, gold, and diamonds across those international lines as a means to survive, while ducking repressive trade taxes and forced labor emanating from the Belgian colonial system. While the Kivus functioned largely through such well-worn opportunistic networks, their peripheral position also had its significant disadvantages. Under colonialism the Kivu province held the least number of schools in the country, and the provision of health, education, and state services was left largely in the hands of American and European missionaries (MacGaffey 1987; Depaepe 1998).

Figure 2: Map of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (United Nations 2011)



Even after independence in 1960, these cross border relations brought economic growth and development in a way that was separate from the Kinshasa-led state. Under the kleptocratic

rule of Mobutu-Sese-Seku (1965 - 1997), the Congo flourished for a brief period, gaining enormous western support and notoriety for its marked success. For instance, “the Washington Post proclaimed that ‘Once synonymous in Western minds with civil war and anarchy, [Zaire] has become a fast-growing, stable nation and is now reaching out for African grandeur and international recognition’” (28 Oct. 1974 in Dunn 2003, 124). Ironically, such acclaim is today commonly foisted upon its eastern neighbor, Rwanda.⁴ Yet, with Mobutu and his corrupt regime at the helm from 1965 - 1997 international acclaim spiked then faded, and by the mid-1970s the state had crumbled into decay and conflict. The Kivus, set at a powerful economic crossroads outside the state’s grasp, evaded some of the economic, political, and infrastructural destruction tied up with Zaire’s demise. “By 1990s the political system had retreated to Kinshasa, where it ‘operated’ in isolation. It did not manage ‘peripheral issues’ in which it had no interest, such as those affecting the Kivu region, where local and regional dynamics far exceeded the capacity of the collapsed state and an impotent political class” (Reyntjens 2009, 13). With Mobutu at the helm, Kivu’s citizens were left to their own devices and told to “*se débrouillez*” – to get by, to figure it out.

With the combination of time and state neglect, the peripheral Kivus grew outside of colonial and state control (See Figure 3). Their borderland position provided the mobility for residents to flexibly uphold and transgress the encircling borders and to host non-state actors ranging from rebel groups to humanitarian industries. While throughout the 1980s Zaire slid into increasing conflict, opportunity in Goma *et environs* remained high – albeit situated in a terrifically precarious space. The up-to-that-point mostly sleepy port town became a site of refuge

⁴After the 1994 Genocide Rwanda, under the charismatic leadership of Paul Kagame, has become the fastest growing country in Africa. While proclaiming fears about Kagame’s rule similar to that of the international community concerning Mobutu in the early 1970s, the New York Times nonetheless praises the tiny country: “Today the word Rwanda is no longer synonymous with misery and death. The average life expectancy is 65 years, up from 48 in 1990, according to the World Health Organization. The percentage of children dying before their fifth birthday has fallen markedly, from 253 per 1,000 in 1995 to 55 per 1,000 in 2012. Most Rwandans have health insurance. There is almost universal access to basic education” (NYT 2014).

and the population burgeoned. The city came to rapidly host a diversity of individuals of a range of ethnic backgrounds seeking both refuge from conflict and the promise of financial opportunity. Far from state control, the area also came to host the region's rebellions and the war economies that fueled them.

Figure 3: Map of North Kivu, DRC (OCHA 2012)



Importantly, the region's recent 20 years of conflict, humanitarian crisis, and associated international attention erupted pointedly in 1994. Just across Congo's eastern border the Rwandan Genocide claimed the lives of nearly one million Tutsi and moderate Hutus within a hundred days. When Paul Kagame and his troops halted the genocide and the civil war in which it occurred, more than one million Hutus fled the country out of fear of retribution violence. The refugees – a mix of genocidal perpetrators and innocent individuals fearing for their lives – settled across national borders in Congo and Tanzania. While the dynamics of geo and cultural politics of the Rwandan Genocide and the Hutu flight into the DRC are important and complex, they extend well beyond the scope of this dissertation (see Adelman 1999; Pottier 2002; Umutesi 2004). Nonetheless, this refugee flight drew enormous humanitarian action into the region and with it, a complex set of cross border politics and ensuing rebel group formation.

In 1996 Goma became a “*siège de rébellion*” during the First Congo War (1996-1997). The Rwanda-supported *Alliance Démocratique des Forces pour la Libération du Congo-Zaïre* (ADLF) formed within the eastern region in part as an effort to eradicate the Hutu perpetrators now living in the eastern Congo. The ADLF benefited from a range of international support (and drew soldiers from Congo, Rwanda, Uganda, Burundi, and Tanzania), as states and their politicians encouraged the overthrow of Mobutu's state. Reasons for state involvement ranged from resource greed to the political desire to eradicate subversive rebel groups sheltering within Congo's loosely controlled eastern borders. In a joint effort led predominantly by Rwanda the ADLF captured Kinshasa and deposed Mobutu in May 1997, installing Laurent Kabila as president. That First Congo War was followed swiftly by the Second Congo War (1998-2002), where Rwandan and Ugandan forces again worked to topple the Congolese state. This time foreign fighters responded (in part) to frustrations concerning the Presidential order for their deportation. Through violent measures, the Rwandan-supported *Rassemblement Congolaise pour la Démocratie* (RCD-Goma) gained control of the area around Goma, and instilled a legacy of roadblocks, improvised borders, and looming brutality while growing the war economy and

increasing the potential of large financial returns for the region's residents. With the combination of such enormous distance from state control, a vibrant war economy, porous borders that allowed trade to easily pass, and the ensuing rush and settlement of humanitarian agencies in the post Rwandan Genocide era, Goma signaled a space of potential advantage and gain amidst ongoing conflict.

Over the past 100 years Goma had transformed from a tiny dot on a colonial map into a bustling, quintessentially borderland. Political scientists Koen Vlassenroot and Karen Büscher (2011) prefer to call the city a "frontier zone" as they lay out its current binary properties of simultaneous risk and opportunity. They write, "on the urban scale, war created not only humanitarian crisis and the proliferation of violence but it also generated economic and political opportunities that strengthened an affluent and powerful urban elite" ultimately rendering Goma as an ambiguous space and a laboratory for change (2011, 484). Through their frontier zone lens, Goma can be viewed as a place marked by trans-border mobility, financial opportunity, ambivalent safety and refuge, limited state control, and a host location for powerful exogenous actors – be they rebel groups, the United Nations, or an array of international humanitarians - who grapple for control of the space and populations. Ultimately, while Goma is certainly volatile, it is also a "*lieu d'opportunité*" (space of opportunity) for both endogenous and exogenous actors (Vlassenroot and Büscher 2011).

Today, due in part to this frontier, betwixt and between position and the opportunity offered therein, Goma has become simultaneously an epicenter of conflict and home to more than 400 local and international humanitarian organizations. These agencies largely have replaced the state and provide everything from food aid, to health care, education, sports facilities, and legal services. The impact that the density of these agencies has had on Goma is indeed unprecedented. The region has been turned into an "NGO supermarket" (Cooley and Ron 2002, 27) and what Cooley and Ron argues, is a scramble for contracts and donors that leads to heavy inter-agency competition. They argue that by the early 2000s Goma had become a "three ring circus of

financial self-interest, political abuse and incompetence’ where aid had become “big, big money” (2002, 26). Photographs of humanitarian need and aid-helped success are produced daily, and distributed both in country and abroad to draw donations. This money has come to fund not only relief and development efforts across the region, but has also contributed to the dollarization of the economy, the enormous rise in rents and humanitarian-tourist infrastructure (including but not limited to fancy hotels, resorts, and vehicle services), and an enormous growth in security infrastructure and agencies, “emerged almost exclusively oriented towards this humanitarian clientele” (Büscher and Vlassenroot 2010, 259). The economy remains booming; between the illicit war economy and the billions of dollars of regular aid contracts, Goma is thriving despite the rumors of astronomical levels of unemployment.

While international actors continue to use Goma as a base, the city thrives along the edges of the social and institutional borders. Dense motorcycle and pedestrian traffic circulates between the gritty interior of the city, the lake, and downtown with its roundabouts and burgeoning chic shops. *Tchukudus* – hulking wooden hybrids of a scooter and wheelbarrow – careen through 4x4 gridlock, driven by skilled, highly muscled drivers. Photo studios buzz with photographers running in and out to fulfill portrait and print jobs. Markets thrive with cheap Chinese products and food staples that speak to the region’s notoriety as the breadbasket of the Congo with produce that ranges from potatoes to pineapples, low to high altitude goods. And around the borders of the state and the high walls and project-sites that cordon-off the aid industry, working and middle class Congolese citizens craft their lives. They build their projects and dream of access to the opportunities and wealth poised at the intersection of conflict and the protracted residence of the region’s humanitarian circus.

A Quick Note On Terminology

Throughout this dissertation, I refer regularly to zones and populations through the messy binary of “local” / “Congolese” and “humanitarian.” In so doing, I borrow this distinction from the

region's discursive categories. On one hand expatriate humanitarians regularly refer to anyone who does not identifiably work within the aid industry as "*un Congolais*" – a Congolese person. The sweeping term arises from local social dynamics and carries with it significant political power. The longstanding politicization of "autochthony" – of being native to a place – in the eastern DRC has led to the prioritization of the national identity of "being Congolese" over more specific ethnic delineations. On the other hand, these same Congolese actors actively participate in the act of labeling. Just as they mark the *allothones* (outsider non-Congolese) as "other" (Jackson 2006; Geshière and Jackson 2006), they mark expatriates as *mzungus* (foreign, usually denoting whiteness), or as *les humanitaires* (humanitarians). The latter label acts to lump expats into an assumed association with the omnipresent humanitarian industry. However, this over-determined division of "Congolese": "Humanitarian" is not relegated only to discursive labels. It also reflects the infrastructural and social structuring of the region and of the individuals therein. As the chapters advance, I flesh out the nuances of these categories – addressing different relationships, roles, classes, genders, nationalities, ages, and interactions with the humanitarian industry.

TRAVERSING THE PHOTOGRAPHIC LANDSCAPE

I first began studying the photography that is created in the eastern DRC's frontier zone in 2009 for my master's research at the School of Oriental and African Studies. The utter density of humanitarian aid and the cliché genres of images that described the conflict and humanitarian crisis to Western viewers drew me to the region. Originally my work focused on the western-facing depictions that provided Congolese faces and bodies through which foreign audiences were expected to understand the region's epidemic of sexual violence. However, as I explored how these images were created, and how they became entangled with the politics of the region's humanitarian aid, I realized that there was far more going on in the tidy representations of sad-

looking women than met the eye. The photographs not only appeared to engage humanitarian principles and politics, but they also drew from and contributed to the tense social context that encompassed the photographers and their subjects. I understood that to fully understand the humanitarian images that were published in the West, I needed to look closely not only at those images, but at the broader assemblages of photography that are entangled with the region's scape.

Studies of humanitarian photography, like my early work, have commonly focused on the powerful western actors – the photographers, the agencies, and the audiences. Analyses of humanitarian photography created within the Global South have contributed powerful and important arguments concerning voyeurism, the inequality of the gaze, and the photographic ability to catalyze Western donation and political intervention (Sontag 1977; 2004; Benthall 1993; Hunt 2008; Moeller 1999; Campbell 2007; Linfield 2011; Twomey 2012). However, little is known about the “in the field” interactions and the local implications that these practices and pictures engage and instigate. Moreover, photographic subjects are rarely addressed as actors in their own right, and discussions of the local norms of popular photography and humanitarian depictions of the same populations inhabit different articles often in grossly different academic journals, as if a camera in the hands of an international aid worker bears no resemblance to that in the hands of a studio photographer. By training one's analytical lens solely on the photographic object and the powerful actors who created it, circulated it, and consumed it, one fails to recognize that photographs - even ones that show suffering - are products of interactions grounded firmly in, and responding to a common scape of local and global socio-political dynamics. Through the photographic landscape I attend to the messy entanglement of history, representation, power, politics, expectation, economies, and agency. My goal is to use the following chapters to address both local and global aspects of humanitarian photography in the highly photographed space of the eastern DRC. In a sense, I strive to decolonize an understanding of humanitarian photographs by addressing them in the very milieu in which they are created. To

do so, I address the various visual fields of the eastern DRC's photographic landscape – ranging from the local to the humanitarian.

In the eastern DRC photographs as well as the perspectives, expectations, and interactions that shape them are part of a complexly structured social landscape composed of soldiers, entrepreneurs, well-paid humanitarian expats, government officials, local photographers, security personnel, and the heterogeneous ethnicities and classes of the eastern Congolese residents. There is no singular analysis of a *mediascape* (Appadurai 1990), visual culture, or visual economy (Poole 1997) that can be applied to adequately address the simultaneously independent and interwoven visual social setting.⁵ In order to engage the variety of perspectives, spaces of photographic creation, and the different meanings made through various photographic engagements, I conceptualize the photographic landscape as fragmented into its simultaneously separate and interlocking visual fields, each with its own visual economy.

Drawing on a legacy of political economy Poole writes, “the word ‘economy’ suggests that the field of vision is organized in some systematic way. It also clearly suggests that this organization has as much to do with social relationships, inequality and power as with shared meanings and community” (1997, 8). Akin to her study of the photographs of the Andes, in this research I employ the concept of visual economy to study the “patterned production, circulation, consumption and possession of images” (ibid.), albeit within and across distinctive visual fields. While it is certainly possible to group the visual terrain differently, I have crafted categories – the “local,” “humanitarian,” “governmental,” and “journalistic” - that respond to the social zones in

⁵ Visual culture speaks too firmly to the singularity and shared-ness of a population, their ideas, and the material objects they make and use. Goma, with its dynamic, multi-ethnic populations born of immigration and displacement, and motivated by the threat of poverty and the illusive urban promise of economic gain is far from homogeneous. It is even less so, when one factors in the humanitarian presence, and figures – the soldiers, arms traders, rebel leaders - who populate the war economy that feeds the region. Meanwhile Appadurai's notion of *mediascape* (1990) is pertinent, but limited by its focus on the role of global media and the flows and impact that such items and ideas have upon a place, instead of understanding the relationship between local and global media as frictional, dialectic, and just as much top-down as it is bottom-up.

the region and the use value of the photograph. Use-value refers to the reason for which an image was photographed; it is its representational function (Poole 1997, 10). In order to engage each field, I look not only at the photographs that they produce, but perhaps more importantly at the interactions and subjectivities that come to construct the resulting material image.

To engage the photograph both as an object and as a process of creation, I am aided by Ariella Azoulay's (2012) conceptualization of the photograph as an *event*. For Azoulay the photograph is constructed by an "infinite set of encounters" between individuals, shaped by their broader social histories. She goes on to explain that these encounters contain multiple modalities. She draws on three: 1) The physical encounter that produces the image; 2) the encounter between the image object and its viewers; 3) the "hypothetical" encounter that occurs in relation to the belief about or in a photograph. The photograph is something real and also something conjured, something built of belief, desire, and imagination. Ultimately, by relying on the broadly encompassing notion of the photographic event, I am able to analytically pull different encounters forward for examination without losing the intimate and ever-on-going connections among them as I engage the agency, desire, intention, and expectation of the region's actors in relation to their particular image worlds.

Local, Humanitarian, Journalistic, and Governmental Visual Fields

On one side of the photographic landscape, the "local visual field" encompasses all genres of popular Congolese photography. Loosely defined, this field includes all aspects of the events of the construction, circulation, and consumption of the region's popular photography.⁶ Here I consider popular photography to be photographs created for personal Congolese consumption. For instance, these images might include studio portraits, wedding photographs, snapshots from a

⁶ Social media outlets, accessible through individual smartphones, have opened a newly international circulation of popular photography. The impact and politics of these particular circulations are important, and will be discussed where pertinent in this dissertation, though a more systematic study of this phenomenon is warranted.

trip to the lake, or graduation souvenirs. In general, these photographs are decidedly imaginative and are born of a highly interactive relationship between the photographer, the photographic subject, and the individuals around them. In the ethnic and social mix of Goma *et environs*, photography is nonetheless characterized by a common set of representational conventions, through which individuals experiment with identity, modernity, and imagination. Such photographs keep the up to 2,000 local Congolese photographers in Goma, and the thousands of image-makers that rove across the province employed. I explore the nuanced dynamics of this visual field in Chapter 2.

On the other side of the photographic landscape sits the humanitarian visual field. Humanitarian photography is “photography in the service of humanitarian initiatives across state boundaries” (Fehrenbach and Rodongo 2015, 1). It is a relatively recent category of photography, having come into existence in the 1990s. However, the history of what we now label humanitarian photography stretches back over a century. As part of the photographic landscape, the humanitarian visual field refers to the processes, consumption, and circulation of photographs that are intended for use within humanitarian agencies. Humanitarian agencies of all shapes, sizes, and missions produce images for a wide array of uses including reporting, accounting, marketing, sensitization and international fundraising. While many of these images are intended to flow across national borders and be exhibited elsewhere – on their globally visible webpages for instance - they are created and circulate within internal aid circuits in the eastern DRC. Importantly, as will be further discussed in Chapter 3, “humanitarian” is not strictly a term relegated to emergency relief, as it commonly is within the literature (Pandolfi 2003; Redfield et al. 2008; Fassin 2011). Rather, drawing from the Congolese discursive categorization, the term “humanitarian” refers relatively indiscriminately to a range of philanthropic businesses including classically humanitarian efforts such as emergency relief and food aid as well as development projects focused on good governance, education, and poverty reduction. Thus, “humanitarian photography” within this research reflects the broad category lines that the Congolese population

of North Kivu has drawn. Thus the humanitarian visual field here encompasses the images created by the “local partner agencies” (aid-speak for the Congolese run non-governmental organizations that compete for contracts from the international agencies) as well as those made by the international agencies and their professional photographer consultants or communications officers.

The other fields that shape the photographic landscape include governmental and journalistic photography. These visual fields are defined respectively as the images used for the political campaigns and propaganda, and photographs created and published by press personnel for use in journalistic outlets. Governmental photography and local photography share considerable similarities that are incorporated in discussions of local photographic norms in Chapter 2. For instance, the photograph of President Kabila, touching his presidential desk, or the image of President Mobutu descending through the clouds during his reign both reflect and have shaped the ways in which the Congolese figure themselves within popular photography. However, since I focus highly on the *process* of photography within this dissertation, the governmental photographs that are generally produced nearly 1000 miles away in Kinshasa fall outside of the scope of this work.⁷

Conversely, journalistic photography – photography created for the purpose of being published through national or international press outlets - holds a tenuous position in the region. It is a form of photography that is both highly regulated by the state, and often entangled within the region’s turbulent politics and conflict. Moreover, such images and image production are commonly confused with humanitarian work. Photojournalists often double as contract aid photographers in order to gain access to specific places, stories, and services across the country. In Chapter 1, I examine the field of journalistic photography to draw out the charged visual politics of the region and provide illustration of the tense, consequence-laden visual environment

⁷ Katryn Pye (2012) offers a rich description of how political billboards were employed to motivate political change in Kinshasa.

in which actors engage photography and interpret its meaning. Later in the dissertation I also bring discussions of journalistic photography to the fore as specific images and circumstances intersect expectations of local and humanitarian photography. While this visual field warrants its own research, as I engage the politics and social dynamics of a place beset by humanitarian aid and its 20 years of photography, I do my best to draw in journalistic and governmental photography as necessary.

Overlapping Visual Fields And The Dialectic Production Of Meaning

While on one hand I treat the visual fields as independent entities in order to understand their particular norms, power dynamics, internal histories, and representational forms, I also engage the spaces where they overlap (notably in Chapters 5 and 6). For instance, local and humanitarian visual fields most commonly overlap within the interactions between Congolese photographic subjects and humanitarian photographers. Photography poised at the intersection of local and humanitarian visual fields functions as a classic contact zone, where the photographic expectations, interactions, and the resulting image become microcosms of those relations and struggles that stem from the differential levels of access and power across the region's scape. Pratt writes, "contact zones are social spaces where cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power" (1991, 584). Exploring the overlapping spaces provides a means to engage the often-silent friction and politics that arise as photographic subjects and photographers conflictly grasp to harness the photograph's ability to speak and control the message it will later carry. However, the photograph resists domination (Azoulay 2012, 27). Due to its inherent ambiguity, the photograph's content and resulting message(s) that occur in sometimes playful, sometimes tense situations defy total control by any actor or organization.

ETHNOGRAPHIC NUTS, BOLTS, AND CAMERAS

This project draws from the research I undertook from August of 2013 to August of 2014 in Goma *et environs*. However, it is informed by my longer engagement with the region. From 2009 to the present, I have made six research trips to the eastern DRC. Each visit deepened my involvement with the area and engaged my often-overlapping roles as an anthropologist and as a photographer. I should note here that I have worked as a professional photographer since 2003 carrying out visual work that ranged from university communications photography to photojournalism across East Africa, and to documentary work for development agencies and commercial industries. My photographic background and my nearly 20 months of cumulative field research in the DRC critically shaped this project. During the last seven years of moving in and out of the DRC with my camera, I have gained experience, created contacts with aid agency and local photographers, made friends, worked photo gigs, and explored the different visual fields of photography across the region. Many notable encounters along the way came to inform both the analytical shape of the project and my methodological engagements. Here are a few succinct examples:

In 2011, I met the then United Nations head photographer Carlo Ontal, who added me to a dynamic, controversial photo-video project. Carlo then drove a filmmaker, his assistant, and me into Mai Mai rebel territory outside of Lubero, North Kivu. While that trip alone was remarkable, I was more impressed by the Hollywood-like studio that he constructed on an Italian missionary's porch and the portraits Carlo created that afternoon (see Graham 2016). Despite the war and the rebel control, the pictures were wildly popular. Everyone from the youth to the elderly, from glowing wives to child soldiers, and their commanders wanted to pose proudly for the camera.

During another stint of research, I had the experience of watching a humanitarian communications "expert" create a film of women who suffered from fistula - a terribly painful and life altering physical impediment often caused by difficult childbirth or an outrageously violent rape. This man, dressed in Hawaiian print shorts, sat behind the camera and trained it on

the woman who had been asked to talk about her experience. After about five minutes of her story, he looked at her translator and asked, “Can you tell her to put some more emotion into it? It is just not really coming through how bad this is. Can she cry?” In the end, he told me, “I’m not going to use her words just a long shot of her face should do.”

Through other sets of completely different experiences, I had the pleasure to engage versions of day-to-day life in and around Goma. For instance, from 2011 on I committed myself to learning the local version of Swahili.⁸ The Swahili in the eastern DRC is particular. The French taught in secondary schools punctuates and is adopted as the language is constantly creolized and reformed. However, as Johannes Fabian insightfully argues, the interlingual borrowing is not a “result of gaps in the lexicon of the borrowing language... borrowing may not be instrumental in this gap-filling sense, so much as poetic, stylistic or creative (1982, 11). While, the region’s Swahili is certainly understandable to those who speak the “Swahili Safi” (clean Swahili) of Tanzania, it has its differences: nouns are only partially conjugated, “h” is often left off of words, and so on. Through my language lessons in a small language school in the center of town, I met the Lununga family. Nearly every Sunday I would hike across town to a neighborhood just outside of Virunga market to help cook, and just hang out. I always had a camera on me and over the years, in their kitchen and sitting room, I would both initiate and be asked to create photographs of individuals and the family.

By the time I arrived in Goma in August 2013, in other words, I had an initial awareness of the various photographic fields and some of the complex interactions that they encompassed. Nonetheless, I needed far more research to understand their intricacies and how they reflected and, in turn, shaped the broader scape. To do so, I developed a set of methods that paired

⁸ Swahili in Goma is a distinctly urban, eastern Congolese version of the language. It is similar to what Fabian calls “Shaba Swahili,” but draws in specific urban slang and French, such that the spoken language is distinctive from the more rural versions that occur towards the Shaba region to the South East. Goma Swahili also is distinct from the more Tanzania-inspired version spoken in Bukavu, and the KiNande hybrid version of Swahili employed around Beni / Butembo.

interviews and participant observation with photographic engagements distinctly tailored to the region's social dynamics. To carry out those plans, I based myself in Goma but also chased the photograph and the photographic encounter across the broader province of North Kivu. To map a mosaic of the social contours and power dynamics across the photographic landscape, I drew from the history of the region and learned to open myself up to the opportunities that arose. Throughout this research, I adapted my methods to fit the circumstances and to allow me the chance to participate in projects and events as they arose. This interplay of methodological flexibility and structure reflects Corinne Kratz's notion of participant observation. She writes:

Participant observation is always a blend of the opportunistic and the systematic. It involves seizing the moment, going with the flow, following unexpected leads while at the same time balancing the vagaries of being open to changing research circumstances with systematic review of notes and other research material in order to identify the contours of social fields, patterns in cultural practice and social relations, and through analytical reflection to recognize gaps and areas that require further examination. (manuscript in progress)

Moreover, given the volatility of the region during much of my research, traveling alone throughout the outskirts of the province was unwise. Thus to move about outside of Goma, I often had to rely on humanitarians for their vehicles for access to their well-controlled project sites. Often I gained this access and transportation through Goma's tightly networked expatriate social scene. Usually, I had something to offer in exchange for each opportunity. Sometimes I provided company during a long road trip; sometimes I was a friend or a shooting buddy. Other times humanitarian agencies saw me as an easy, accessible way to obtain photographs at low to no cost. I rarely turned down opportunities but also balanced out the ethics. When agencies offered money, I accepted the nominal amount they would pay for photographic assignments and often less. While my camera did in many cases create an opening for me to access a situation, I only accepted to photograph for agencies or individuals when they also accepted that such photography came as part of my anthropological research. I made it as clear as possible that therefore all situations I would encounter along the way and the images I would take could be

potentially published later. From 2013-2014, I had the opportunity to photograph 15 distinct humanitarian projects, which addressed a range of issue, including: teen pregnancy skill building, sexual violence treatment centers, arts centers, the Goma prison, food distribution centers, child soldier and at-risk children programs, a basketball team geared to promote youth education, cattle training, hearing aid implementation, ex-sex worker skill building, military trials, police-run trainings, comedy skits, market construction, and hospital care. In the end, this set of programs traversed the full range of humanitarian aid in the region, where projects premised on saving lives mingle with skill and capacity building programs. As mentioned in the Note to the Reader, however, where possible I have changed the names of agencies and individuals to minimize the risk of causing harm.

Throughout, I ran interviews with international aid agencies' employees, local NGO staff, local photographers, journalists, researchers, and Congolese individuals who both were and were not beneficiaries of aid. The interviews contributed to defining how individuals experience the local and humanitarian visual fields and structure understandings of the image genres that occur therein. Throughout the year, I ran a total of more than 100 interviews. I interviewed representatives from more than 50 humanitarian agencies operating from Goma, I spoke with more than 20 local photographers, and well more than 30 Congolese individuals from the middle class, working class and displaced backgrounds. In addition to interviews, I conducted daily participant observation in a wide array of settings and with a range of individuals (including photographers, photographic subjects, beneficiaries, humanitarian staff, journalists, and members of the military) in Goma and in humanitarian project sites across North Kivu. Such interactions and observations provided data about how residents and humanitarians of the eastern DRC interact across local and humanitarian zones, especially in relation to photographic representation and expectation. The discussions I took part in and actions I witnessed exposed the frustrations, expectations, hopes, and suspicions concerning photography and the broader region's scape. These experiences fuelled further interaction and conversation in a variety of settings, ranging

from the streets of Goma to local photo studios, to humanitarian offices and project sites, to swanky expat bars, and internally displaced peoples (IDP) camps.

Ultimately, together with my camera, I gained access to the very photography I wished to study. This led to a situation in which in my research and in my social life, I straddled the fractional social zones of Goma, sometimes well, other times with significant awkwardness. My camera helped not only craft my identity as both a researcher and photographer, but also helped provide critical insight into this research. Interviews and participant observation in English, French and Swahili told me much about how local and humanitarian visual fields interact, shape and respond to the local and humanitarian politics in the region. However, these methods did not provide a complete understanding of the non-verbal actions and negotiations within the space of the photographic encounter in an area marked by protracted aid and conflict. To push this knowledge ever further, I employed my background as a photographer. Throughout this research, I used the camera as more than just a methodological tool to gather data. Rather, following in the footsteps of Sarah Pink's enthusiasm for visual engagement both in the field and as a means of experiential knowledge production, this ethnography engages photography as subject and method. My camera became "not only as a product of particular social and cultural environments but also as a force that encourages a shift in the ways of understanding and seeing" (2001, 12-13).

Within anthropology, photography was once valued for the knowledge it both produced and efficiently transported. However, over the last century, photography as method, and photography as epistemology lost both value within the discipline and prestige in contrast to the reign of the textual ethnographic account. At the turn of the 20th century, anthropological projects of cultural evolution, anthropometric and sui genesis, "salvage" ethnography, relied on the paradigms of photographic realism and documentary mimesis (Banks and Ruby 2011; Edwards and Morton 2012) to convey ethnographic knowledge in the form of visual data. Photographs were believed to carry "incontrovertible" documentary evidence of what Roland Barthes calls the photo's surface ability to both show "there-then" and "here-now-ness" (1977, 44).

However, as the discipline shifted its focus from the material, displayable objects and exotic people to more “invisible connections and abstract relations” including kinship or political structure, photography became incidental to the collection and display of data and knowledge (MacDougal 2009, 57). Further, the growing critique of photography as a “non-expert” means of engaging with the world, denigrated its position within the ethnographic tool-kit. The very body and experience of the fieldworker – and the associated single-author textual monograph – subsumed the need for photographic evidence (Grimshaw and Ravetz 2005, 5).

By the second half of the century, photography had become an anthropological aside. No longer seen to expose unquestionable evidence and knowledge, photographs instead fell to the position of being occasionally employed to create rapport with subjects, provoke in-depth interview data (photo-elicitation), and capturing fieldwork details (Collier and Collier 1986; Harper 2002). In post-production use, photographs came to occupy “merely ancillary [positions], illustrative rather than constitutive of anthropological knowledge” (Taylor 1998, 66), often as they were paired with text to establish claims to ethnographic legitimacy (Wolbert 2000; Morton 2005). While photography as an anthropological subject has received renewed ethnographic attention, (e.g. Vokes 2008; Campt 2012), the use of the camera to produce knowledge in the field remains a predominantly data-gathering exercise. Ultimately, the inter-subjective and dialogic aspect of photography has been obscured by the discipline’s reliance on photography’s perceived one-trick-pony ability to mechanically reproduce (Benjamin 1961) reliably “realistic” content in the field.

The methods I employed during this project strive to counter this trend. In a manner to show photography to be far more than ancillary to anthropological research, I used three main types of image research: “shadowing” photography, “direct” photography, and “co-creative portrait” photography. These forms of image production commonly overlapped, yet through their cumulative process, they allowed me to access local and humanitarian photography beyond its discourse. “Shadowing photography” became a form of in-depth participant observation.

Borrowing from Cristina Grasseni's methodology of "skilled vision" (2007), I shadowed active photographers, both local and humanitarian, to gain a nuanced understanding of how they saw their subjects and the broader context. Through attempts at mimicking the activities, camera angles, image inclusions, and interactions of communications officers in aid agencies or of local photographers in their shooting environments, I learned to see as if through their respective lenses. This created a form of embodied research, where the norms, dynamics, frictions, and politics of the visual fields became strikingly visible.

Moreover, "direct photography" became essential to accessing the local knowledge held at the very core of the both local and humanitarian visual fields. Due to my past as a photojournalist, I was asked by local individuals and international agencies to take photographs for them. Through direct photography, I photographed everything from casual portraits, fashion shows, weddings, birthday parties, to NGO activity images, advocacy and fundraising material. Especially concerning humanitarian photography, this form of photography situated me centrally to the production of "good" local and humanitarian photographs. As such, before photographing, I commonly would be briefed on what the plan was, what images were desired, and then would have the ability to photograph a given situation. Through my lens, I would pay in-depth attention to the interactions, constraints, and expectations embodied in the space of taking the images, the "play" before the camera, and the decisions I and the individuals and agencies played in image selection. When the individuals involved later reviewed the pictures, I also benefited from organizational and individual feedback, which further nuanced the dis/connections between policy and practice in both humanitarian and local photography.

An important addition to these methods was the "co-creation portraits." Such photographs engaged the anticipations of particular audiences (beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of aid) and helped to define the nuance of photographic practice in the region. After a short interview, I would ask subjects to determine the type of image they want to create. They would prepare, pose, and tell me where to photograph them. This method produced a loosely

systematic means to engage photographic desires and processes as I learned to “see” across the fields of the photographic landscape.

Taken together, the combination of traditional and not-so-traditional methods provided data about the mechanisms, policy, and practice (and the differences among them) that encompass how local and humanitarian actors navigate across the photographic landscape and the broader regional scape. The strength of these photographic and discursive methods came to be found in more than just the language used or the visual information included in the final image (both of which I engage in the following chapters). Rather, as I described above, around and through my lens and the lens of others, I gained access to the small interactions and implicit knowledge that surround the creation and the use of the photograph across the dynamic photographic landscape in the eastern DRC. My researcher-photographer position taught me how not just to examine the different fields and their politics, but also how to in fact see through the different lenses. By personally navigating across the visual fields of the photographic landscape, my methods and positionality enabled me to analyze Goma *et environs* as a scape marked by flexibility, mobility, and opportunity. And through my methods, I gained an understanding of the frantic, disjointed, and otherwise well-networked way in which the individual and institutional actors navigate each other in the frontier zone of Goma.

CONCLUSION

This dissertation employs the data, experiences, and knowledge produced through the above methods to chart the contours of the photographic landscape and the broader scape of the region’s borderland. By engaging the visual fields that respond to the eastern DRC’s particular social zones and the expectations shaped therein, I explore the connections between photography and social politics. To do so, I start with a chapter that details the volatility of Goma’s frontier zone and the photography that occurs there. By focusing on a particularly contested journalistic

photograph and the range of reactions and interpretations it provoked, I initiate an examination of the broader frontier zone and the ways in which meaning is made through photographs. From there, I overlay that busy, unstable space with analysis of the respective local and humanitarian visual fields before diving into the meaning and communication that occur as they overlap. Throughout, as I chart the photographic landscape I draw back to the region's complex scape, seeing the photographs, their interactions, desires, and the visual fields they shape as both constituted by and actively contributing to the volatile and opportunistic dynamics of the region.

CHAPTER ONE

A PHOTOGRAPHIC DISASTER

“OH YEAH, THE PICTURE THAT NEARLY GOT ME KILLED...”

Captain Zeb, a right-hand man of the well-beloved Colonel Mamadou of the Congolese Army (FARDC), sped into town from the frontline of the conflict. His truck rattled to a halt just outside of Deo’s Café in the center of the city. Lit on adrenaline and exhaustion he shook out a large swatch of blood stained camouflage-print cloth and exclaimed, “Look! It’s from a Rwandan!” He paraded around the outside patio a bit then theatrically confided, “I wish I could have taken the head, put it on the front of my car, and driven around town!” He paused and quickly added, “But someone would have taken pictures, and that would be bad. This will have to do!” He took the cloth, tied it to the antenna of his truck, and sped off. Those watching cheered him on in a rare show of public support for the FARDC. Their elation continued for a few days as the Congolese Army defeated the Rwandan-supported M23 (*Mouvement de 23 Mars*) rebel group at the battle of *Trois Antennes* just 10 km outside of Goma’s center.

At the time, Zeb’s simultaneous bluster and self-restraint came as no surprise. On one hand, his response reflected the fact that for the first time in a long time the FARDC was winning. On the other, his restraint referenced an incident that occurred a month earlier. After a successful bout of fighting in July, a single controversial photograph of the Congolese Army unleashed a wildfire of dangerous rumor and reaction. Within hours of the production of that particular July 16th image, Zeb watched the city of Goma riot, while he navigated rumors that his colonel had been court marshaled. The chaos-inspiring photograph belonged to Simone Schlindwein, a

German journalist. For her and the individuals of Goma, that one image retained significance well after its production and publication. It became such a powerful event that a year later she remembered the photograph by the reaction it caused. “Oh yeah,” she said during an interview, “that picture that almost got me killed...”

Simone’s photograph also became an influential introduction to my 2013 fieldwork. During the beginning of my time in Goma, it served as a fast-paced, pivotal event through which I began an exploration of the photographic landscape and the dynamics of the conflict and its key players. This photograph also allowed me to explore how a range of actors across Goma’s scape interpret images and produce meaning from the visual representation. In the following chapters, this dissertation focuses most prominently on the local and humanitarian visual fields. However, by exploring the myriad encounters that compose Simone’s fraught journalistic photograph, the networked regional politics, both related to photography and to the particular frontier zone began to be visible. By probing the perspectives and reactions surrounding this photograph, I was able to start raising questions about meaning, control, agency, and expectation across the photographic landscape.

CONFLICT AND PHOTOGRAPHY IN CONTEXT

I first heard about Simone and her photograph the day I arrived in Goma. I crossed the border with three suitcases filled to the brim with camera gear, a photo printer, and a year’s supply of paper and ink – not exactly the usual anthropology tool-kit. From the Goma-Gisenyi border, I made my usual ride over the predictably bad roads, past new construction and new coats of paint, down the 8km to Maji Matulivu. “Maji” – the Heal Africa (local NGO) guesthouse, is a rose-gardened, lush, lakeside space I had called home for part of nearly every summer since 2009. I had decided upon my arrival in Goma that Maji would work as a place for me to get my feet on the ground again, my head in the situation, and then move on to a central (in town), more “local”

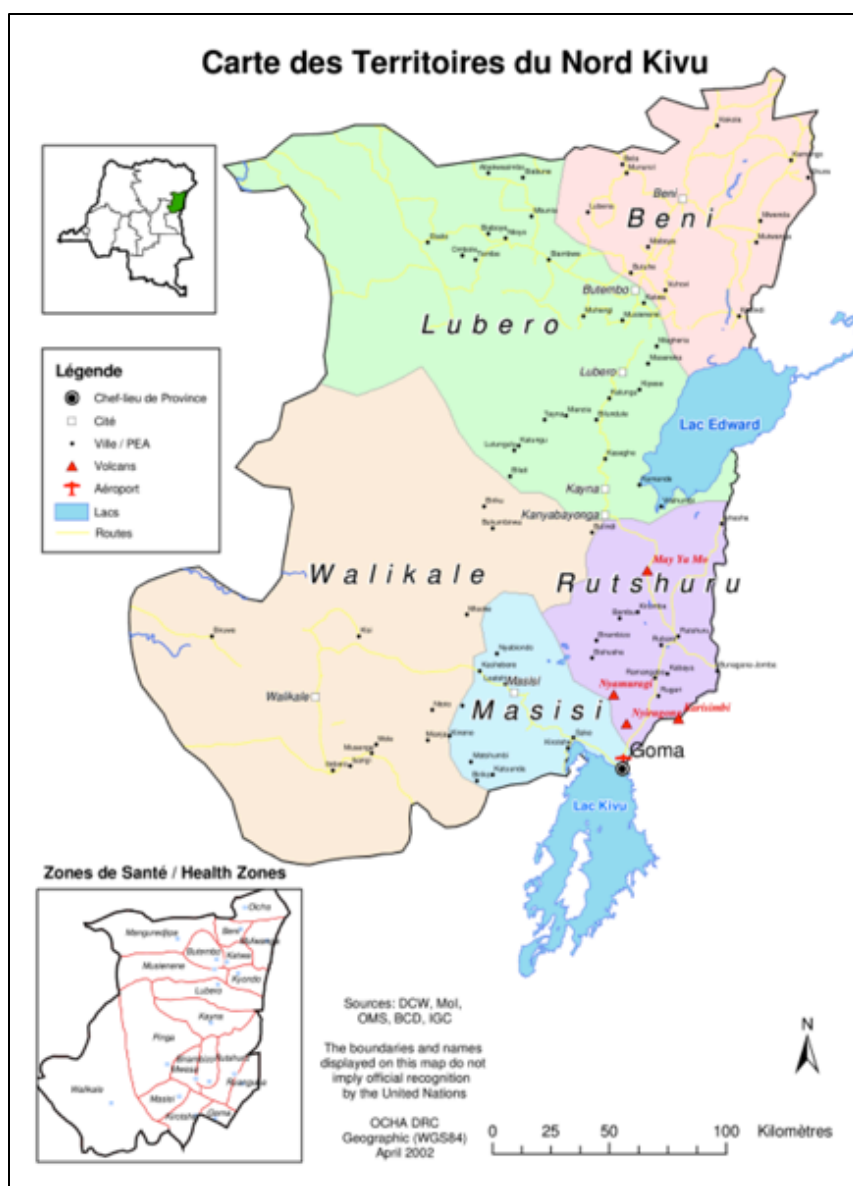
living situation. In the meantime, Maji enabled immediate connections with travelers, humanitarians, and other researchers.

That first day, I ran into Joseph Kay. He was at Maji looking for a place to live, exploring the rose gardens and the backside of the upstairs apartments where I was staying. Joseph would become a close friend, informant, and war correspondent, and later a program manager for a humanitarian agency during the time I spent in Goma from August 2013 - August 2014. But that day, he was just a British ex-pat I had met briefly at a local bar the year before. We settled onto the floor on the French balcony of the apartment and plunged into the current politics and violence, my research, and his photographs and aspirations while he chain-smoked himself clear through a pack of *Stellas*. Joseph had just started to take his photography seriously and had been investigating the M23 for a few months.

In short, the M23 came into existence on April 4, 2012, when 300 soldiers of the former rebel soldiers from the National Congress for the Defense of the People (CNDP 2006 – 2009) defected from the Congolese Army (the FARDC). CNDP members had received amnesty and incorporated into the FARDC in 2009. When they broke away from the Congolese army, other soldiers and new recruits from the hills of Masisi and across the Rwandan border joined, shaping the M23. By the time I arrived in Goma in August 2013 the M23 had successfully established a secure territorial holding and amassed between 1500 and 2000 soldiers, who together composed a formidable fighting unit and political structure, successfully preying on the FARDC's organizational weakness. Funded and equipped in part by Rwanda, the M23 notably dragged potential regional instability with it to the front lines. As the group solidified control over the territory around Rutshuru, around 40 kilometers (about 2.5 hours drive) north of Goma by road, the M23 built "*La République des Volcans*." They levied taxes, provided receipts, operated roadblocks and checkpoints through which foot, vehicle and aid agency traffic was required to cross. At the height of their campaign, The M23 sacked Goma in November 2012, only to retreat in exchange for political legitimacy on the international level two weeks later. When peace talks

in Kampala broke down in mid-2013, they returned to the offensive, again gaining territory towards Goma and eventually bombarding the town from the nearby hills between August 21st and 31st 2013. The various attacks between April 2012 and November 2013 led to the displacement of approximately half a million individuals (IRIN 2013a) from the Nyiragongo, Masisi and Rutshuru regions, and heightened tensions on both sides of the Congo-Rwanda border (See Figure 4).

Figure 4: Map of the Territories of North Kivu, DRC (OCHA 2002)



Joseph, like many journalists at the time, had spent time in the M23 territory. The rebel group's boundaries were porous both for the people coming in and out of their territory and for the journalists who helped make them legible on the international stage. On that balcony at Maji, he clicked through his images on the small screen of his little busted up Nikon D70. The images captured the region's various *manifestations* (the local term for what amounts to a normalized mix of riot, demonstration, and protest),⁹ the troops, and his attempts at artfully photographing dead bodies. As he explained his pictures, he also expounded on the M23 situation up North. I was interested in his photos and had innumerable questions about his intentions, his subjects' reactions to his photography, and his early attempts at composition. He argued that he didn't do "aesthetics" but just took the photos that were. Then he cut me off midway through a follow-up question and rerouted the conversation away from his images. "Oh this is totally up your alley" he asserted, "have you heard about what happened with Simone?" My field notes relay my need for more information on the subject, but I got the gist of what he was saying:

Simone- Journalist. She was based in Goma and according to Joseph "shot hard," taking the picture of the FARDC soldiers who, for the camera, destroyed and played with the body of an M23 soldier. She was chased out of the region, and the tensions between FARDC and M23 escalated. She also immediately tweeted the photo after taking it, without context or foresight on how it will be interpreted. (Fieldnotes August 16, 2013)

Later that day after Joseph headed back to town, I tracked down Simone's fated photograph on her twitter feed (Figure 5).

⁹ In the eastern DRC protests that often incorporate violence are referred to as *manifestations* in both Congolese Swahili and French. These common events are neither full out riots, nor particularly organized protests. Instead, they are an energy – a solid combination of the definitions of protest, riot, and demonstration – where thousands take to the streets and make their dissent known.



[Figure 5: Photograph by Simone Schindwein (July 16, 2013)]

The image contains two Congolese police, two FARDC soldiers, and a partially featured civilian standing around a soldier's dead body. One soldier pushes a spent artillery shell into the crotch of a barefoot dead soldier. The soldier with the shell in his hand looks up from the body to gaze at Simone or her camera, the bandolier-wrapped, well-armed policeman to his left does the same. The other soldier looks at the body; the second policeman appears to look up towards the photographer, as does the civilian though a clear view of their faces is obstructed. The male body lies in the bottom of the photograph, with the man's face positioned away from the camera, his abdomen is exposed, his pants ride low, and his arms lay above his head. Visible in the photograph is another exploded artillery shell casing, a few wooden buildings with white writing on them in the background, and the general context of the tidy, open space – a town square? A schoolyard? The middle of a road?

NEW AND TENUOUS ALLIANCES IN GOMA'S "WARSCAPE"

This photograph retained a surprising amount of resonance as during my first week back in Goma the conflict escalated. Between August 20 and 27, the M23 successfully bombed Goma, targeting areas such as Mamadou's house, the airport, and Ndosho – a densely populated suburb of the city. At that time, Goma bristled (far more than usual) with amped up soldiers. In the low-level adrenaline that infused the town I took to circulating the city and visiting friends when possible, and otherwise hunkering down at Deo's Café –the small coffee shop with tables near the street that sits on the heavily trafficked main drag from the border. Its location and the fact that it was the only good coffee in the center of town at the time meant that Deo's drew a mixed Congolese and expatriate crowd. Business people, trendy local servers, local and international NGO workers, journalists, researchers, fixers,¹⁰ and army commanders frequented the cafe. Their "technicals" - machine gun mounted trucks - and their troops waited for them just beyond the patio. As I sat there, drinking myself jittery on coffee or sharing afternoon beer, I caught up on the recent politics, the current conflict, and the role of photography and journalism in the current milieu. Therein, the "case of Simone" became unavoidable.

As *manifestations* and bombings of the city and outlying areas intensified, aid agencies confined their foreign employees to working from, and sleeping in houses near the border or simply evacuated them to Rwanda. In part, the action of pulling humanitarians away from the conflict, while journalists surged towards it speaks to the normalized roles of these actors and the zones in which they work. This photograph directly concerned the journalists and the researchers

¹⁰ Fixers are an interesting cast of characters. These are the in-between men (they usually – at least in Goma, are male). They act as cultural brokers between English or French speaking westerners (often journalists, researchers) and the Congolese. To be a successful fixer in Goma means that one needs not only have fluent language skills, great working relations with military commanders (both governmental and rebel), and a solid understanding of the social and political milieu, but also a clear understanding of Western and Congolese cultures.

who had to independently navigate Goma *et environs*, and who did not have security officers to help determine the levels of security or the spaces they could access. It also meant that hundreds of international aid workers in the city barely feature in the following ethnographic episode. While I am certain that aid workers were indeed at points involved in discussions concerning Simone's photograph, it never arose in my conversations with them. Their photography, as will be discussed from chapter 3 onwards, moves differently through the scape. However, focusing on this poignant and volatile photographic moment, and not limiting myself to only interactions around humanitarians and their photography, enabled me to access the connections between many of the scape's actors, the hot issue politics that underlay a particular form of journalistic photography, and the tension entangled in the various ways of making meaning from (and attempts to control the meaning of) a photograph.

The context of this period of the M23 conflict was one laden with anticipation and stress. A brand new United Nations aggressive force – the Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) had just joined forces with the weak and notoriously abusive national army. The FIB provided an armed wing of the UN with the ability to attack and to lead on a battlefield; it broke with the standard vision of peacekeepers whose mandate allowed them only to fire when fired upon and play a backup role in protection. The FIB bolstered the UN's prominent operation. At the time MONUSCO, the UN Stabilization operation in Congo, was the largest UN peacekeeping operation in the world.¹¹ In July 2013, the FIB had enlarged that mission, committing to an active

¹¹The United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). With a "troop ceiling" of 19,815 peacekeepers in the country since 1999, the expectations in 2013 were high for MONUSCO to both protect civilians and keep the powerful rebel group at bay by supporting the State and their army to maintain their ground. However, this idealized support for the FARDC is a utopian version of the on-the-ground situation. Researcher Christoph Vogel sums it up nicely, arguing that MONUSCO has acquired this reputation for "blurring lines between military and humanitarian activity, and for an appalling record in protecting the civilian population – one of its two major aims. ... [the other being to] help restore state authority, which requires engaging with politicians and public servants with sometimes dubious motives and propping up an army notorious for human rights abuses" (The Guardian, Aug. 30, 2013).

combat mission – to “neutralize and disarm Congolese Rebels” (UN 2013). With three infantry battalions, special artillery forces, and reconnaissance units whose ranks were filled by some of Tanzania's, South Africa's, and Guinea's finest, the FIB was well poised to end the M23 conflict. However, the pairing of the FIB with the FARDC created an obvious risk.

The FARDC has a dubious record at best in the country. Both nationally and internationally, the FARDC has through repeated instances earned their record of corruption, disorganization, and perpetration of insecurity and sexual violence. Commonly underpaid and poorly trained, the FARDC has its auspicious origins in Mobutu's fear of his army. He ruled them through a form of Article 15 – *Se Débrouillez Vous* (just get by). While this politically supported neglect of various sectors (police, army, and much of the Kivus in general), for the FARDC this translated to Mobutu's famous statement to his army: “You have guns; you don't need a salary” (Stearns 2011, 116). Thus, the combination of the new FIB and the FARDC produced a historical and perilous situation for the UN: peace through active aggression. Critically, the very moment that Simone created and published her image followed the agreement between both the FARDC and the UN to stake their reputations and mutual good faith on this aggressive joint venture in rebel eradication. Simone's photograph and its fallout unintentionally came to expose the precarious nature of this allegiance and the volatile dynamics set within Goma's urban scape.

The events unfolding at that time in Goma consisted of a set of circumstances and battles in a long chain of pocketed conflict in the eastern DRC. While international media commonly depicts the eastern DRC as a place of omnipresent conflict, in 2013 more than 40 rebel groups operated in sometimes overlapping but often-noncontiguous spatial and temporal zones (IRIN 2013c). On the map, often hundreds of kilometers separated these groups. Temporally they were not all simultaneously “hot”; many would lay low for months at a time before conflicts would flare in distinct spaces. In part, such spikes in conflict would both be determined by and reflect which group the FARDC would target. At the time of my fieldwork three rebel groups dominated in-town conversations and media headlines: 1) the M23, whose forces controlled the area from

just North of Goma up to Rutshuru; 2) the ADF (Allied Democratic Forces) a former Ugandan rebel group that resided in the bush outside of Beni; and 3) the FDLR (The Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda) a diffuse Rwandan Hutu-led group originally reconstituted in the DRC after the Rwandan Genocide.¹²

The immediate effects of each rebel group's movements and territorial claims—massacres, rapes, displacement, forced labor, and forced and voluntary recruitment - often occurred within spaces outside of the state's control. Nonetheless, civilians did their best to carry on normal lives as they moved in and out of the highly porous borders of such pocketed conflict spaces. Such movement was always strategic and undertaken with a clear awareness of the variety in the degrees of their risk and potential gain (Vlassenroot and Büscher 2009, Stearns et al. 2013). Each group's actions and very existence in the region both reflected and impacted the eastern DRC's socio-political context. The activities of these groups influenced population movements and settlements, trade routes, economies and economic strategies, patterns of humanitarian aid, and national and international politics. As such, while I examine this area through the lens of the photographic landscape, the region also fits the description of what Carolyn Nordstrom refers to as a "warscape" (1997). Also leaning on Appadurai, she argues that the war draws on global flows and processes as it alters notions of space and place. War (or in this case conflict) brings a large portion of the population into its scope though not only violence but also through the inter-related networks of support, movement, meaning, and economics. In Goma particularly, the presence of war tends to bring with it a certain insecurity that residents, international actors, soldiers, and aid workers skillfully navigate on a daily basis like all of those who live, operate, and move through the area. To quote Nordstrom:

¹² Other major rebel groups included the Mai Mai (Pareco, Sheka, KiFufua – who were originally formed as local defense units against rebel groups like the FDLR and have now taken on their own mandates and causes beyond civilian protection), and the Raia Mutomboko (the "angry citizens" – who pledged to fight the FDLR for the ravages that group caused to their communities).

Foreign strategists, arms, supplies, soldiers, mercenaries, power brokers, and development and interest groups move into a country. Guerrillas and soldiers travel to other countries for training and strategic planning. Refugees and displaced people flow across borders [and importantly, I add between spaces in that country]. An international cast of businesspeople and black marketeers provides goods and profit from the upheavals of conflict. As these many groups act and interact, local and transnational concerns are enmeshed in the cultural construction of conflict that is continually reconfigured across time and space (1997, 37).

In Goma's warscape Congolese citizens, humanitarian actors, the United Nations players, journalists, photographers, researchers, traders, businessmen of all shades of the market, armies and soldiers mix – creating a jungle of interconnected politics, economics, knowledge, and social connections that have both consequence and advantage. This network and the financial opportunities it provides sits atop more than a century of neglect and non-state-driven economic growth. The last 20 years of war and ongoing conflicts strengthened the bonds that tie the various actors, industries, and economies together. The push and pull of opportunity and volatility came to craft a population now habituated to balancing on a knife's edge, and navigating the risks and opportunities that present themselves.

Hung in a tenuous balance between these conflicts, and far from the control of the state, Goma has become a place of both refuge and opportunity. Karen Büscher (2012), has studied the urbanization of the city and argues that since the 1990s, Goma has transformed from a small, dormant town to one brimming with the potential held by economic, political, and military opportunities. The town grew from just 10,353 residents in 1958 to 172,573 in 1993, jumping to an estimated 600,00 in 2007 (Büscher and Vlassenroot 2009, 267) while today rumors place the city's inhabitants at approximately a million individuals. Within this booming, unofficially organized *urbanization sauvage* (wild urbanization) individuals navigate their risks and opportunities, largely in the absence of a state but not in the absence of powerful actors. The state,

whose government is based in Kinshasa, is simultaneously present and not present in Goma.¹³ Its bureaucratic function, especially that of organizing tax collection and paperwork is outstandingly present. However, it is also highly deficient, unable and often unwilling to provide protection and basic services to its population. Citing Mbembe (2001), Büscher notes, “State power is there, but seemingly largely for privatized accumulation” (2010, 485). In this “zone of limited statehood,” she argues that wealthy businessmen, armed groups, and other non-state actors including NGOs, and the United Nations agencies have come to provide security, regulation, economic opportunities, and services. Together they form “hybrid institutional arrangements [...] that are extremely flexible, fluid, and unstable” (ibid.). The alliance between the UN-FIB and the FARDC is one such example.

Big men, often Tutsi elites who have gained and retained their power and land titles through strategic alliances with major cross-border (e.g. Rwanda) and national actors during the past 20 years, wage significant control over the city’s economy and structure (Büscher 2012). Nevertheless, the volatility and the promise of economic opportunity also have an apparent impact on Goma’s working class and middle-class residents. The connection to the growing economy built upon the conflicts, the humanitarian industry, and the mineral trade has brought migrants looking both for security and opportunity from both within the country and from across its porous borders. Goma (DRC) and Gisenyi (Rwanda) sit like Siamese twins facing Lake Kivu, separated only by a physical border delineated by a few loosely dug trenches, fences, and roads. Each day hundreds of Congolese cross into Rwanda and similar numbers of Rwandans cross into Congo to pursue educational and business goals. Meanwhile violently displaced and intentionally migrating individuals came to the city looking for benefit from the ever-growing formal and

¹³ As a crow flies the distance from Kinshasa to Goma is 977 miles. Using the roads, which first presume that they are indeed intact and drivable, the distance becomes 1664.56 miles, and may take up to a week to traverse. Due to the decrepit road infrastructure and dangers of traveling through much of the interior of the country, the Congo river provides a route between Kisangani and Kinshasa, which may take anywhere from a few days to a few weeks to complete.

informal economy. Both the working and middle-class population benefit as they hustle, sell, trade, and provide services within the center city and the bustling poorer parts of the urban scape like Bierere and Ndosho. Such a situation provides both ample opportunity for gain, but also increases the volatility of the region.

In this context, Simone's photograph came to expose the fragility of these social and economic connections; it made visible the dynamics at play across the broader urban scape and the photographic landscape. For instance in the weeks following the publication of her image, it fed a rolling dialog about the role of a photograph as evidence, the subjective engagement of a photographer and photographic subject in creating a photograph, and the potential to control the picture's message. This chapter tracks and theorizes these three debates, raising questions about the relationships between Goma's borderland space, the conflict, and the photography produced there.

THE SIMONE CASE

Simone Schlindwein shot the notorious photograph with her Blackberry cell phone on July 16, 2013. This particular photo became what I called in my field notes, "The Simone Case." Naming the situation after the photographer reflects the curious aspect of this image: that the vast majority of the talk around this one photograph came to revolve as much around its content as around the photographer who created it - Simone. Even now the confirmable facts about the photo are few. However, it is certain that when she took the photograph, Simone, a 33-year old German journalist was working for *Die Tageszeitung*, a news source based out of Berlin. Simone had lived in the DRC for a year and a half and had been working on an investigative journalism piece about the FDLR. She also was one of a small band of independent journalists who did not require the government or UN support to get to the "front" - the front lines of the conflict. Rather, she

managed access through her friendship with Col. Mamadou and his crew.¹⁴ According to Simone and other journalists in Goma at the time, her relationship was such that Mamadou would call her of his accord to show her things – notably victories and other compelling news. On July 16th, 2013, Simone rode with Mamadou to the frontlines of the conflict with the M23. That day as the FARDC soldiers celebrated a gain of 4km of territory, she composed the photograph that came to threaten her security and that brought the politics of photography crashing into lives of the Congolese, the UN, the FARDC, as well as international journalists and international researchers.

Simone's photograph became a flashpoint for conversation; the image itself and a quick description of its contents had gone viral in and around Goma. The speed and reach of this photographic circulation is attributable in part to the fact that Simone published the image on her *Twitter* feed, as opposed to through the more traditional news outlets. While her regular investigative journalistic reports sported well-verified accounts and balanced data, social media publications in a sense “traded speed for accuracy” (Newman 2009). That is not to say that the image was inaccurate, but rather that it circulated the Internet and the mobile phones of the city's residents with only 140 characters to contextualize the visual. Her twitter caption read: “16 Jul 2013#FARDC soldiers playing around with dead #M23 bodies on the frontline. is this acc to the code of conduct?” [sic].

Within 24 hours, it had traversed the nation and international borders to reach the computer screens of Martin Kobler (Special Representative for the UN's Organization Stabilization Mission) and Ban Ki-Moon (Secretary General of the United Nations). The image

¹⁴ In a dramatic and seriously unfortunate turn of events, after the success with the M23 around Goma, Mamadou's battalion stayed together – moving North to Beni to lead the offensive against the next UN supported target – the ADF NALU. On Jan. 2 2014, on the road from the airport, Mamadou's technical was hit by a rocket launched from somewhere in the woods. The car continued a little ways, while the car carrying some of his men, Joseph, and another journalist took gunfire but was able to return towards the airport. Mamadou was killed in the first rocket attack. “Congo always kills its heroes,” a friend said to me in sadness. The short-lived era of unfaltering support for Col. Mamadou and his men was destroyed with the rocket – the man, the legend himself was dead, and his group was splintered by assumptions of treason, theft, and insanity.

reached individuals ranging from working and middle-class citizens of Goma, to expat researchers and journalists, all the way up the hierarchy to the Press Secretary and General of the Army. Through their perspectives and reactions, Simone's photograph was mapped back into the volatile dynamics set within Goma's urban scape. The debate that the image sparked among the various stakeholders, revolved around three axes 1) the "evidentiary" power of the photographer 2) the role of subject and photographer in crafting the image, and 3) the need to control the message.

This photograph came to expose not only the incredible weight that the message of a single image can ferry. It also exposed the dire, sometimes-desperate lengths that particular actors in the eastern DRC were willing to go to in the attempt to control its message. Moreover, this case draws out the various frames individuals engaged as they read the image. The reactions and interpretations of the material image drew on irreconcilable notions of photographs as both objective proof and as subjective creation. Media critic Susan Sontag flatly argues that, "Everyone is a literalist when it comes to photographs" and that the job of most photos is "not to evoke but to show... that is why photographs, unlike handmade images, can count as evidence" (2004, 47). This particular still image's instability provides both a case of image-as-evidence and a counterpoint. Its capacity to be forever coded and recoded (Pinney and Peterson 2003, 11) between reads of objective proof and subjective creation exposes the power of photographic ambiguity (Berger 1973) as individuals across Goma's scape grappled to understand and shape the photographic meaning.

AN ENTANGLEMENT OF LITERALIST REACTIONS

The first major debate surrounding Simone's photograph, and the controversy which caused the UN to become involved, dealt with the content of the photo and the role of the image as a means of evidence. Read through a literalist "evidentiary" lens, Simone's image content presented a

representation that neither the FARDC nor the UN would take kindly. The content of her photo clearly identifies it as a journalistic photograph, as a “war”-time photo, featuring multiple sides of a conflict. Simone’s photograph opens up certain typical narratives of men, weapons, death, victory, and human rights abuses. The image’s content shows the desecration of a corpse as well as distinctive military symbols and indexes – the camouflage, uniforms, and weapons - in the image, she clearly indexes the potential war crime embodied in its content.

In the entanglement of text and image Simone harkens the broader legal structures to frame the action. Particularly, she calls forth article 16 in the second paragraph of the 1949 Geneva Convention IV. It states, “As far as military considerations allow, each party to the conflict shall facilitate the steps taken ... to protect [the dead] against ... ill-treatment.” The International Criminal Court corroborates this rule: “Pursuant to Article 8(2)(b)(xxi) and (c)(ii) of the 1998 ICC Statute, “committing outrages upon personal dignity constitutes a war crime in both international and non-international armed conflicts” (ICRC 2016). Therefore, it is easy to imagine that the action featured would violate these standards and call for legal action. In response to this photograph-as-evidence and the questions her caption raised, the UN reacted, the FARDC conducted a photographic lock-down, Goma rioted, and the rocket-shell holding photographic subject found himself in a military tribunal staring down the barrel of a sentence of up to 20 years or even death.

For the United Nations, a powerful stakeholder in this space, this photograph carried enormous implications. Just as the UN’s FIB was preparing its initial forays in “aggression for peace,” France24 picked Simone’s photograph from her Twitter feed and republished it under the declarative headline, “Congolese soldiers desecrate rebel corpses” (France24 2013). The image and its outcry quickly then began reaching more than just social media viewers. Within hours, FIB and elite UN officials had swung fully into damage control mode, and had submitted press statements addressing the photograph that clearly showed that they “do not condone this action.” Ban Ki-Moon, secretary-general of the United Nations became involved and declared that he was

profoundly preoccupied with the allegations of desecration of enemy combatants. Of his position the UN wrote:

The Secretary-General is deeply concerned about reports of alleged mistreatment of M23 detainees and desecration of corpses of M23 combatants by the Congolese armed forces. The United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) has raised this matter at the highest level with the FARDC and welcomes steps by the Congolese army to investigate these claims and to hold the perpetrators of these acts accountable. In line with the United Nations Human Rights Due Diligence Policy, MONUSCO has launched the process of reviewing its support to FARDC units suspected of being involved in these incidents. (United Nations Secretary General 2013, 1)

While the UN put pressure on the FARDC to sort out what happened and account for the abuse, the image gained purchase within the hands of the M23.

On the second day that I was in Goma, I headed out to look for Jack. Before arriving in Goma, members of my existing social network in Goma put me in touch with Jack. I had been told that he was a researcher involved in a significant number of projects and who had and was willing to share ample knowledge of the current situation. I arrived at his door, but he wasn't home; the reception at his door was chilly. His humanitarian roommate excused herself while his other roommate, Cynthia, welcomed me in under the condition that she could continue to write her report while we talked. Cynthia was a professional researcher, and like Joseph when I mentioned my research she immediately brought up Simone. In the brief pauses between typing, she explained that the M23 was enjoying the FARDC's bad press: "Yeah, the picture of the M23 being mutilated by the FARDC, everyone knows about this – Simone was evacuated by MONUSCO and is not welcome back. Moreover, the M23 was delighted about the photo ... it lends them credibility while the FARDC was furious... The picture is good propaganda for them [M23]... Their propaganda team has always been better than ours... Have you talked to their propaganda guy yet?..."

I never did manage to schedule a meeting with the press commander of the M23. However, what became apparent from Cynthia's observations and the UN's reaction was that the

photograph provided ample evidence – proof – of a situation. One statement Simone’s photograph carried revolved around the failure of the FARDC to uphold the international rules of war, causing the fragile alliance between the UN and the FARDC to waver, while the rebel group employed the image to gain legitimacy by exploiting the image as proof of FARDC’s loss of credibility. Unsurprisingly, the UN and the FARDC had damage control to do both within the conflict and across the broader warscape. Simone herself explained the repercussions:

MONUSCO realized in that moment that they were part of the propaganda show – all their things with being neutral were not neutral anymore... this was the first time they tried it (the FIB), it was very controversial, and pitched it to the security council as “peacekeeping.” It was Martin Kobler’s thing, and the FIB launch was happening on the same week as the picture (opening week in Kin). He (Kobler) knew me before as a journalist. Now he saw me as a German journalist creating so much a problem of his first day of the new aggressive mandate for UN in Congo- personalized MONUSCO – Martin is MONUSCO – he was trying the open door policy for the population, confronting the enemy; trying to do something really new – the FIB. ... Doing something new after 20 years of failing. The UN said, fine we’re fighting a new war in our image campaign. We do that and that we are corrected. The first step of being aggressive and they started by failing like that (as shown in the picture). It was a very historical point. Suddenly the Congolese war became a media war – with implications worldwide and on the ground. That picture was the zero moment – everyone on the ground realized that we need to fight that in the media not the ground – that ground (that was gained and over which the individuals in her picture were celebrating) was only 4km of nothing. (Interview Oct. 31, 2014)

With MONUSCO trying to save face, and downplay their connection to the FARDC, within hours, the image inspired chaos. Within the army, it quickly reached the desks of the FARDC press secretary Amouli and army general Olinde. In Goma itself, rumors from Congo’s famous *radio trottoir* - its sidewalk radio that is known for spreading news and speculation - spread like wildfire. Due to the UN’s angry reaction, the accusations on the streets warranted that well-loved Col. Mamadou had been court-marshaled in regards to his association with the act caught in the photograph and his role in bringing journalists to the front. The volatility of the region soon exposed itself as the city exploded into a series of *manifestations* that burned tires, stoned UN vehicles, and filled the streets with angry citizens concerned about their colonel and angry at the attempts at outside control over the area.

Moreover, the image as hard evidence of FARDC abuse impacted the average working class citizen of Goma. Some took to the streets in protest, while others speculated quietly about the image, connecting the abuse featured to the longer history of instability and violence at the hands of the Congolese army. For instance, in a group discussion with a handful of young Congolese adults, some involved in teaching and following language classes, some in collaborating in the running of a struggling local NGO for vulnerable youth, gathered in a school in the center of town during the August bombings. Within the safe space, the Simone situation came up. Behind a door padlocked from the inside, individuals quietly voiced their opinions. Jean spoke up first. “*C’est une haine à faire ça – on enterre les corps C’est TOUT! On ne les mutilait pas – on ne les touche pas, même si c’est l’ennemie. C’est détestable ce que l’homme a fait!*” (It’s a disgraceful thing to do that – you bury bodies. That’s ALL! One does not mutilate them. One does not touch them – even if they are the enemy. It is detestable what that man there had done (referring to the man holding the artillery shell in the image.) Jolie chimed in, whispering, “You know, now when the men [FARDC] catch the enemy – they kill them. If the prisoners arrive in Goma, they might be OK, but the others, they torture those M23, then they kill them. It is terrible.” Both Jolie’s and Jean’s remarks corroborated that the content of the image acted as (one more example of) proof of FARDC abuses. For them, Simone’s work was an unquestioned act of proper photojournalism, and their focus and outrage trained on the visual evidence of the desecration denoted in the image.

Such an objective – content-centric - read of the picture was not surprising. Press photographs are expected to capture a “decisive moment” (Cartier-Bresson 1952). The decisive moment is a concept cited as central to the most compelling journalistic photographs. Cartier-Bresson defines it as “the creative fraction of the second when you are taking a picture. Your eye must see a composition or an expression that life itself offers you, and you must know with intuition when to click the camera. That is the moment the photographer is creative” (1957 in

Bernstein 2012, 1). Cartier-Bresson's "decisive moment" equally accounts for the power of the "found" image. His phrase, the "expression that life itself offers you" indicates that the moment and therefore the photographic content were naturally occurring. Found. Candid.

Within the photographic landscape of the eastern DRC, the notion of an evidentiary photograph speaks to one common read of the image – where the photograph is treated to be unquestionable proof. The photograph becomes proof of both the event captured and proof of the person shown therein. However, proof is often questionable at best and presupposes particular ethics within the creation of the classically "found" image. For instance, the leading points of the *National Press Photographer Association's* code of ethics note that a photographer must "1) Be accurate and comprehensive in the representation of subjects and 2) Resist being manipulated by staged opportunities" (NPPA 2015). These ethical points and "how to" advice reinforce the notion that the journalistic image should be natural and as close-as-possible to "objectively" representative. With Simone as a journalist and her photograph squarely classed within the journalistic visual field, her photograph carried the expectation that it would be read objectively. However, this was not the only interpretation.

THE SUBJECTIVE CRITIQUE

A Photographer Who Should Have Known Better?

Johnny, a Congolese journalist who knew Simone well, was an expert at managing the borders of a photographic field – able to safely navigate between his job for an international press agency and the politics of the local situation in which he lived. One day in September, he pulled over as I was walking home from the center of town. While giving me an unexpected lift, he explained the photographic line he walks concerning what he saw as Simone's errors. "You have to be prudent if you want to keep living here. People here know me. I have worked here for a long time, and my life and family are in this city. If I want to keep being able to do my job for the press, I have to be

smart and think about the future when I take images. They have to be journalistic – documentary – *the things that you find*” [emphasis his]. Then he tracked back to the subjective problem of Simone’s photo:

I do not take pictures of things that are staged or created for me – that was Simone’s problem. She asked the FARDC for a picture, and I was there – and then they started to play for the camera, they acted for her, and it wasn’t smart, and she wasn’t thinking about the future. She had a good job here. Now she has nothing here – but it wasn’t good journalism either. There are simply pictures you cannot take: Never take anything ‘qui laisse une mauvaise gout’ (that will leave a bad taste in one’s mouth). One needs to be prudent, and if one finds the photos, one can take them – me, I have photos of dead M23, and FARDC cadavers, but I found them in the field. (Interview Sept.17, 2013)

Johnny reaffirmed the ethics underpinning how proper journalism should function regarding its production of images, but also what a viable subject matter can be within the tense frontier zone. A good photograph must be found. More importantly, it must also not upset the authorities. The image for Johnny was not something you attempt to control after the fact, the control occurs when you as a photographer decide to photograph a subject or not. His abstinence in touchy situations spoke to that knowledge and an awareness of the power of the image to slide out from anyone’s grip. Johnny’s astute observations signaled another side of the Simone case: The debate which centered around an understanding of a “journalistic” or “press” image as a subjective creation - as an interactive moment reverberating with the collision of the intentions and actions of the photographer and equally of the subject(s) and bystanders. Johnny and a range of other stakeholders came to see the problem with the photograph not as one premised upon the content, but as one constructed by the choices of the photographer. By the time I had arrived (a month and a half after Simone took and published her fateful photograph), a critique blaming her for her choice to create the image had gained significant purchase.

When I did finally manage to track down Jack and set into the conversation of Simone’s photo, he corroborated Johnny’s perspective. Jack and I had met not long after I talked to Cynthia during the initial M23 bombing of Goma and the humanitarian quarantine, where major

international agency workers were confined to their houses or evacuated across the border into Rwanda. The following day Jack, Cynthia, and I had piled onto his small motorcycle and headed into the mostly empty town center. The bombing from that morning kept most people in, but both Deo's Café and Coco's dance club were still buzzing – albeit with significantly fewer people than normal. After helping to right a large white SUV whose drunk driver had turned at high speed into a run-off gutter next to the street – Goma often rightly earns its critique as a theater of the absurd - we all settled back at Deo's and conversation turned to the Simone case.

Jack claims that he is not sure that it was even desecration or mutilation of a corpse; he thinks it was more disrespect. The guy was just playing it up for the photographers. Jack claims, "Simone should have known better, but she took them and uploaded them anyway." (Fieldnotes Aug. 24, 2013)

A year and a few months after Jack and I first discussed this topic, I was back in Goma and mentioned I was working on this chapter. He lit up. In a mix of enthusiasm and anger, Jack re-emphasized that the image wasn't ethical – it was bad journalism. He echoed himself, "she's a journalist. She should have known better!" Jack's sentiment was ethically driven, and the onus of the image fell to Simone. He stepped beyond the view of the image as "true" and provided an analysis premised on her choice to create and publish the image. In the image, he saw the subject pantomiming for the camera. Having been back in the DRC for only two days, it was quickly becoming apparent that there was a tension layered within the photographic landscape between the photograph as evidence and as subjective creation. This tension was mirrored in the way in which the analysis strained to make meaning of the image's visible content and the process of photographic creation. As individuals swung from anger and disgrace at the image to anger at Simone for creating it, the notion of photographic "objectivity" rubbed up against the concept of seeing photographs not as found proof, but as subjective, chosen creations.

Within hours of Simone's publication of the image, the problem of her photograph at once became the content of the image and her set of choices. In understanding the photograph as

a document and an act incorporating multiple players (photographer, subject(s), bystanders), influential individuals across Goma saw the photograph as a product of decisions made by the photographer. Their attention tacked from the FARDC to Simone. Simone described the sticky shift in this situation, “And me – suddenly I became the focus. The photo literally falls out of the picture – it became all about me, not about the picture itself – who did that picture? Well, they say, it [Simone] has to go.” Somewhere in the melee, a high-ranking FARDC friend of Simone’s called her with a not-so-subtle warning, “Did you take the photo? [he paused] It will be ending badly for you if you do not leave the country right now.” Not 24 hours after photographing and publishing the image, Simone found herself hunkered down in an armored convoy, bound for the Goma-Rwanda border while her photograph gained endless clicks, likes, attacks, and re-tweets across the global social media sphere.

Looking Past The Abuse: Just Playing With The Dead?

While Simone was whisked out of the country under enormous threat, she was not the only person implicated within the consequence-laden debate concerning the subjective production of the photograph. This line of argumentation had also found its way into the courtroom drama surrounding the subject of the picture: Lt. Solomon Bangana (the man holding the artillery shell). In Lt Bangana’s ensuing trial the photograph became objective proof that he committed a war crime. However, his lawyer argued that the photograph was a subjective construction. He claimed that Lt Bangana had no human rights training and was only "playing" for the camera. The argument balanced on the idea that had the journalist not been there the featured abuse would not have happened. In court, the image sat in tension between its evidentiary and subjective interpretations, and on those values the life and livelihood of an individual hung.

Outside of the courtroom, a similar discursive battle was waged focusing as much on Lt. Bangana’s choices and those Simone herself made in creating the image. A discussion with the Press Secretary for the FARDC, Col. Olivier Amouli, drew out the key concerns of this debate.

Amouli, notorious for providing access to his friends – and women he found to his liking and denying others - was a particularly influential, yet fickle character. While the battle of *Trois Antennes* raged just outside the city – a month and a half after Simone published her photograph – Cynthia put me in touch with Col. Amouli. I managed to meet up with him at a UN press conference and asked for an interview. At the close of the conference, Amouli took hold of my elbow, walked me past a throng of cornered reporters who were not allowed to go to the front, and drove me to a near-deserted hotel on the far edge of town. There, he ordered two simultaneous Heinekens and provided his side of the story under the roar of a boxing match displayed in a caged television in the corner of the cavernous yellow dining hall. Col. Amouli's account of the immediate fallout from Simone's picture speaks to the power of the singular photograph:

That day I took a group to the front with Col. Mamadou – then I had to return back to the town, but they went up to Musja (town). But I was gone. Next morning I received a call that there was a problem with a photo that France 24 (F24) had published. They explained to me that a photo was distributed that showed a soldier in the process of mutilating a cadaver. I hadn't seen the photo yet. It was an isolated act. Officers did not give orders to mutilate cadavers. F24 diffused the photograph and an associated article. The next day we had riots in Goma – people believed that Kinshasa was recalling Mamadou (court marshaling him). That demoralized the military, and it became necessary to calm the population. Simone wasn't really at risk. The population didn't know where she was. But she needed to work more with objectivity – and moreover, it's necessary also to show the good things.

...There were many M23 bodies; they were numerous. A man found a shell, pointed it at the crotch of the dead to “faire un scenario” (play out a scene). But it wasn't mutilation – Still they (the UN and the military tribunal) condemned him with no proof. Now he's in the FARDC court (*tribunal independent du defense*) and Ban Ki-Moon made a declaration directly on that image and topic. All of this disappointed me. (Interview August 29, 2013)

His explanation exposes the tension and ambiguity of the photograph. Was it a found photo or a scenario enacted for the camera? Akin to grumblings about Simone's journalistic ethics, viewing Lt. Bangana as “playing for the camera” became a recurring way of discussing the photograph without actually addressing the content. It becomes a way of doing what Chris Pinney (2003)

calls “looking past” - engaging the image beyond the indexed photographic content (here the abuse) and reshaping the narrative. This ability to look past the sheer content of the picture suggests images to be, “a complexity of perspectival positions of a multiplicity of layers that endow photographs with an enormously greater complexity than that which they are usually credited. The photograph ceases to be a univocal, flat, and uncontested indexical trace of what was, and becomes instead a complexly textured artifact concealing many different depths” (Pinney 2003, 5). As Col. Amouli, the lawyer, and Johnny questioned the set of encounters and the personal agency that shaped the photograph they exposed its powerful ambiguity. As individuals engaged the photograph and interpreted a message from its content, they did so within the context of their personal perspectives and politics as well as those of the broader scape. Just as Jolie and Jean saw the image as connected to the FARDC’s unsavory history of violence, here Amouli viewed the photograph as a product of a complex interaction between the journalist and the photographic subject.

Play became a theme in how many of Goma's actors read the image; it shaped how they “looked past” the particularly violent, concerning surface representation. In fact, the "play-for-the-camera" trope became so prominent that it drew a variety of descriptions and even re-enactments. Sitting at Maji while drinking sundowners and watching the sun descend below the horizon, Aimé a young expat entrepreneur speculated:

I think they (soldiers) wouldn’t have done it – and it wasn’t mutilation – if the cameras were not there going “click click click click” (he jumps to his feet and pretends to photograph me theatrically) that wouldn’t have happened. I think they were performing– and when you get a bunch of them (photographers and journalists), then you (the subject) naturally perform for the camera. I don’t know much about Simone’s situation, but yeah, it was only happening because the journalists were there – without them, I don’t think it would have happened. (Interview Sept. 7, 2013)

Captain Zeb echoed Aimé’s sentiments about Lt. Bangana’s agency and expectation in creating the image. A few days after winning the battle of Trois Antennes he dropped by Deo’s again, and

we split a beer. Unlike the last time when he wielded a scrap of a dead man's clothing, he had handsomely cleaned up, and was in uniform, day drinking Heinekens and enjoying telling me about his current view of photography and politics. Casually, he added his voice to the debate about subjective performance.

Zeb was there when Simone took that photo. He says that Bangana had not even been up to the front that day, but with all the cameras around (other photographers were apparently there too, but they didn't publish anything), he saw the dead body and used a spent artillery shell to poke at it. "Nothing more than that really." And he explained that now Lt. Bangana is in jail because Simone was nearby. She saw him do this act and then took the picture and uploaded it to social media with the association of the mutilation of a body. "He didn't do anything, and he's paying for it in jail." Moreover, now Col. Amouli doesn't let unsupervised photographers up to the frontlines anymore. (Fieldnotes Aug. 27, 2013)

Zeb and Aimé's reasoning, like that of Col. Amouli, moved beyond the surface of the image. Instead of seeing abuse, they saw the encounters, the process, and the agency-laden play – the “poking” that occurred in the space of photographic creation. They saw this action as a response to the photographer's presence. This notion of the subject's performance for the camera raised questions also about the goals and norms of not only the journalistic visual field but also the local photographic field, with which this photograph articulates. Studies of studio photography – arguably the most common form of photography in the DRC - relay the notion that the camera opens a space for the engagement of an intentional self. It opens a space for play, for “self-determination and cultural performance” (Brielmaier 2013, 255). Even when the camera is only a blackberry phone, “photography gives breathing space to an aspect of the imagination” (Buckley 2000: 89). It gives individuals a chance to in part shape the message they wish the material image to carry. The action and gazes of those in front of the camera raise questions about the image's simultaneous potential to represent “truth” and come into being through a negotiated set of actions and constructions. The subject's acknowledgment of the camera and the potential stop-motion performance - the pause as Lt. Bangana abuses the cadaver - somehow crafted this image

into more than mere evidence. It potentially speaks to the intersecting desires of the photographer to provide proof, and for the subject to perform a grander-than-usual sense of self.

Through the lens of the local visual field (which I describe in detail in the following chapter) this image was not entirely dissimilar from a range of posed military portraits and *photo famille* photographs (group pictures) that the FARDC soldiers commonly desired. Sometimes they posed with their weapons, at times creating “*les mise-en-scènes*” featuring them poised mid-action as they pretended to shoot. The following are a range of such photographs. While my images come from no closer than 6km to the front, Joseph’s - in his eventual role as a photojournalist with the Associated Press - came immediately from the front. He created these in the in-between moments when the soldiers hunkered down on hillsides or behind buildings sometimes for hours at a time. In moments that extended between the fighting, when bullets quieted, soldiers requested portraits. They posed studio-like for the camera, or stop-motioned with their weapons. Acutely aware of the camera, they engaged its space – his and mine - as one of simultaneous documentation and play.



Figures 6 and 7:

In Nyiragongo township, Salvadore and Solomon request portraits. “We want pictures with the car and the kids. The kids we will show to our own children back in Kinshasa to show them that people out here are not so different.” Salvador opened the car door, wrangled the children kindly and posed. (Sept. 2013)





[Figures 8 – 9]:

At the front in 2013 Joseph composed a number of portraits – including the two here of friends who wanted to show their connection, and a soldier who posed with his RPG (Photo Credits Joseph Kay).



Like the photographs that Joseph and I produced, Simone's picture may also articulate local desire to be seen in a particular way. However, since her image was published and circulated as an "objective" journalistic photo, the notion of "play" caused notable friction. The position of this photograph within the overlapping journalistic and local visual fields was, like the embattled region in which it was created, far from stable. The tangled "evidentiary" nature of the photograph and the inter-subjective act of its production created a volatile image. It articulated with a component of photographs that Mead (1975) termed the "danger of the visual" for it is "too open to misinterpretation, and too seductive" (in MacDougall 1998, 68). Ultimately, Simone was inescapably implicated. So too was Lt. Bangana. The photograph raised questions that even the court struggled to answer: if this was play for the camera, was it also desecration? Could it be both? Was claiming "play" not just one more way of politicking, decrying the image as a "fabrication" and claiming that "no such atrocity ever took place" (Sontag 2004, 11) as Sontag argued is the typical reaction to war photographs that show one's own side's atrocities? And moreover, as individuals jockeyed to present their version of the photographic event, was it possible to control the seemingly uncontrollable photographic narrative?

DAMAGE CONTROL

To Control the Narrative, Control the Photographer

During my early fieldwork, Simone's photograph and its disputed evidentiary and subjective engagements did more than just enable me to raise questions about the various ways individuals read and make meaning through images in Goma. Also, by engaging the ongoing fallout from this particular picture, I was able to query actors' desire to control photographic narratives. The far-reaching implications surrounding visual control seemed to follow two mandates: 1) control Simone; 2) control others who could potentially create similar photographs.

Initially, the control that was enacted was physical, and the outrage at this particular photo came to focus on Simone. Despite Col. Amouli's protests to the contrary, Simone felt her life was at risk. The United Nations agreed. In an interview on Oct. 30, 2014, she explained what she understands to have happened:

It was one simple fucking picture – there was a big back-story in that picture... The people consuming that photo had no idea of the mess Congo was in when I took that picture. That was only clear for people in the army - the people who were at the scene. ... I'm not a photographer – but I do investigative journalism; I'm a journalist – I am necessarily involved in dirty stuff. I was up at the front with Mamadou – and we had this trust between us. That day, I saw more than I could publish. That was the first time that I realized (the trust), because when I did release the image – when I did click that picture and sent it to the whole world - that was the moment when the trust broke. (Interview Oct. 30, 2014)

Simone explained that before taking the photograph, she had been spending time with Col. Mamadou, who was sipping champagne to celebrate the 4km of victory behind one of the wooden houses that are featured in the background of the photo. The situation was more complicated and awful than she had expected – the FARDC had lost a lot of men and was celebrating having gained 4km of empty land. In her terms, she was “pissed off and disgusted.” At the same time, there were a number of other photographers there who were hanging out with the soldiers. “They were standing around this scenario where a soldier put the empty rocket thing over the dead man's penis. The soldiers and police had been celebrating and talking dirty about the soldier... they were having a victory celebration – a trophy showing.” She explained that she left Mamadou and entered into that situation after it had already begun. The other photographers were already taking pictures of what was going on. The difference between her and those other photographers was that they didn't publish them. Instead, she said, “I tweeted the photograph when I was standing there.”

After she had received the call from a friend in the FARDC to get out of the country, she

had to wait for a UN evacuation escort.

The next day was a nightmare of 3 hours. The Indians (UN Indian battalions) arrived with cameras. They kept filming me; it was very terrible. I was screaming at them to put the camera away, and they just kept photographing. The first commander just told me “you are coming to the office. It is an order, not choice.” I entered his office. He was someone I had never met him before. He knew who I was, knew what I was doing – He told me how much damage I caused with that fucking shit (the photo) – it had cost convoys, people in Goma broke the UN cars and attacked his unit, the population was out of control, and security was down. He read me a whole speech of, “I caused the whole problem.” And I had to think, is it the content of the picture that caused it or is it me that created that problem?

I just said, “OK just let me go.” Nobody asked me about the content of the picture or how it related to the UN fighting for peace – I once wrote, “fighting for peace is like fucking for virginity” – what’s the point – ... they didn’t care about the violation of the code of contact / the Geneva convention... The Congolese Army and the UN played that game of focusing on me - Simone – that in the end is what the picture became all about. I couldn’t believe that the UN accused me of sabotaging that operation. They didn’t say that exactly, but they said something like “you know we just had a good start in a crucial moment – and you ruined it,” well it wasn’t exactly their words, but you know... Not “wow that picture! My goodness!” No. They dropped me at the border, and as I walked across the DGM (Direction Générale de Migration) border patrol guard said to me, “you did not do our country any favors today.” (Interview Oct. 30, 2014)

Simone’s experience of the photograph speaks to the volatility of Goma’s well-networked frontier zone where the FARDC, UN, border agents, and broader population are intimately connected. It also speaks to the efforts to control the photograph. Getting her out of the country perhaps wasn’t only for her protection. It also served to remove Simone and her reporting from the region; the FARDC and the UN strove to control a threat by controlling the photographer. However, Simone’s border crossing did not end the threat. While she was removed from a situation to create similar images, her photograph retained its power and continued to draw criticism and outrage. After fleeing to Rwanda, Simone moved to Kampala, Uganda and started to take stock of what had happened. Then she got a call from her boss. Simone continued her account:

My boss said, “Something is happening related to that photo on Twitter.” I

looked and saw that people had written, we “have to kill her” “collateral damage” “she won’t survive” “I have your name on the bullet” ...Someone on Facebook was like – “she’s likely living in Kampala.” The (Congolese) diaspora is close and is informally connected to my home - my night guard is Congolese – my whole life is Congolese. If someone looks, they will find me quickly. So I ran away. I left on that day – on the 3rd of August and got on a flight to Germany. I didn’t come back to Africa for four months.

I just kept hoping that the FARDC will win the war – if the war were lost, then I would be accused forever of having sabotaged things – all those tweets that called me “Kagame’s girlfriend” or a “Tutsi whore and prostitute.” (She paused)... How pictures create damage! It was a snapshot, and it created a lot of harm. I can’t – I know that I would not survive if they were to lose. I can’t redirect the attention back to the picture because for them, the problem was never the picture. It was Simone. (Interview Oct. 30, 2014)

Through intimidation, anonymous social media stalkers embodied the volatility of the region and strove to undo Simone. Interestingly, she paints two distinct pictures of the types of abuse she encountered. On one hand, these threats speak to the notion that she should pay – with her life – for the turmoil her photograph inspired. On the other, the accusations strive to control the picture, not by removing her entirely, but by defaming her. By painting her as sympathetic to the M23 through allusions to her Rwandan and Tutsi ties, her online abusers strove to undermine the evidence of her journalistic image by presenting it as one grounded in propaganda for the enemy. In threatening her credibility, they attempted to negate the photograph's truth-telling capacity.

As images like Simone’s increasingly find speedy, global circulation through social media platforms, these images come to articulate the politics of gender as well as those of the region. Gender is a particularly hot-button topic in the eastern DRC, due to the ongoing issue of sexual violence and the outpouring of global attention it has received. “Rape,” argues Séverene Autessere, “is the main theme of countless media reports on the Congo. According to an insider, since 2009, there has been no interest in the Congo at the UN Security Council except when it discussed incidents of mass rapes and potential responses to them” (2012, 211). While sexual violence indeed remains a grave problem in the country, it has become a simple narrative that has dominated discussion of both gender roles and the DRC more generally. Gender issues in the

eastern DRC also expose the position of women, who in the region's patriarchal societies, still struggle for rights to education, land, inheritance, and their children.

Simone was operating in a field dominated by men. In the eastern DRC, the vast majority of journalists and nearly all studio photographers are men. Within the international combat journalist scene, there indeed are a handful of women who have fought for their position and equal treatment. However, they still face discrimination and outright misogyny. For Simone, being labeled a Tutsi "whore" and a "prostitute," follows general Internet trends as well as those of the region. Researchers including Ellen Spertus (2002) and Pamela Turton-Turner (2013) have long noted that the Internet is a difficult place for women to engage equally. Bartlett et al. argue, "while the Internet was seen as a utopian platform for free speech and equality when it began to become popularly used in the 1990s, it was evident from the very start that the inequalities that structured "real-world" society had been transferred online" (2014, 3). Their research shows that women are more subjected to bullying, abuse, and hate-speech than men.¹⁵ By undermining Simone's position through her gender, her Internet stalkers took general misogyny and twisted it into regional dynamics.

The comments about being "Kagame's girlfriend" or a "Tutsi prostitute" also draw attention to the volatile political dynamics of autochthony and the border with Rwanda. This also shows how the scape of the eastern DRC is not limited to the area and actors within its physical borders. By linking Simone to Kagame - the president of Rwanda - Internet stalkers pull Simone into the region's socio-political tensions formed through a complex history of migration and conflict over the last century. In short, in North Kivu colonial politics of staffing plantations (Rubber, coffee, cotton) with *Banyarwandan* workers (both Hutu and Tutsi), drew labor and

¹⁵ Helen Lewis, a journalist for the *New Statesman* in the UK argues that such gender-based abuse is so endemic that "if you put a female picture or a female byline on an article then you will end up getting more hostile comments and more comments referring to the author's gender. So there are assumptions that people make when they see a female byline. The suggestion is that they take an article less seriously, they pick more holes in it, they are more skeptical of it" (Global Editor's Network 2015).

livestock into the region, while reducing the land access of the agriculturalist *Bantu* populations who controlled the predominantly agricultural land (Mararo 1997; Dunn 2001). Violent clashes particularly between the *Bahunde* and the *Banyarwanda* resulted from issues of land and rights from the 1950s onward. In South Kivu, a long troubled history surrounding the land and citizen rights of the *Banyamulenge* (a group of Kinyarwanda-speaking Tutsi pastoralists) also helped to reinforce a division between the supposedly "autochthonous Congolese" and the Rwandan "outsiders" (Jackson and Geshière 2006; Jackson 2006, 2007; Dunn 2009).

In 1963, and again in 1981, President Mobutu conferred the power of citizenship only to autochthonous individuals. Using tattered colonial ethnic maps, ethnic groups had to make the claim that their group existed within Congo's territory at respectively 1908 (as Congo became a Belgian colony), and then again in 1885 (dated in reference to the Berlin Conference when Congo's borders were first drawn). These decrees resulted largely in the exclusion of the *Banyarwanda* peoples, (particularly the *Kinyarwanda*-speaking Tutsis) from rights to citizenship. In so doing, Mobutu reified a social understanding of a national border, heightened the importance of "mega-ethnicities" (the "Nilotic" Hima and Tutsi versus the "Bantu," a group loosely composed of the self-identifying native Congolese (Verweijen 2015, 164) and raised anxiety over rights to access and opportunity - to jobs, to state services, and to the ability to legally own land (Jackson 2007; 2009; Bøås and Dunn 2014; Verweijen 2015). This act poured fuel into the fire of myriad conflicts across the region as it constructed Kinyarwanda speakers as a dangerous "other" and conferred "certain ethnic groups with the authority of apparent antiquity" (Jackson 2002, 58) and the power to claim land and the rights once held by others.

Alternately supported and oppressed by the Congolese state, the real and presumed alliances between the Tutsi population in Congo and the seat of power in Rwanda have contributed to fomenting various wars and conflicts across the east of the DRC. During the First Congo War (1996-1997) through the formation of the ADLF in the eastern DRC, they contributed to the overthrow of Kinshasa in 1997. Later under the Rwandan-supported RCD-Goma, they

controlled the region and capitalized on the illicit mineral trade across the border (Taylor 2003). Since the official end of the Second Congo war in 2002, Rwanda has perpetuated its involvement in the Kivus by its purported funding rebel groups, including the *Congrès National pour la Défense du Peuple* (CNDP) (2006-2009) and the most recent *Mouvement de 23 Mars* (M23) from 2012 – 2013. On account of the politics and history of the region, this notion of autochthony has gained salience over any other ethnic identity. Vlassenroot and Büscher insightfully note that in Goma, “Processes of identification and the mental construction of the self and the other have been given a new dimension since the start of the conflict. Questions about citizenship and belonging have been sharpened and identities further politicized. Contestation over national identity and debates about inclusion and exclusion still has a strong impact on Goma’s urban society... Identifying oneself as “Congolese” in Goma is often the same as simply identifying oneself as not being Rwandan” (2013, 3179). Ultimately, by attempting to connect Simone through outrageous claims about her sexual exploits with Rwanda’s president, political dissidents in the Congo and their diaspora wove her into the politics and histories of the region as they strove to undo her credibility and control the image by denigrating its content to simple, biased propaganda.

Never Again: Controlling the Image by Preventing its Creation:

Attempts to control the image did not stop with Simone. When she fled the country, care was taken to control that such an image did not happen again. With the support of MONUSCO, Col. Amouli strove to control foreign photographers’ movements and images. Before Simone left the country, he had called a meeting that addressed the small band of independent journalists, forbidding them from accessing the front without his explicit permission. This mandate continued to cause problems and hackney press access during my time in Goma. At the press conference I attended before interviewing Col. Amouli, I encountered a group of war-hardened journalists and photographers, unable to access the front. They had flown in to cover the war, but without the UN’s and Amouli’s blessing, they were not able to reach the battle. Amouli assured them that he

would take them to the front when the fighting settled down, but until then they were not allowed out of the center city. As Amouli and I left the compound for that initial interview, a hardened South African journalist stepped towards me, “talk some sense into him, will ya?” The control of photography had driven desperation. A few minutes later, in the eerily empty hotel restaurant, Amouli explained the situation as he saw it:

The situation with the Press, well, the front is not stabilized, and there’s no way to get to calm ground up there. If something stabilizes then they can go. At the front, the combat is severe – there are not even any military men who come back without injuries. I know that the actions of the military behind the front lines doesn’t sell well for the journalists– *mais on a besoin de aussi montrer un coté un peu plus douce* (but we need to also show a softer/ gentler side). (Interview August 29, 2013)

This sounded dubious, especially considering that the men and women cornered at the MONUSCO compound were a motley group of experienced conflict photographers equipped with their cameras, helmets, and flak jackets. Nonetheless, they needed official permission; the entire crowd of foreign journalists expressly in the country to photograph the conflict remained reliant on MONUSCO and the FARDC for any access. When journalists did break the rules and head up to the front unaccompanied, this media control was enacted upon their return. The day before that press conference, Joseph hopped a motorcycle taxi to the front. He had by that point become a stringer for Associated Press and maintained independent connections with the FARDC. Together, he and the soldiers traveled to the front at Kibati (12Km outside Goma). Upon his return however, the same soldiers who facilitated his trip confiscated his camera gear and memory cards. They apologized, but noted that they had orders to do so. Amouli handed back Joseph’s gear two days later, calling him, “*le petit bandit*” (the little scoundrel) for breaking press orders. Nonetheless, the point came through loud and clear: No front access without a chaperone. No creating unsanctioned images.

The photographs that Amouli hoped for included those that would articulate the "softer" side of the conflict. These images would improve as oppose to tarnish the FARDC’s reputation.

He wanted to paint the Congolese army in a "humanitarian" light - drawing on the seemingly merciful actions of the military. He wanted to capitalize upon a known trope of aid photography in the region and show his people altruistically helping others, not abusing their dead bodies. Amouli was determined to do so by keeping them away from the places where they could produce questionable images. He wished he could have done similarly with Simone. In reference to her actions, he noted:

There was a FARDC soldier that day who was helping to lessen the suffering of an injured M23 soldier. She could have shot that. She could have taken an image of our soldiers feeding or giving medicine to a M23, perhaps even shown how the population is supporting the troops now. Or she could have shown that for those condemned there is no impunity. You know, images that speak - "*les images qui parlent*". But journalists live by marketing their images. It is a business. They want the images that sell, so it is only about the money... One needs to respect the other situations too and show the humanitarianism (in reference to that occurs to the FARDC's actions) that was going on at the front. (Interview August 29, 2013)

The image ideas he prescribed for the hardened journalists that he had penned-up away from the front were indeed not what they were seeking. However, this notion of desiring a "humanitarian" photograph speaks to the prominence of the humanitarian actors within the broader scape, and the normalization of their photographic tropes within the photographic landscape. Their images showing compassion and aid had come to represent the region's empathetic, helpful side. By connecting military photographs with regular humanitarian representations, he hoped to influence the narrative crafted about the FARDC and thereby ensure that no further damaging images were created. And while Simone returned to Goma in 2015, the legacy of that one image shaped what she believes she can do in the future. In our conversation, she made it clear that obviously negative stories of the FARDC are off limits. "There was a very clear message not to file bad things – at all. I'm an investigative journalist; if I want to work there now and survive, that is how I'll have to do it." So while she's back in Goma, the shadow of her July 16, 2013, photograph lingers.

The struggles of Col. Amouli and the aggressive Internet stalkers exposed the dualistic desire to control the image and the patent inability to do so. Once the photographer produced the image, forcing it into a unitary message was simply not entirely possible. As Azoulay (2012) importantly argued, the photograph defies domination. Ultimately, the multiple efforts to control the narrative that actors engaged across the broader scope of the region speak to the ambiguity and the power of the photograph situated within the volatile space of the eastern DRC.

CONCLUSION

The conflict with the M23 ended in November of 2013. When victory for the Congolese army appeared inevitable, Goma's population of international journalists and photographers temporarily spiked. With success secured, Amouli and MONUSCO granted these actors access to the front. However, from mid-September onwards, the conflict-driven tension in Goma subsided. As the M23 lost control of the roads and the land to the North, the city reverberated with a new level of vitality. Markets flooded with the food goods that had for more than a year not managed to pass the roadblocks nor safely travel the roads to Goma. Within the shops, restaurants, and the town's photo studios business bloomed. However, during the bombing and insecurity, Renard a local photographer, explained, "war is no good for business." While the conflict raged, he and his studio photographer colleagues continued to show up at their workplace, but very few customers sought their work. However, as the front line shifted back to 15 km outside of the town, he observed, "things are now good. Business is coming back. People want to move about again, so we're taking more photos."

From mid-September of 2013 to when I left in August of 2014, life in Goma returned to its usual secure insecurity. For the duration of my research, there were no more bombings and only occasional *manifestation*. Conflict in the region, of course, did not cease, but the FARDC and UN chose to address the respective ADF and FDLR rebel groups, whose independent

pocketed territories sat reasonably far from the city. In the wake of the M23 conflict, humanitarian projects proliferated, especially in the areas of Masisi and Rutshuru near or within the no-longer-operational borders of the once *République des Volcans*. And in Goma *et environs*, both local and humanitarian photographers continued to operate, forming representations of the people of the region.

Simone's photograph came to be the only visual event during my research to rise to such inflammatory levels. As such, the friction it both produced and responded to spoke importantly to both the dynamics of photography and the social contours of the scape of Goma's borderland. As I have shown above, this photograph drew out two contrasting ways in which an image is read and thereby politicized. The notion that a photograph is a construction born of photographer's decisions and subject's posing is not new. Nonetheless, this chapter showed that while the image is indeed produced through a set of choices and perhaps a somewhat collaborative moment, how it would be read, interpreted, and responded to becomes less certain. Simone's photographic narrative – the message her image carried – was both operationalized through the objective (the image is “proof”) and the subjective (the image opened a space of play that was inter-subjective, not “found”) lens. In each case, it was harnessed to the regional politics and social dynamics. Moreover, the distinction between the interpretations shows that the scape does not contain a singular cultural means of engaging a photograph, but rather that each actor, institution, and zone employs the image to articulate their particular positions, expectations, and fears. The photograph not only was operationalized and analyzed to reflect these myriad socio-political views, but it also rolled them forward, shifting them. The image itself, and the attitudes it provoked indicated and reified positions, opinions, and concerns. Moreover, these responses also altered the ground upon which the perspectives were derived and the dynamics of the future engagements with photography and also the various actors and institutions of the region's scape (including but not limited to journalists, the FIB, the UN, the FARDC).

An understanding of these scape-based dynamics is critical for the rest of this dissertation as I explore the details of the local and humanitarian visual fields and their interconnecting, overlapping spaces. Like journalistic photography, images produced within the humanitarian visual field also strive to adhere to the principles of appearing “documentary” and “found.” As in the case of Simone’s photograph, these images often also feature Congolese subjects whose tendency is to emphasize a playful resonance between creativity and realism in front of the lens. While Simone’s photograph drew a bombastic, dangerous response as it articulated with the region’s broader contextual scape, humanitarian and local images also draw from and stimulate junctures with these entangled histories, power dynamics, actors, and institutions, albeit often with a significantly less inflammatory response. Moreover, the themes of images as proof or play, the grappling to control the photographic message, and the interaction and potential clash between visual expectations and interpretations will continue to reverberate through the following chapters as I detail the photographic landscape. I will explore the ways in which the still photo and its process of creation respond to and perpetuate or shift the knotted interaction of global forces and local means of navigation, co-optation, and resistance within the sometimes frantic, interconnected, and yet fractional space of Goma *et environs*.

INTERLUDE ONE
A PAIR OF GOMA TOURS

The following images and text exemplify different means of addressing photography in Goma.

The photographic essay engages the fractional social zones of the eastern DRC. The images move from the humanitarian space to the tense conflict and in-between spaces to the working-class Congolese realm. Following the images of Goma, I situate a short textual tour of Goma within this broader visual space.

TOUR 1: A VISUAL TOUR DE GOMA



Figure 10: Typical tourist view into the lava lake from the top of Virunga National Park's Nyiragongo Volcano.



Figure 11 (above): NGO vehicles along the road in Goma. Figure 12: Coco Jambo on a Friday night.





Figure 13: (above) Donors and NGO regional heads talk in the presence of professional basketball players at a catered event at Lac Kivu Lodge. Figure 14: (below) Lakeside humanitarian residence in Belgian colonial home.





Figure 15: (above) Volunteer visit at Promo Jeune Basket NGO in central Goma. Figure 16: (below) Breakdance at the Amani International Festival for Peace.





Figure 17: (above) Goma residents look into a humanitarian-supported sports event from outside of the border of 'aid space.' Figure 18: (Below) Students walk to school on roads lined by the high walls of the humanitarian industry.





Figure 19: (above) The FARDC and Goma's population mingle after return of a FARDC soldier who had been captured and held across the border in Rwanda. Figure 20: (below) The remains of improvised roadblocks litter the streets of Ndosho during local *manifestations* in response to the August 2013 bombings.





Figure 21: (above): UN Flyover. Figure 22: (below) A view of the FIB and FARDC mobilization from Deo's Café.





Figure 23: (above) Goma by night. Figure 24: (below) Patrick at home.





Figure 25: (above) Kennedy, a law professor at ULPGL presents their NGO law project during a commencement ceremony. Figure 26: Guelord at school.



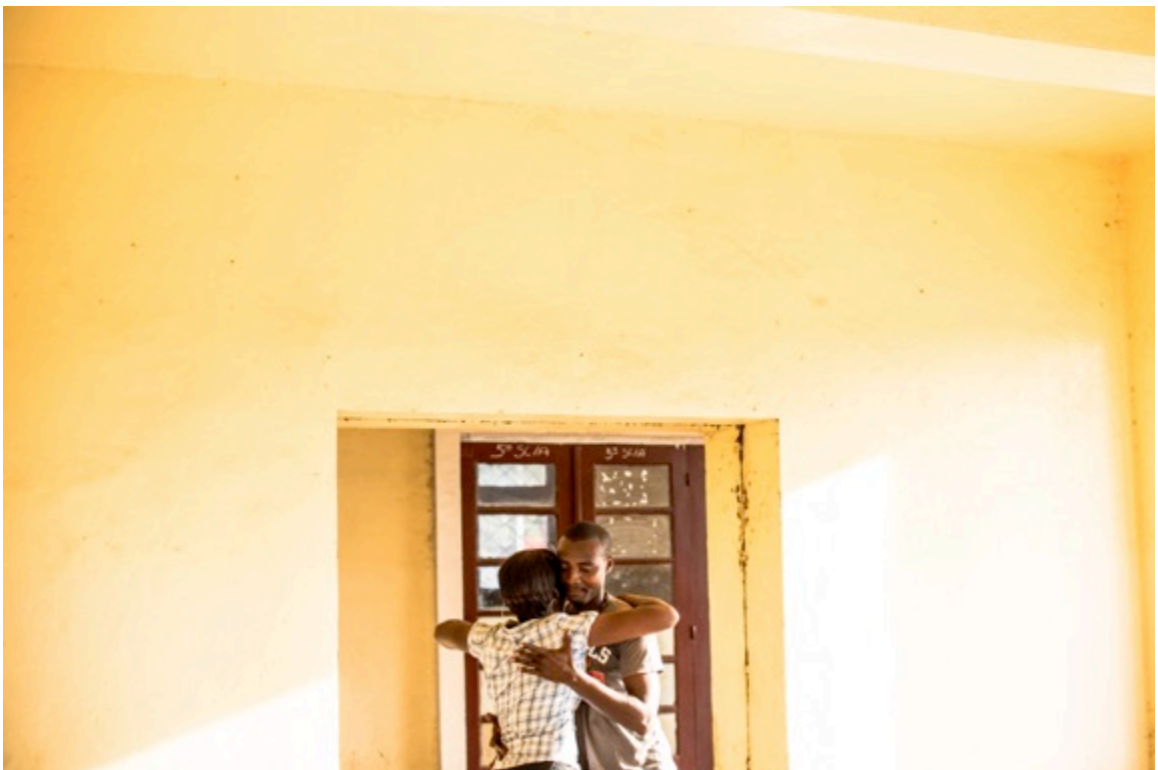


Figure 27: Prepping for a fashion show in a Goma secondary school. Figure 28: Civil marriage ceremony at the Marie de Goma.





Figure 29: (above) Goma construction is on the rise. Figure 30: (below) Abel teaches a private session on how to dance “zouk.”



TOUR 2: PHOTOGRAPHY AND THE GOLDEN TCHUKUDU

Through sun, rain, or dry season dust a host of men weather the elements.¹⁶ Camera in hand, they wait in the shadow of Goma's most photographed attraction: the statue of the Golden Tchukudu. Standing nearly ten feet tall the sinewy man is frozen mid-stride, bent by the challenge of pushing a scaled-up version of the region's working class symbol. *Tchukudus* wooden scooter-like pushcarts that can carry upwards of 1000 pounds intermingle with motorcycle and aid agency 4x4 traffic in the city and slowly climb the hills to all reaches of the province. In subtle irony, this verdant roundabout with its gilded peasant attracts anything but those provincial in appearance. Instead, sumptuously dressed wedding parties and smartly done-up visitors frequent the statue in search of the region's *photographes ambulants* (mobile photographers). Faced with potential patrons, these itinerant photographers jockey for the opportunity to memorialize their subject's sense of well being in exchange for a small profit.

As individuals pose in front of the statue and within the adjacent gardens, the actual tchukudu drivers lean in, pushing their loads along the furthest edge of the roundabout under bombastic billboards that celebrate success, money, and modernity. As these drivers wheel through the streets, past photo studios, printing labs and the innumerable small clothes and sundry boutiques, they traverse the publicly visible aspects of the photographic landscape – predominantly showcasing images from the local visual field. Colorful advertisements dot the two-mile stretch of paved road and the four primary roundabouts that define Goma's town center. While each billboard markets a different company or product, they nonetheless expose similar

¹⁶ Studio and "studio-like" photography is an interestingly gendered profession in the eastern DRC. While women do occasionally work as journalistic photographers (Lew Uwera is a notable example) and humanitarian photographers, the world of studio photography remains solidly male.

visual definitions of success and glamor. Money, modern dress, and technology compose the dominant representational themes.

On Goma's main drag and diagonally up the street from the swanky new *boulangerie* (bakery), which caters almost exclusively to elite and international clientele, resides a second-floor furniture showroom. Without any roof for protection, overstuffed velour couches and chairs sit beside open pillars of rebar. Immediately beside the decrepit plush menagerie, a colorful billboard shows a smartly dressed older couple in Western clothes beaming out at the street. An elaborate two-story house looms behind them with a message about how easy it is to secure a bank loan and buy the house of your dreams. Two hundred meters away, just to the right of the Golden Tchukudu, a billboard shows a woman in a brightly colored mini-dress with sleek hair. She cheers with her arms raised. Money rains from the red background as she and her equally western-dressed male counterpart ogle a new convertible car. The message is clear "you too can win all these things by entering this cell phone company's contest. Just text them." No more than a mile down the road, set squarely between a secondary school and a university (at the InstiGo roundabout), a beer advertisement on a billboard reads, "*Mutzig, le gout de la reussite*" (Mutzig, the taste of success). A sharply dressed man, whose face is not visible in the frame, sits with his sparkling glass of beer. His tailored suit provides the background contextualizing the sexy women's hands on his shoulders.

While the billboards compose the most elevated level of photographic images in the town, Tchukudu drivers, *motards* (motorcycle taxi drivers) and pedestrians also encounter a more eye-level set of public images. Along the streets painted reproductions of pop stars (Rhianna, Michael Jackson and Tu-Pac are common) and advertisements cover storefronts and the omnipresent 8-10 foot tall lava rock walls that map the hard infrastructural borders of humanitarian agency space encompassing dwellings, offices, bases, and projects. Hawkers unfurl bright posters as they walk the avenues. Their images expose anything from representations of fruit and vegetables to computer-created pictures of Grecian-like temples, to collages of hip-hop

stars and local war heroes (e.g. Rambo and Col. Mamadou). Electric poles host rival visual campaigns showing the governmental image norm - passport pictures of unsmiling politicians commonly covered-over by advertisements for revivalist preacher visits and concerts. In previous decades, those same poles also sported local studio photographs as a means of public shaming of individuals who had failed to pay their photographers for their likeness.

As one strays from the town's nucleus, plastic trash and corncobs line the street shoulders, yet one will rarely find visual material beneath their feet or wheels. While the public visual milieu in Goma is richly inhabited by popular photography and its exaggerated glamor - riches, happiness, and success - personal appropriation of print material remains limited. On one hand newspapers, magazines, and books do exist. On the other, it's difficult to say more than that. In Goma, *Nyiragongo* a local newspaper named for the looming nearby volcano - is sometimes printed bi-monthly, though commonly not at all. New books are expensive; the occasional *librarie* (bookstores) around town sell a severely limited supply of overpriced books. Second-hand books with colorful worn covers are available in particular markets, and a small group of philanthropic humanitarians continues to struggle to build Goma a proper, open-access *bibliotheque* (library).

In the dearth of available printed visual material, promotional images have gained significant value. The following scene is familiar: As distorted music reverberates from 5 foot-tall speakers, brightly dressed youth in matching t-shirts dance and hand out colorful fliers from a crawling flatbed truck. The spectacle showcases their product - be it cell phone promotions, powdered milk, new boozy drinks, or body lotion - and each ear-drum-destroying show provides sleek photographic handouts. The region's residents swarm in a manic consumption of the images, which later are found pasted to school notebooks or taped on one's living room or bedroom walls. No image is wasted. Similarly, humanitarian distributions of sensitization material (print material intended to provide guidance or education about a particular topic)

receive similar attention and value. Years after their distribution, the fliers and three-fold brochures can be found taped to walls of offices, workshops, and homes across the region.

Similarly, in the internally displaced people's camps, up in the hills of Masisi, and outside Beni photographs are also cherished. Sitting rooms show purchased posters of Asian hotels or religious figures. From the very wealthiest to the most destitute of the region, all frame photographs of self and family and hang them high upon their walls. Other images are stored carefully in boxes, albums, or in the original paper packets from the photo studio. Whether saved behind glass, paper, or plastic these images show a choreographed story of self. They connect individuals with the high-tech stereo systems, luxury hotels, and even the symbol of Goma itself the Golden Tchukudu. And coming full circle they showcase the consistent work of the group of studio and mobile photographers set not only at the center of urban Goma but also at the heart of the region's local visual field.

SECTION TWO

THE PHOTOGRAPHIC LANDSCAPE'S VISUAL FIELDS

CHAPTER TWO

A GUIDEBOOK TO GLAMOUR: EXPLORING THE LOCAL VISUAL FIELD

Humanitarian and journalistic photography has for years provided the West with a gritty, violent, and need-based depiction of the eastern DRC's citizens' lives. Nonetheless, in the same space where images of conflict – such as Simone's fateful image – are created, the region's residents remain eagerly engaged in regular visual work. Public advertising around town reinforces prominent photographic standards, but it is the thousand-plus local photographers (and far more, if one counts the whole of the province) who actively depict the visual contours of the regions' residents' lives. Through their lenses, Congolese photographers cover the daily depictions of self, ceremony, and bureaucracy, collectively crafting and reifying the tropes and genres involved within the local visual field of the photographic landscape. This chapter examines this local visual field through a history of photography in the region, an ethnographic episode, and a guidebook to local photography. As I trace local photography across the frontier zone, I examine the history and details of the photographic production, photographer-subject interactions, and compositional trends. Often, I employ my own camera's lens as a way to see and produce knowledge about popular photography, thereby enabling a more engaged, intimate understanding of the practices and expectations of the region's home-grown images and how they shape and are shaped by the broader sociocultural and historical contexts. Such a nuanced engagement with the local visual field is valuable in itself, but the following analysis will also help to contextualize the interactions

and expectations that I explore throughout the later chapters of the dissertation when I engage the overlapping space of humanitarian and local visual fields.

EARLY PHOTOGRAPHY AND THE EASTERN DRC

Photographic studios – like those that pepper the center of Goma - are central to the popular photography produced within the eastern DRC’s local visual field. The studio is an institution that sits at the very heart of both what individuals choose to photograph and how they go about creating those images. Today studios dot the map of Goma, especially around the center of the town. Each studio contains its faithful band of studio photographers – a group of men who work for nominal salaried pay and otherwise trade their presence for the access to further photographic jobs. Unlike many of the innumerable mobile photographers (*les photographes ambulants*) who now float opportunistically through the city, studio photographers act as the officially registered image producers anchored to steady spaces of production and printing. The major studios in the center of town, like *Studio Creatif* and *Studio Agfa*, have been in operation during the region’s recent two decades of conflict though a few studios also existed before. The studio’s economic survival and that of the photographers have never managed to be thoroughly squelched by war. During the bombings in late August 2013, *manifestations* broke out across the city and bands of angry young men gathered on street corners armed with stones and knives. Nonetheless, multiple photographers worked with glamorously dressed wedding parties to concoct the desired poses in front of the Golden Tchukudu and at *Rond Pont BGDEL* (roundabout of the banks). The need to document life’s celebrations consistently defies conflict.

Such tenacious studio institutions and practices stem from a tangled history of colonialism and the early means of photographic documentation. The African photo studio – which houses the photographers, their equipment, and often their sets – lighting, props, staging materials, makeup, and backgrounds - is not a new phenomenon. Photography reached the African continent in the 1840s and by the 1880s, the first African-run studios appeared along the

West Coast. “Africans themselves appropriated the technology and began to work as photographers, seeking clients among the African and European population living in coastal economic centers who were interested in having their likenesses taken and could pay for it in cash” (Schneider 2013, 39). While African photographers first established themselves in those major coastal cities such as Freetown and Luanda, with the creeping increase in the mobility of technology they began to venture inland. As they moved into villages and across national borders studio photographers increasingly captured portraits of their growing African clientele (Viditz-Ward 1987; Nimis 2013). The power and prevalence of the photograph grew as the identity photo became increasingly valuable as a means to make individuals legible to the colonial state (Werner 2001). Such early studio and ID images were not only used within practices of state control and surveillance. Rather, they also gained value and circulation outside of the state as they were passed between lovers, friends, and family members (Edwards 2001b).

Congo through the Colonial (Era) Camera

The development of photography and the photographic studio in the Congo largely parallels these continental trends. However, the peripheral location of the Kivu provinces has made African-run photo studios a significantly more recent phenomenon. Before the development of the first African photo studios in the Congo, photography became common in the hands of colonial functionaries and the myriad adventurers and missionaries. While the photographs of atrocity and mutilations that began to circulate from the Congo in the late 1880s may be the foremost historical images in Western minds, the region also sported ample photography that detailed landscapes and diverse ethnic groups. As the photographic technology became more portable, moving from glass plates to large-format film slides, to *Rolleiflex* film, to eventually 35mm black and white and color film, and now digital and cell phone photography ever more people gained access to the camera and its power of representation. During the colonial era, photography burgeoned with the steady mounting of expeditions and the placement of Belgian colonists across

the country; with 2450 white administrative functionaries, the Belgian Congo supported the highest number of colonial personnel on the continent (MacGaffey 1987, 32).

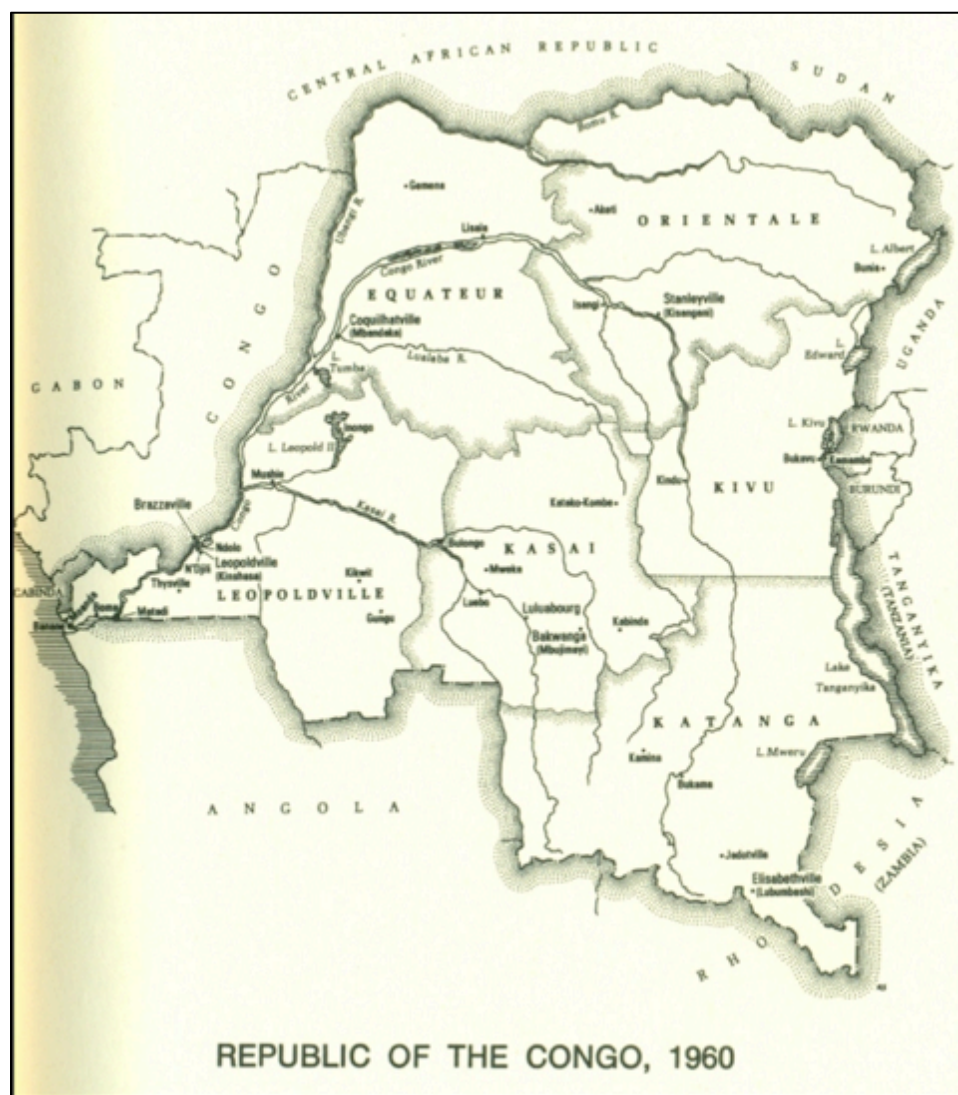
Together with travelers, missionaries, traders, entrepreneurs, and professional photographers, these colonialists created thousands of photographs romanticizing the landscape, colonial development projects, and the country's diverse ethnic groups. In their early pictures, African peoples were often represented within "type" genres. Type photographs were a fascination of early anthropologists though travelers, missionaries, and colonizers commonly produced them. They tended to abstract the "essence of human variation" and used scraps of observable culture and physiology – tattooing, hairstyles, bone structure, and ritual dress - to "stand for generalities, becoming symbols for wider truths at the risk of stereotyping and misrepresentation" (Edwards 1992, 7). Such type photographs focused on close-up portraits or *mise-en-scène* (put in place) images featuring individuals posing with their traditional cultural objects, e.g. spears, drums, fly whisks and masks. Later photographs also incorporated images of "westernized Africans," featuring their operation of factories and steamships in the full colonial dress. Colonial magazines, *Le Congo Illustré* (1892 – 1895) and *L'Illustration Congolaise* (1918 – 1940) widely published these photographs as well as drawings of the landscape, peoples, flora and fauna, and the successes of the colonial mission (Geary 2002).

While the photograph became an efficient tool of propaganda for the colonial state, and a means to trade in ethnographic generalities, for the Africans featured, the picture also became a desired object. While controlled by the hegemonic forces of colonialism, the photograph nonetheless became something individuals could demand as opportunity arose. Through the colonial, type-based lens they nonetheless incorporated in local meanings of self, class, and modernity. While on the German Loango Expedition in the Kongo and Loango kingdoms near the coast, photographer Julius Falkstein (1824-1917) experienced non-stop, opportunistic photographic demands on the part of the Africans. Of his experience, Geary writes, "Requests for portraits were so great that toward the end of his stay he (Falkstein) was unable to handle the

demand. People were overjoyed with each successful portrait... The portrayed proudly displayed the images in little golden frames, gave them a place of honor in their houses, or kept them in the box that contained their valuables” (2002, 81). Geary goes on to note, “Africans, especially leaders, exploited the photographic occasion for their own purposes and played an incredibly active part in the encounter” (ibid., 83). These early photographic interactions in the Western regions of the country opened spaces for the development of African participation in photography and eventually African-run studios. Today in the eastern areas of the Congo the same opportunism and demand for one’s likeness surround photography.

The Kivus did not have African-run photo studios until possibly the mid-20th century. However, according to Geary (2002) near the western coast in the cities of Boma and Leopoldville (now Matadi and Kinshasa), Africans began their own enterprises in photography as early as the 1890s. In those studios, African photographers created images that exposed playful imaginings that drew on both Western and African notions of wealth and modernity. One such photographer was Hezekiah Shanu, a Nigerian Yoruba man who migrated to the Congo to take a leadership role within Leopold II’s private army, *La Force Publique*. Fascinated by the photography he encountered during his military tenure, Shanu chose to stay in the Congo and hone his photography in his studio on the banks of the Congo River. His photographs catered to the African elite and show well-dressed men and women posing in “Victorian fashion” touching elaborate modern props, such as canes, chairs, and pocket watches (Geary 2002, 104-105). As the flows of the colonial state -the army, trade, and the missionaries - moved inland so did photography; African studios began production in Stanleyville (now Kisangani) by 1910 (See Figure 31 for a map of colonial provinces and cities at independence). In the studios that grew from the coast to the upper reaches of the Congo River photographs featured individuals in smart Western dress posing with flower vases, small dogs, canes, umbrellas, radios, and bicycles (Geary 2002).

Figure 31: Map of the Republic of the Congo 1960 (Blackpast.org 2015)



The Dual Photographic Periphery of the Eastern DRC

That there is little information about early African studio or even Western photography in the sleepy port towns of Goma and Bukavu or the broader Kivu Provinces reflects the region's peripheral location. Situated on the distant edges of two commonly photographed areas – the Western parts of the Congo and the center of the Rwandan Kingdom – the Kivus entered the photographic fray late in the game. Goma sits approximately 1000 miles as a crow flies from the capital of Kinshasa. Even from Kisangani, the closest town on the Congo River, Goma is 422

driving miles away. On one hand this distance mostly positioned the Kivus beyond the government's control. The state was neither able to regularly extract taxes nor demand its mandated quantity of agricultural goods and days of *corvé* (forced) labor (Packard 1981). Moreover, this distance from the state also meant that the region faced serious disadvantage both in regards to education and social services. During the colonial period, only 3 percent of children in the Kivus received post-primary education; teaching and access to health care were limited to what missionaries could provide. At independence, few Kivuians had the education or access to move into the national political sphere (MacGaffey 1987). Similarly, in this state periphery few Kivuians had the experience creating their own photography.

Moreover, as photography became increasingly common on the continent, the Kivus found themselves in another social and photographic periphery. To the east along the shores of Lake Kivu and the hills of the Semliki Valley sat the Rwandan Kingdom with its highly centralized hierarchical government and its distinctly stratified social structure.¹⁷ At the height of its power, the Rwandan Kingdom composed of a tight network constructed of Tutsi pastoralist hill chiefs who controlled the land and the agricultural producers (commonly *Hutu* and *Twa*) who farmed on the slopes.¹⁸ From the 1700s onward, the kingdom gained power and further centralization; in the late 1800s military raids under the command of Mwami Rwabugiri brought significant tracts of land and the mixed Bantu and Nilotic peoples to the West of Lake Kivu (much of modern day Goma *et environs*) under the kingdom's rule. In the late 1800s, the German colonial government mapped onto of the existing Rwandan Kingdom. Together with the Belgians, they drew an arbitrary border through Lake Kivu that delineated the Ruanda-Urundi

¹⁷ The Rwandan kingdom has existed through a series of *mwamis* (kings) since the 11th Century. However, due to the migrations into the region – including the migration of the Nilotic migration of the Tutsi pastoralists in the 14th – 16th centuries, the kingdom largely became centralized in the 1700s, eventually evolving into the highly stratified shape that featured in colonial and early anthropological accounts (Newbury 1988; Schroenbrun 1998; Vansina 1998; 2004; 2005)

¹⁸ Catherine Newbury's work on the Kinyaga however, importantly shows that such ethnic categories were not fixed. Rather they were fluid. Opportunities existed for social mobility or movement between one's social elevation and even between hills (1978; 1988).

population from its western frontier composed of often-mobile Bantu peoples who historically controlled trade between the Congo basin and the Indian Ocean (to the east) and the Arabian Peninsula (to the northeast) (Morono 1998; Newbury 2010). Colonial photographers regularly memorialized the high court members of the kingdom and the *Ntore*, a group of celebrated *Tutsi* warriors. Turning their lenses on the elaborate court dress, talking drums, warrior dances and high jumps (Geary 2002, 90-97) the broader Kivus and their mixed agricultural, hunter-gatherer and pastoralist populations of *Hutu*, *Nande*, *Hunde*, *Havu*, *Bashi*, and *Bemba* remained largely out of focus. Long after photography had become common in central Rwanda and the west of the Congo, in the mid-20th-century archive images of the region begin to expose the colonial notions of “progress.” Pictures of Goma’s new deep-water port, burgeoning two story buildings, imported vehicles poised at the edge of volcanic eruptions, and the colonial schools overshadow the African populations and their images.¹⁹

Peripheral to both their eastern and the western counterparts, the peoples of the Kivus were left largely to fend for themselves and construct their own means of profit both during the colonial and post-colonial eras. Around the Congo-Rwanda border, individuals skillfully created economic opportunities based on the uncontrollability of the region, as it “thrived on the political difficulties of Zaire (now Congo) which provide it with a favorable environment for profitable business negotiations and transactions” (MacGaffey 1987, 159). In transgressing the border through trade and contracts certain individual elites - “big men” - and ethnic configurations gained enormous power and wealth. The *Nande* of Beni and Butembo, for instance, grew into a formidable trading network of businessmen who now provide security and economic growth in the northern region of North Kivu that borders Uganda (Raeymaekers 2010; Vlassenroot et al. 2012). The *Tutsi* traders and landowners in and around Goma also have deftly profited from

¹⁹ Analysis based on author’s research in the Tervuren Congo archives housed at Royal Museum for Central Africa in Belgium.

mineral trade and extraction on the land, as well as trade in pastoral products, and real estate investment (Büscher 2009). Far from the social and political control of the state, the Kivus' border cities came to house enormous unregulated growth and potential financial opportunity. Therein, the diverse, urban and peri-urban populations of the frontier cities learned to not only *se débrouillez* (to get by) in the semi-absence of a supportive state, but to fluidly craft and position themselves to best gain access to the wealth and opportunity they could see. The growth of photo studios and *les photographes ambulants* reflects both this opportunity and the enterprising spirit that grew in this peripheral space.

The Rise of the Kivu Studio

By independence in 1960, African-owned photo studios began appearing within the Congo's steadily growing eastern city of Goma, as well as Bukavu in the south and Butembo / Beni to the north. It remains unclear as to when the very first African studio reached the eastern-most provinces. However, according to Aziza – a founder of a radio station for women in South Kivu – her father Jerome was the first African owner of a studio in that province. His studio opened in the late 1940s and kept running through the fraught years of independence all the way into the 1980s. Jerome, like many early photographers, was a jack-of-all-trades. He maneuvered between his roles as a cook, a photographer, a bar-owner, and a small sundry shop manager. When he was young, Jerome had been the cook for a colonial photographer. Over time, he came to operate his own studio, built of earned and gifted material. “I can still smell the chemicals” Aziza reminisced of the dark room. She had spent part of her childhood in the independence era helping out, trimming negatives, and packaging prints for clients. Jerome painted a background of the Eiffel Tower and various versions of nature and cloud scenes with which his Congolese subjects could pose. “We all thought that the backgrounds we painted and posed in front of were the same that the *mzungus* (foreigners) were doing in their studios,” she added. While hoping to resemble colonial photographic practice, the Congolese studio space was also distinctive. As individuals

crafted a visual narrative in front of the camera, they relied heavily on the input of the photographer to make themselves look good. He provided the background, limited props and sets, and suggestions for poses. For their part, the photographic subjects would commonly contribute the specific props and representational desires. “They would bring fancy clothing, a radio, a bicycle... These things they would show to flaunt their status,” she explained. Such items classified as what Nancy Hunt (1999) refers to as the material objects of the colonial lexicon. These particular negotiated “remains and debris” opened space of “colonial bargaining and strife, translation, and mixtures” (1999, 11) as they were drawn into the experimental photographic space that was as political as it was playful.²⁰ Of the issue of colonial mimicry, Ferguson writes:

At one level, colonial rulers explicitly aimed to “civilize” their subjects and mold them into the image of Europeans; natives who imitated the colonizer were in this sense part of the colonial plan. But colonial imitation always threatened to become excessive and uncontrolled and thereby to unsettle the boundaries and relations of authority between settler and native that the colonial order depended on. [...] When urban Africans seized so eagerly on European cultural forms, they were neither enacting ancient African tradition nor engaging in a parody of the whites. Rather... they were asserting rights to the city and pressing, by their conduct, claims to the political and social rights of full membership in a wider society.” (2002, 553; 555).

Jerome’s photography supports a shared analysis that studios transform into “sites where people practice consumption as a way of engaging and interrogating modernity” (Buckley 2001, 79). However, the photographic subjects did not wholesale appropriate colonial norms that had inspired the studio and its interactions. Rather they re-imagined them and made claims through the image to exist in the city, and moreover, to thrive. The posed, interactive photographic experience opens controlled space to explore the self while simultaneously probing local interpretations of global themes and their regional politics (Pinney 1997; Behrend 1998; Brieilmaier 2013). The camera, the presence of a photographer, and the imagined viewer inspired

²⁰ Hartmann et al (1998), Landau and Kaspin (2002) and Kratz and Gordon (2002) provide important analyses of how populations were both figured within the colonial and tourist camera and made meaning through that lens.

the “*pas des deux* between the concept of the ‘individual’ and the social” (Clark in Peffer and Cameron 2013, 6). In that way, “The photograph becomes not only a reflection of the physical appearance of the individual but also a statement of identity and relationships” (Cameron 2014: 154). It is a place where one can “embrace another identity and thus enhance one’s own” (Peffer 2013: 6), where one can fantasize (Brielmaier 2013, 255) and ultimately where one can be shown to be “just a little bit more than one really is” (Pinney 1997, 178).

Since independence, the Kivu photo studio has steadily grown as a place of simultaneous self-making and interrogating modernity. During my fieldwork, I encountered innumerable personal photographs that feature the individual or their family in front of a white or painted backdrop that dates from the years just after independence. The images show well-dressed men, women, and children and an array of props (e.g. bicycles, radios, and/ or Bibles). These pictures arose not only from the studios set within the major cities, but also from the backwater areas such as Shabunda South Kivu, Lubero North Kivu, as well as in the displaced persons camps that ring Goma.

Notably, one photograph from Shabunda in the 1970s shows a checkered black and white backdrop, reminiscent of J.H. Lamprey’s late-1800s grid system used to measure the photographic subject. Lynne, who fled from conflict in Shabunda during the 1990s, is now a server at a restaurant in Goma. In the image, she and her sister pose in their Sunday best, gazing with seemingly shy expressions at the camera. Lamprey had pioneered a method that used silk threads and later a painted black and white checked backdrop to garner “scientific” data about exotic peoples (Poignant 1992; Pinney 2011). “The grid sought to transform the presence of unique bodies into what we might think of as somatic prototypes ... a complete visual knowledge that would assimilate bodies as data in a vast system of comparison” (Pinney 2011, 29). Like the pocket watches, bicycles and the range of debris from the colonial era, instruments like this background became incorporated into the eastern DRC’s visual lexicon. The original use of such a background exposed the hegemonic power of the colonial camera and the desire to control the

photographic subject (Edwards 1990; Poignant 1992; Pinney 2011). However, the appropriation and meaning-making it later came to engage formed a new type of visual creolization as Congolese actors unmade Western “modern” visual content and assigned it new, regionally-meaningful narratives.

Goma and Its Studios

Today, studio and the studio-like photography continue to interrogate notions of self and modernity as individuals and photographers pull a range of props, backgrounds, and regional power dynamics into the image. By the time I began pilot work for this project in 2012, there were three major printing labs in town, capable of printing black and white images, and at least ten studios operating in the center city. For example, next to the universities, competing photo studios sit in 8x8 vending stalls. Wawa has his studio – aptly named “Studio Wawa”- next to UniGom (the University of Goma). Inside his small vendor’s stall, he pops the wooden window out and leans out to look at passers-by. Above his head sit stacks and stacks of printed images. Behind him, there are two plastic chairs and a small table with inexpensive makeup products laid out, and a few mirrors both on the table and against the wall. Above the mirrors hang a host of example photographs, framed and representing the type of work that Wawa can do. In contrast, in the center of town, Studio Creatif often has nine photographers and upwards of ten photo editors working for them, tied to creating images just outside the studio, editing them, and printing them. Outside the studio a group of camera-wielding men stand in casual competition; each photographer is ready to rush out and claim the hand of any potential customer, thereby claiming the right to do the photographic work.

Photographers at Goma’s studios speak to the diversity of the city itself. The bigger studios articulate directly with the recently relevant position of the periphery, where opportunity is fleeting, but gains are quick. Commonly owned by Indian and Lebanese economic immigrants, these studios draw ample money to send them back and forth from Goma to their foreign homes

multiple times each year. Within their photographic ranks, there are rarely, if ever, women. However, the male photographers range from 15 years old to 65, come from a dynamic mix of ethnic groups, and carry with them a vast array of experience across the city's myriad neighborhoods and clientele. Common among them, however, is the fact that photography is not an end in and of itself. Rather, it has been an efficient means of capitalizing on economic opportunity and building for future projects – marriage, further business ventures, and the schooling of their children. Patrick, a 25-year-old photographer with Studio Creatif explained:

I started photography when I was in the first year of secondary school. That was in 2003. At that point life had gotten really hard. But I had a small Chinese camera; it was an automatic film camera – I used to bring it with me when I studied in secondary school. At school, I was *ambulant* moving from the school and the neighborhood to take pics. That old camera took good pictures, and people started to call me to create them; it made them very happy. I would print small or even sometimes large sized photographs. I remember well that I made good money back then. I studied due to my photography; I became able to rent my small apartment and life became good. In my 4th year in secondary, I started working here in with Studio Creatif. That was the end of 2006.

Photography has become such an efficient means of capitalizing on the fleeting wealth of the region as well as the ever-present desire of the population to show success and upward mobility. The rise of the ever-opportunistic *photographes ambulants* during the recent era of conflict speaks both to the outstanding population growth in Goma and to the economic opportunity to be found in photography. Access to cameras, cell phones with integrated lenses, and digital processing software has grown more available and has challenged studio photographers' roles as the dominant local image-makers in the region. Today, everyone from street kids, secondary school students, professional studio photographers, market vendors, and NGO workers make side money as *photographes ambulants*. Standing outside of Studio Creatif, in the center of Goma, David – who often doubles as a model for the studio's advertising photographs, pocketed his small digital camera and lamented, "Before it was good. Because back then, no one had one [a camera], so people would come here. But now, there's nothing. The work has become *teke teke*

(difficult). Before more people would come to have a photo taken at the studio. But normally now, others take the pictures and develop them here.” Another of the studio’s photographers, Emmanuel, echoed his sentiments, “In 20 years the situation around photography has changed significantly. But now we don’t know what the situation is with tomorrow. For the moment, *tuko tu, basi* (we are here, that’s all). As for photography now, we only gain a little, there’s no work. There is *chaumage* (unemployment). The more there is photography everywhere, the less we are necessary.” Increasing numbers of casual photographers coupled with regular electricity shortages and the rising rent prices in Goma have pushed the once studio-based production of popular photography to adapt and expand beyond its usual studio walls.

The role and function of the studio as a photographic space have been forced to shift with time and the spread of photography. However, interestingly, the material photographs produced outside the studio nonetheless resemble the representational norms and interaction inculcated therein. Studio-learned poses, backgrounds, props, interactions, and visual self-determination have stepped out of the studio space and into the broader local visual field that spans the province. For instance early in 2013, I lent a camera to Bella, a savvy former street kid whom I had known since 2011. At the beginning of my fieldwork I had pursued a photographic methodology of auto-photography or photo-voice where, in response to questions or a theme, individuals document his or her life and then discuss the resulting images. Bella was curious about photography and in what I thought was a win-win proposition, I asked Bella to photograph his daily life and all that was important to him. In exchange for his help with my research, I would print the images for him to keep. Two weeks later, he returned the camera to me. The photographs showed a systematic set of portraits of adolescent boys and girls from his neighborhood. His photographs copied standard local image styles and featured his subjects framed against neutral walls, posing against cars, or holding cell phones. The pictures looked like photographs that could have been taken by nascent studio photographers. As it turned out, his posed studio-like portraits were part of an economic exchange from which Bella profited due to

my promised free printing. While this method quickly failed due to the eventual theft of three of the four cameras, in its short-lived attempt, it exposed the region's opportunistic use of photography, both as a means to show oneself as glamorous and a way to capitalize on a quick financial gain.

Like Bella's photographs, whether created by studio-employed photographers or *les photographes ambulants* the studio's legacy remains strong. What I call "studio-like" images share distinctive similarities in style and subject-photographer interaction to studio photography, despite – or potentially on account of - the potential inexperience of the photographer and the distance from a formal photographic space. Props, backgrounds, and interactions are known by both subject and photographer and carefully improvised and choreographed - even if there is no studio or official studio photographer present.

A CASE OF OMNIPRESENT STUDIO-LIKE CONSTRUCTION

By May 2014, I had long since moved out of Maji and left the tiny in-town apartment I had shared with three other adults and two children. From February until August, I relished my independence and semi-quiet in the second-floor apartment of Marta's middle-class home near the UniGom. At the end of an average day of photography and interviews, I turned my motorcycle towards home. I had, however, forgotten both that it was Marta's daughter Lorie's 10th birthday, and that the party was to be held on the first floor of my home. Brilliant white party tents hung in the driveway; chairs were arranged in both church-straight rows and laid out encircling the white plastic tables. Covered in a thick coat of gray volcanic dust, I contrasted strongly with the clean white spread. I ran off to clean up; birthday parties were events you looked glamorous for. Women would don their best *kikwembe* (African fabric dress), and men would arrive in suit jackets and ties. Birthday celebrations were examples of *les circonstances* (the events) that photographers are called to document and print.

That night turned out to be full of entertaining festivities and image making, allowing me to experiment with my direct photography and co-creative portraits methods. From the beginning of the party, I provided casual photography with my small Fuji x100.²¹ This little full frame camera was less intrusive than the large Nikon D800 I usually used. Moreover, it fit in better with the look of many of the region's cameras and keeping my gear from overshadowing the hired photographers. Throughout the evening, I filled in occasionally for the two young, hired photographers. As was usual in the eastern DRC, events such as birthday parties were no small ordeals. The host would hire photographers who were charged with photographing the major moments and the well-dressed VIP guests – often the family members and high-ranking members of society. Photographers were paid for the images they print, not for their commitment to the event. Thus, while the host expected them to capture specific people and moments, it was also common to find photographers wandering among the crowd and taking portraits of the well-dressed non-VIP guests to make side profit. By later selling the prints back to the attendees, they could add about 11 – 15 cents a photograph to their earnings. This opportunistic, dual photographic tactic inevitably caused clashes.

“Where are you photographers?! What in the hell do I pay you for? You're missing this!” Marta would scream from somewhere in the house, while the young image-makers were nowhere to be found. That night, I helped photograph the moments they missed. Marta instructed me to shoot stop-motion cake cutting, the buffet line, and the portraits of Lorie and her father upon his surprise arrival from Kinshasa. Diamonté one of the photographers, later asked for my memory card so that he could print and profit from the photos he missed as he wandered the crowd.

²¹ Within Goma and the major cities of North Kivu, photographers wield anything from small, banged-up point and shoot film Yashika or early model digital Sony cameras to fancy Nikons and Canons that would elicit jealousy in much of the wider world.

Early in the evening, Imani pulled me aside; he wanted a few photographs showing him to look *mzuri* – a Swahili term commonly used to indicate wellness. Imani was a young man studying nursing at the UniGom campus just around the corner who also doubled as the house’s “security guard” (effectively, he had been hired to be the person to open the high metal gates if I came home after 8 pm). Residing in a fully equipped room on the first floor, it hadn’t taken long before Imani had become family for not only me but also for Marta’s extended household. At this particular party, he straddled his role of employee and well-respected guest with dignity. Dressed in an iridescent blue suit jacket and shined black brogues, he took on a new job of welcoming and helping to seat the invitees.

When Imani no longer needed to work as an usher, he reminded me that he wanted a few photographs. As per usual the first question was “where?” Imani indicated that he wanted a picture outside of the houses’ walls; it was too busy inside, and he didn’t want random people distractingly featured in the background of his photo. We slid through the door, and he pointed at the adjacent lava rock wall. “How about over here?” he asked just before he slid into the location and struck a pose intended for a *mrefu* photo. *Mrefu* is a commonly used Swahili term that translates directly to “tall,” but also indicates a photograph that shows one’s whole body. He placed his hands at his side, spread his feet to shoulder width, and with his chin up looked the camera square in the lens. I snapped an image. “A little to the left,” came a voice from behind me. Startled, I looked to see that one of the local photographers had followed us outside. He pointed, encouraging Imani to move to the left so that the background would be uniform. He was right. The image I had just created included the side of the neighbor’s doorway. I knew better. I had learned that within popular photography uniform backgrounds were better; anything that distracted from the subject without adding to their narrative of wellness and success was detrimental to the photograph.



[Figure 32: (above) Imani and a *photographe ambulant*.
Figure 33: Imani poses with the Lexus 1]





[Figure 34: Imani poses with the Lexus 2]

Having re-centered the frame, as I made a move to depress the shutter a second time an older male guest stepped out of the party on the way to his car. “Oh no, not like that!” he cut in. We (Imani, myself, and the photographer) all paused, “No, no, no, son come here. Let me show you how to do this correctly.” The passerby told Imani to remove his suit jacket and swing it over his shoulder. He then walked him – a reassuring hand on his shoulder - to the front bumper of the flashy Lexus parked next to the door. “Here, this will do better.” The photographer agreed eagerly with him, and we both depressed our respective shutters framing Imani and the car (Figures 33 and 34). Eventually, Imani called for me to be in the picture and I handed off my camera and stepped into the photograph, imitating his photographic swagger.

LEARNING THE LOCAL THROUGH THE LENS

The vignette shows the intention, missteps, and negotiations involved in producing an otherwise simple photograph of a young man posed in front of a car. Imani's agency came to the fore as he approached me to make a picture of him looking good - dressed well and in a celebratory mood. Equally, his flexible crafting of the visual narrative exposed the interactive, fluid means of articulating aspects of his subjectivity within photographic production. It also showcased the use of props (the car) and pose (the jacket over his shoulder; leaning on the car) as means of deepening a story that made him the center of attention – showing him to be someone cool, connected to modernity, and wealth. Working through my camera's lens with local photographers and photographic subjects, like Imani, helped to expose the nuanced dynamics of what genres, themes, and elements compose a good photograph within the local visual field. It also taught me how such an image is usually crafted. By actively participating in the photographic creation as a photographer I came to learn what representations subjects desired and to actively participate in the negotiated tension between the subject, bystanders, and photographer as each strives to craft a particular visual narrative. I'll discuss these components specifically in the "guidebook" that follows.

Early in my research, my way of seeing as informed by my ethnography and photojournalism was far removed from the norms and practices engaged in the local visual field and had to shift to be able to accurately “see” and do local photography. (I engage this shifting way of seeing through Cristina Grasseni and Dianne Hagaman's work in regards to humanitarian photography in Chapter 4). Built of an amalgamation of ethnographic inquiry and experience as a documentary photographer and photojournalist I had been trained to seek the action of a situation, the decisive moment, and the candid-like interactions where the camera seems to not impact the engagement of the photographic subjects. In general I knew to look for diverse backgrounds and embrace visual excess - what Deborah Poole refers to as the difficult to control “noise” of context, culture and human countenance” that encompasses the photographic subject (2005, 163).

Compositionally, I was trained to photograph using the rule of thirds (placing the person to the left or right third of the image – i.e. not centering them) and a horizontal axis. These tactics opened space for large amounts of excess – the doorframes, cars, trash, children, and affects - to enter the frame of the photograph. As subjects, photographers and bystanders encouraged me to center the subject, zoom in, and reduce excess, I had to resist my usual compositional tendencies.

My methods of shadowing, direct, and co-creative portrait photography arose in part from the social dynamics of photography across the region's photographic landscape and partially from the compelling examples set by other photography-creating academics.²² For instance, Chris Pinney's (1997) work on photography in India showed how the social life of the photograph reflects the histories and theology of the region. Using his camera, his work also exposed how his Western sense of subject, light, and composition initially clashed with local Indian representational desires. This facilitated a set of through-the-lens realizations that enabled him to engage photography and the subjectivity it reflects from a situated, non-ethnocentric lens. In another example, Sarah Pink employed her camera to understand a group of female bullfighters in Spain (1997; 2001). Pink (2001) used her photographic prints to spark discussion that helped to query her subjects' subjectivities and enable her to gain a sense of "how individuals situated themselves in relation to other individuals in bullfighting culture" (2001, 39). The methods I used in this research similarly employed my camera to understand the construction of various forms of photography across the photographic landscape and the subjectivities therein. They also helped to probe the expectations and politics of the underlying regional scape and create knowledge through the experience of photography within each visual field.

Using my photographic baseline as a starting point, I relied on a set of methods that would retrain my eye. Through the local version of "shadowing photography," I watched and

²² While I draw mainly from others' methods that employ photography, this learning-through-experience parallels much of the methodology and knowledge production in the realm of ethnomusicology. For instance, ethnomusicologists have learned to understand jazz through the process of learning to play and improvise (see Sudnow 1978; Berliner 2009).

mimicked photographic action, as studio photographers and *photographes ambulants* would turn their camera vertical. As they zoomed in on their subject against a neutral background or worked to craft a sumptuous narrative of success, I tried (not always successfully) to step beyond my usual photographic inclinations, upend the camera, and consciously compose a similar image. Additionally, through “direct” photography my camera and I became a photographic tool for individuals and groups across the region. Goma's residents would often ask me to take specific photographs both of themselves and of events such as weddings and other celebrations – like Lorie’s birthday party. By paying attention to the expectations and desires of the photographic subjects and other photographers, I re-shaped my understanding of what produced a *picha mzuri* for this particular audience. The more I took and returned these images (I carried a printer and paper with me, which I used to print and regularly return images), the more I was requested to do so. As such, I came to know what was pleasing both to the subjects and the photographers by learning dialectically through the camera. This created a form of embodied research where my understanding of the norms, dynamics, politics and subtle shifts of intention and meaning of the images became both sensory and strikingly visible in the resulting photographs.

These methods augmented the more traditional anthropological engagements in the field. Conversations and hours of participant observation provided me with enormous insight, especially in understanding how both subjects and photographers discuss images. Moreover, discussions exposed not only conventional photographic terminology, but also how such language and the image processes it informed crosscut age, class, and ethnic groups within and around Goma. The terms *mzuri* (good / well), *mnene* (fat / close-up), *mrefu* (tall / showing the full body), *kati-kati* (half-way/ cropped from the waist up), *passeporte* (head and shoulders) and *arrière-plan* (background) were commonly accepted terms. These concepts communicated the compositional expectation of the photograph for individuals ranging from the well-off business people of the center city to the displaced population residing in the region’s IDP camps.

These terms and the visual desires they communicate are not taught in classes. There are no schools and no universities that teach students how to take photographs. At Studio Creatif, the topic of training became a point of both pride and dismay, “I was never *formé* (trained) in photography,” explained Renard, a 40-year-old photographer who had worked at Studio Creatif since 1994. “I taught myself. I asked questions of my colleagues when there were things that I didn’t understand. ‘This problem *iko nini* (is what)?’ ‘*Vitesse iko nini* (Shutter speed is what)?’ ‘*Overture iko nini* (aperture is what)?’ I didn’t know what ISO was. I didn’t know anything about cameras when I started.” As he was explaining David cut in, “Its terrible!” he lamented, “There are no teachers at school who train students in photography, everyone must teach themselves to take pictures and make their money.” The surrounding photographers on Studio Creatif’s steps, nodded in agreement. Rather than understanding their craft through words, photographers learned from one another and through their camera; photography in the DRC is a physical practice. A “good” photograph – what is locally termed a *picha mzuri* – is something that is recognizable on paper but not commonly discussed or described in detail. Ultimately, I chose to learn in the same way that the photographers did – through the lens.

A PHOTOGRAPHIC GUIDEBOOK FOR NORTH KIVU

In the following pages, I construct a sort of guidebook for local photography. By putting words and images to the interactive, imaginative ways in which the popular photographs are shaped, I strive to provide the reader with a nuanced guide through which to come to know and recognize components of local photography. In the following chapters, I apply this information as I explore how these characteristically local trends and tendencies cross the porous boundaries of the photographic landscape and inform interactions and expectations within the production of humanitarian photographs.

THE INTERACTIVE, CREATIVE PICTURE

Photo Guideline 1: (For Subjects and Photographers) Interact to make a photograph that will praise the subject



[Figure 35 (above); Figure 36 (below)]



In the eastern DRC, the studio and studio-like portrait represent flexibly structured relationships between the photographer, bystanders, and the subject. The photographer who is usually approached and paid for this interaction is charged with crafting and capturing a visual narrative that speaks to the *mzuri*-ness of the subject. This corroborates Heike Behrend's findings from her studies of Kenyan photo studios. She notes, "studio photography makes a conscious choice, one that prides in its attempt to record, preserve, and celebrate a certain moment" (Behrend 1998, 140). As photographers in the eastern DRC compose the image with the input of subjects and bystanders, they reinforce an interactive relationship. On one hand they draw on the history of negotiated interaction between subject and photographer, which has shaped the expectation of what a good image is. On the other hand, the economic exchange structures the interaction and the expected visual narrative. The goal of the photograph has little to do with capturing a decisive moment or "reality"; rather the objective is to please the subject, and therefore, gain money and possibly a repeat customer.

In the process of photographing someone as "just a little more than they are," studio and ambulant photography have established clearly creative, interactive spaces. Not only do photographers provide the material and skills to make portraits happen, but they also facilitate the posing and help to shape the image that will carry its various, ambiguous messages forward into circulation. Between photographer and subject exists a "space of continual debate" (Behrend 1998, 141). While certainly, photographer-subject relationships depend on independent personalities, each photograph can be "understood as a mobile site of interaction, a place for ongoing performances of negotiation of representation between the photographer, the subject, the future viewers and even the long history of images that precedes the moment of the shutter snap" (Peffer 2013, 1).

Renard clarified this process. "In taking the image you [the photographer] are creative. What is good now is that you take the photograph and see the picture [due the digital screen]. Before you had to wait to see if what you did pleases your client. But now, you can take the

digital image, show it to them, and they can tell you what they think. If they like it, they will ask you to take more like that, or they will ask to change it a bit.” As the photographer dutifully does their job – striving to exchange visual praise for the sale of an image, the subject is simultaneously busy crafting themselves into their desired, purposeful expression of self. They seek photographs to show that “they’re dressed well, that they feel good,” explained Gloire, a photographer operating out of Studio Wawa – the tiny box of a studio near UniGom. “They want to show that they’re “equipped” and often, that they just bought something new.” And while the photographer “*wanaweza proposer tu*” (can only propose) how the subject should pose, there is a significant level of interaction between photographer and subject as they create the image. However, the subject has the final say. The subject may look to the photographer for help posing or shaping themselves into the best version of their self, but the financial exchange positions the subject in control.

For instance, while walking through the Rond Point Tchukudu, I watched Rodrigue, a photographer acquaintance of mine taking a picture of a beautiful young woman. She was well dressed in bright yellow *kikwembe* (African print cloth) and held an even brighter fake-leather yellow bag. She posed stoically against the bushes that ring the golden statue. After taking a picture of her up close, Rodrigue backed up, positioned the camera vertically, and photographed a long (*mrefu*), photograph, showing her head and her feet. After a short discussion of what other photos she might like, she was at a loss for ideas. Rodrigue stepped in and asked her to pretend she was flying. He explained that he had an idea of how to edit the photograph to make it look more fun by *photoshopping* a cloud into the background. She giggled and posed awkwardly; her legs stayed straight, but she cocked her torso forward from the hip as if from her waist up she was soaring away from the traffic and the noise of Goma. While such fanciful images might be less common than the standard poses and attempt to look *mzuri*, they nonetheless draw out the edges of the interaction between the subject and the photographer. Local photographic representations

here are fluid, embellished through the play, tension, and negotiation between subject and photographer.

Photo Guideline 2: Feel Free to Merge “Real” and “Creative” Photographic Elements



[Figure 37]



[Figure 38 (above); Figure 39 (below)]



Photographs within the local visual field function not just as perfect mechanical reproductions (Benjamin 1937/1961) of reality nor as simple “decals or transfers” (Bazin and Gray 1960) of a situation to an image. In direct opposition to the more documentary style of photography described in the previous chapter, local Congolese photography emphasizes the image as a distinctly playful construction. In the local visual field, images merge imagination and reality. Intentionality is key. Subjects and photographers craft subject-pleasing visual narratives built both of denotative “real” and connotative “creative” aspects.

That a photograph carries multiple messages or codes simultaneously is not novel. Barthes (1978) breaks the image into denotative and connotative aspects. The denotative code, he argues acts as an index, or as a direct analog of reality. The connotative code composes the cultural, subjective interpretation of photograph – what it means, not just what it shows. Barthes grapples with the dual potentials of the picture from the position of someone who interprets the image. I suggest here that in the eastern DRC, photographic subjects and photographers are more than merely aware of these multiple codes. Rather, they actively work to engage the camera and construct both the real and creative messages into the resulting image.

I will employ the terms “intended real” and “intended creative” throughout this dissertation to discuss the ways in which photographs are constructed and read to engage respectively denotative or connotative desires. These images “transcend the culture of realism while at the same time confirming it” (Behrend 2005, 238) On one hand, intended real aspects of an image reflect a desire to have the picture appear free of construction – such components are to be engaged as visible proof. For instance, images denote meaning particularly through featuring one’s face and body. The ability to recognize oneself is crucial. In fact, the photograph is most commonly created for the purpose of memorializing a version of self. At very least, the face shows a denoted, intended real base for the image. It composes a protagonist for the visual narrative by proclaiming, “this is me.”

On the other hand, the intended creative category becomes an umbrella term to address any aspects of the image that show inventive ideas of intentional crafting. This notion becomes a catchall for the fanciful imagining that goes into shaping the often-playful image products. With props, backgrounds, pose, and by cropping unwanted visual excess out of the frame, photographers and subjects structure whimsical associations and decorate the visual narrative. By adding such intended creative aspects to an image already clearly showing one's real elements – their face and body - one shapes a purposeful narrative that glorifies “*le moi*.”



[Figure: 40]

I employ the notion of “*le moi*” to describe the powerful, positive, sometime ego-riddled engagement with oneself that often arises in Congolese photography. The term draws from a vibrant conversation I had while traveling with Aid the World in Beni (see Chapter 4 for more on this). Their coordinator, Max drove a new Mercedes convertible over the region’s terribly rutted

roads and bemoaned Congolese politics, the ongoing conflicts, and the corruption. He lamented, “The problem with this country is that it is all about the individual – *le moi*. Everything is ‘me first,’ ‘praise me,’ ‘this will best serve me’, *moi, moi, moi*.” In space of simultaneous opportunism and volatility, his commentary struck a cord. Fidel, a semi-philosopher and heavy-handed critic of humanitarian aid in the region later agreed with my application of Max’s term to the area’s popular photography. When I asked what he thought about my use of *le moi* as concerns photography, he noted, “*Le moi* that’s the ego rising to the surface.” He explained that it was a symptom of the pauperization of the Congolese people - a pauperization that has its roots in the country’s political system. He went on, “In the picture each person becomes a demi-god. It’s the culture of *les sapeurs*.²³ For the average person, *le moi* becomes the strongest thing that you have.”

As individuals merge real parts of the photograph with the creative elements that will help shape their narrative, they expose a flexible range of visual subjectivities. The image presents a story that celebrates their true person at the same time that they use a bricolage of on-hand props and backgrounds to shape themselves into something more than they really are. Standing in front of a UN 4x4 in the streets of Goma, he merges his “real” self with not only the vehicle as a luxury object but also the region’s power political player and employer, the UN (Figure 41). The image merges his desires not necessarily to work with the UN but to be associated with them, linked through photographic association. The photograph creates an opportunity for photographic subjects to “enter a space from which in actuality they are excluded.” For Kenyan photographic subjects in Heike Behrend’s (2005) study of Likoni photo studios, studio images where they posed with painted backgrounds meant that they could access

²³ *La sape* is a cultural term used across Congo to refer to ostentatiously dressed individuals. The term actually belongs to Kinshasa and Brazzaville-original *sapeurs* (*SAPE: The Société des Ambianceurs et les Personnes Élégantes*) the organized groups of elegant peoples who compete in fashion shows, dance offs, and who arose out of protest against restrictive state measures (MacGaffey and Bazenguissa 2000).

airports, boats, and connect to the wider world from which they were marginalized. The hegemonic world of the international actors in the humanitarian industry enters the image as a means of creatively crafting oneself and re-casting one's associations. Conceptualizing an image as an amalgam of creative and real elements allows discussion about the ways in which subjects, photographers, and bystanders make active decisions that shape particular aspects of their images and the messages they carry, making photographs into objects that expose neither pure imagination nor absolute reality.



[Figure 41]

SECTION 2: COMPOSING “LE MOI”

Guideline 3: The photo is about YOU. Fill the frame and control the narrative.



[Figure 42 (above)]

Figure 43 (left)]

In November 2013, the photographers of Studio Creatif rode the wave of post-conflict exuberance. They sprinted around, meeting with customers, processing photographs, and showing off their images. I capitalized on their energy and enthusiasm to make a set of portraits. The goal was both to provide them with prints as gifts for the New Year, and to further my understanding of how to shoot properly through the local lens. As I engaged in a set of portraits, I honed the language of photography and my ability to perceive the subtle actions and negotiations that shaped the visual narratives. The images were composed through improvisation and bricolage – depictions that capitalized on the opportunity and yet never failed to glorify the subject. Renard has been particularly helpful in teaching me how to frame a proper local image.

I went to see the photographers and gave Renard back his photo (Figure 44). He looks at it, says, “your camera takes such good pictures!” and then in looking at it again (him against the door) says, “Aubrey, why did you make me so small? I look small. I want to be big, mrefu!” So I ask, “what would make it better?” – “show less of the door,” he says, “more of me.” He is the only thing in the photo other than the background door. He wants to be bigger, more important – more of him, less of anything else. I ask why it’s a problem to show that one is short (mfupi), and he says it’s just not good because it shows mdogo-ness (little-ness). I say, “OK, but you look good - (mzuri).” He concedes that point. “But I’m not tall” he continues. “But you’re not tall in real life.” I countered. Renard’s forehead comes up to my chin. “But, but!” he keeps protesting, and eventually I caved, “OK I’ll fix the photo, then you will look mrefu.” Patrick leans over my shoulder and pokes fun at Renard, saying he doesn’t feel important if he’s small in a photo – doesn’t feel like he has any power. Renard heard and “mmm-ed” in agreement. (Fieldnotes Nov. 17, 2013)

I returned Renard’s photo again (Figure 45). It was the same photo as the other day - the one of him next to the door. Except in this version I had cropped the photograph to show him as a more major part of the picture. I reduced the background space and tried to make space above him and the context around him less prominent so that he would feel less little. It worked. He was thrilled - immediately clipped off the photo printer paper edges (typical of my photo printer paper) – which also seemed to take away from his “bigness” in the image. Then he thrust it at his friends, proudly showing it around. (Fieldnotes Nov. 19, 2013)

Renard’s proportion to the background became essential for him to imagine himself as a “big man,” a tall man, and equally an influential man. His photograph sat squarely in the intersection of real and creative intentions. His personal features were intended real components of the image.

He physically is himself. His physical form, with his slightly paunchy mid-section (for which he receives ample good-natured teasing at the photo studio as he complains about having no work and nothing to eat, his face, his skin. These are Renard, and they ground the “real” value of the photograph. Through “imagined creative” techniques, he also crafts a visual narrative that uses his physical size-to-frame ratio to connote importance. The camera was less of an instrument with which to reproduce reality, than technology with which to write imaginative narratives about one’s self and one’s relationship to the world around them.

This concept of the importance of the individual and their composition within the frame reverberates both through the negotiated production of the images and the resulting photographs. Individuals strive to be not only to be central, but also to “fill the frame.” As a consequence, they are often centered in a vertical format leaving equal – albeit minimal – space on either side of the individual. There are three standard portrait compositions in the eastern DRC: *mrefu*, *kati-kati* and *mnene*. Subjects know to ask for these compositional styles by both name and gesture, waving their hands to delineate what the frame should show. *Mrefu* (tall / long) photographs show the whole body, running from the feet to the top of one’s head. Photographers compose the image vertically, center the subject in the frame, and minimize the context around them. Moving closer, *kati-kati* photographs (half-way photographs) show the individual from the waist up and *mnene* (fat) pictures feature just their head, neck, and sometimes shoulders. In such images, the subject is often photographed in one of two orientations to the camera: facing to the camera. The younger generation of Congolese often turns at a 45-degree angle to the camera, makes a “peace” sign with one hand and tilts their head to the side. In another version of *mrefu* photographs, individuals crouch, or sit coolly on steps or a chair. In all accounts, however, they must fill the frame.

This trend becomes visible both in the negotiated creation of the photographs and in how the Congolese consume them. In September 2013, I sat with my friend Aimée in her new two-story house’s salon. She broke out the photo albums to show me the images of the wedding that I

missed by just two weeks. There were two albums of wedding photographs, and there were two of her albums from before being married. Fading and yellowing, the older albums spoke to her life before her marriage and the merging of her family with her husband's family. These albums had been hers for over 15 years, and the majority of the photographs in the album were of only her. Nearly all the images were vertical. In each, she stood before the camera, often with a modern inclusion in the background – a television, a sound system, a well-painted wall, or a newly constructed building. Nearly every image showed her turned slightly to the camera, apparently showing off her striking figure. Her hairstyles or wigs changed, and her clothes went back and forth from spandex-inspired western garb to carefully tailored Congolese *kikwembe*. The photographs became “a clock for seeing” (Barthes 1981, 15) her body – and physical self. Equally, however, the camera became a means of spinning her body into a social narrative, which contained both real and creative aspects. The poses she struck, and the backgrounds she chose spoke to how she positioned herself, and how she imagined herself within the local social realm.

[Figure 44 (left) and Figure 45 (right) Renard Lushule]



Photo Guideline 4: Pose Attentively. Keep your Face Visible



[Figure: 46]

The pose is critical to affecting the appropriate local image. In Goma *et environs* photographic subjects employ poster poses (literally a francophone version of the English word “poster”) to shape their desired narrative of self. While variations occur, standard poster poses cross cut class, gender, age, and ethnicity both inside and outside of Goma. In the eastern DRC, posing for a camera is comfortable and expected within the realm of photographer-subject interaction. Should a photographer of any ilk raise a camera, the subjects pause and pose usually staring directly at the camera. The typical gaze in these images is either directly at the lens or just to the side of the lens. The visibility of this gaze and the person’s face and figure lends the photograph its analog to “reality” and shapes much of the composition that frames the local visual field.

For the younger generation, poses tend to mimic the hip-hop culture, in much the same way that, speaking of Mombasa photography in Kenya, Isolde Brielmaier argues certain poses reproduced Bollywood “filmic posturing” (2013, 259). In the urban centers across North Kivu, young men and occasionally women pose to replicate the “too cool to care” images of Western hip-hop artists. They thrust their hips out, cock their heads to the side, and level the camera coolly with their stare. Girls also pose coquettishly. They flirt with the camera, sometimes crouching or standing, turned slightly to the side to encourage a photograph to show off their figure and emphasize their culturally sexualized *derrière*. For those who have stepped beyond their youth and for the less urban population, the poses tend to revolve around a neutral expression, as subjects face the camera, square their shoulders, and clearly show their face to the camera. These images draw from the history of studio photography as well as the visual inspirations around the region – the advertisements, print advertisements and billboards, short hip-hop clips on young people’s smartphones.

[Figure 47]



Of such images Berger notes:

We are now so accustomed to being addressed by these images that we scarcely notice their total impact. A person may notice a particular image or piece of information because it corresponds to some particular interest he has. But we accept the total system of publicity images as we accept an element of the climate. [...] It [the publicity image] proposes, will make us in some way richer – even though we will be poorer by having spent our money. Publicity persuades us of such a transformation by showing us people who have apparently been transformed and are, as a result, enviable. The state of being envied is what constitutes glamour. And publicity is the process of manufacturing glamour. (1972, 131-132)

Pose, in addition to the other embellishing creative factors, helps to construct the glamour of the photographic subject. Importantly, in all of the images, one's face must be visible. To hide one's face is to raise questions about what the individual might be hiding. "*Batu watanifikiri kizimu!*" ("People are going to think that I am a monster!") F. exclaimed, laughing and re-covering her face, peeking out through her fingers at the photo showing on the camera's digital back. F. a housekeeper at Maji, and a friend since 2009 had not been ready for my photo; Unprepared and caught unaware, she covered her face. I took the photo to tease her and then shot the proper, well-prepared image. When she saw the first one, she re-hid her face, laughing. Nonetheless, the fear of being perceived of looking like a monster – i.e. having physical deformation or disfigurement – was real. When she saw the photo of her looking neutrally at the camera she relaxed, "*Sawa sawa* (OK OK), this one is much better." For Congolese studio-like photography, the subject is always aware of the photograph; their face remains visible, and their physical self is on proud display. Photographs are rarely if ever shot from behind the photographic subject's back (except contemporary representations of teenage women showing off their back-side in exceptionally tight pants or skirts). Even when groups of individuals pose together *photo-famille* (family photo) style, every member's body and face must be visible.

Photo Guideline 5: Control your Background (or) Edit it



[Figure 48 (above); Figure 49 (below)]



Intentionally chosen backgrounds shape the creative context of the image and contribute significantly to the visual narrative. The background of a photograph is a surprisingly insightful, often an intended creative space. Whether a garden, the lake, a swanky hotel balcony, or a simple uniform façade, the background creates an association between the photographic subject and their story. Speaking of her research in rural Zambia, Elizabeth Cameron notes, “The sitter creates and manipulates their desired identity through selection of dress, grooming, props, and background to reflect local aesthetics and social principles” (2013, 142). In the eastern DRC, such a trend is evident.

For the Congolese in this study, backgrounds were never haphazardly chosen. Whether photographs were created in internally displaced camps – such as Mugunga III (see Chapter 5), in the Ihusi hotel grounds, or in the garden of AMOUR’s local NGO office, individuals carefully orchestrated where their pictures were taken. These backgrounds, however, were, like the example of Imani above, constructed of what environments were close at hand. The images combined innovative bricolage and intention. However, if luxury items – vehicles, fancy houses, balustrades of the hotel, or a pool were nearby, subjects often selected these spaces to craft their narratives. Nature also composed a prominent choice. In the once lava-covered Goma, curated verdant areas have come to be synonymous with wealth; Such spaces are only found in the palatial yards and gardens along the lake and at the region’s fancy hotels. Even a little green helped to shape a photograph. Moreover, it is not only the subjects who choose their backgrounds. Rather, for many photographers, the *arrière-plan* provides them the most creative ability in their photograph. They might direct a subject to a nicer part of a building’s façade, to stand in front of a car, or to pose in a nearby green space.

While most of the trends discussed in this guidebook apply widely to the diverse populations of North Kivu, the elite are a notable exception. Often having received education

outside of the DRC, many of the group locally referred to as the “*metise*” (mixed race) as well as the economic elites eschew trying to show themselves as having more than they do. Rather than stiff poses and luxurious backgrounds, the region’s elite hopes to represent themselves “like they really are.” During my interview with Col. Amouli, I asked him how he wanted a photograph; he quipped, “don’t ask me. Just take the image. I have nothing to prove. I am as I am.” He surreptitiously slid his beer from the frame and looked across the table, not meeting the camera’s gaze. In another instance, a friend whose family owned large tracts of land in the hills outside of Goma explained that he didn’t love being photographed, and moreover, he definitely did not like posing for the camera. But if he were to have to be photographed, he would want to be featured with his favorite waterfall. This image would have been possible only after a strenuous two-hour hike on the farm. There, sweaty and tired, he’d be happy to have a photograph taken; it would show both a place he loved and the hard work he put in to get there.



[Figure: 50 Edited Background]

However for many working and middle-class resident of Goma *et environs* who could not, and did not wish to hike to a waterfall Goma's lava rock strewn, traffic encrusted, and often trash-coated streets were not ideal backgrounds. But modern photographic technology had provided a solution – digital editing. Instead of posing in front of painted backgrounds as in the early studio days, now photographers edit the backgrounds into the space behind the subjects. “I don't mind the photographs with the changed background.” Explained Raphael, a 30-year old student at ULPGL. “Our photographers have problems because they have difficulties with the challenges of the location – and we can't always take pictures like tourists, so we change the background to expose some future.” Inside Studio Creatif editing experts busily drag and tap the face or body of their subjects into new contexts, new stories, and new imaginings – shaping new futures. Like Mobutu descending from the clouds in his photographs, photographers edit clouds behind their customers. It is common to paste the subjects' bodies in front of the White House, in the courtyard of a fancy European, Asian, or Middle-Eastern hotel (Figure 50), or next to a fancy car. The walls of their studio show not only the print sizes and their prices, but also show off their editing and altering skills.

In a discussion at the Imani Language Center, I asked a group of 20 to 50-year-old men and women: “Do you ever ‘edit’ or change your photographs?” The discussion went like this:

Bedel: Yes, sometimes we change them to look like ancient (old) photos, and we change them to imitate black and white photographs.

Kennedy: Other ones we want a good look, we want to look like we were somewhere we have never been, so we change the landscape.

A: Why do you change the landscape?

Group: To impress others. (They agree with each other)

A: What do you change it to?

Group: (listing things): the White House, the Eiffel Tower, Chateau Rouge (Brussels).

A: Why do you change the background?

Bedel: To let others think that you have been there. Like in your village, if you show them they will think that you have been there.

A: Is that being untruthful?

Kennedy: Some say it is lying, some say it's just having fun.

A: Have any of you had your photos edited like that?

Bedel: Yes I had the background changed to a good landscape – to a desert. Just as an embellishment.

Jean Paul: Sometimes you change the photo to have a clearer face – to look more handsome.

Petra: I even changed one so that I was standing on the ocean. The goal was to dream that one day I would walk on water like Jesus –(from the crowd) like a mermaid!

Kennedy: In one I am flying- my arms are outstretched. The picture shows my power.

Stewart: Jean Paul, I also think you have one where you're standing in snow!
(Interview Oct. 27, 2013)

[Figure 51]



While this discussion focuses on the “fun” of the extremely altered images, creating new landscapes or new powers – the ability to walk on water, or to fly –also highlighted the play that is possible in the local photographic process. Equally, in reading these images, there is a tension between lightly passing these images off as “real” and “playing”. The image is a place to imagine, as much as it is a place to show, and it is up to the viewer to distinguish their desired interpretation.

Photo Rule 6: What you touch will define your story

Like the background, photographic “inclusions” (the props and framing) speak to a broader set of creative decisions. Accessories bring the “imaginative world of adornment” (Buckley 2001) to the fore and help to construct the desired visual narrative. In accounts of studio photography across the African continent props (such as clothing, pillars, motorcycles, stairways, fake flowers in vases, dogs, and other individuals) shape the photograph into an investigation of modernity and subjectivity (Pinney 1997; Mustafa 2002; Behrend 2005; Sprague 2005). For instance, drawing from her research, this time in Nakuru Kenya, Behrend relays rationalization of the use of flowers in photographic inclusions. “As the owner of a studio in Nakuru tried to explain ... flowers are the symbol of luxury because they are completely useless” (Behrend 1998, 143). Conversely, in Cameron’s rural Zambian study photographic props are “markers of achievement (a diploma or certificate), affiliation (a Bible for example), financial accomplishment (a radio or cassette player that displays disposable income beyond basic needs, or connections with urban life” (Cameron 2013, 153). Flowers and certificates make regular appearances in the eastern DRC’s photography, along with a number of objects that mark prestige and modernity. Such props pronounce the desire for wealth and glamour. They also create a narrative of pride concerning one's accomplishments, or perhaps also what one would like to appear to have accomplished.

Particularly, in the eastern DRC, touch – of props, or of other people – is crucial for fomenting narrative association. One’s position, station in life, wealth, class, duties, connection to their family, and quite importantly one’s proof of employment all are visually represented through touch. Such associative objects are either discretely handled, or presented clearly to the camera.



[Figure 52
(left)

Figure 53
(right)]



[Figure 54]



This notion of claiming and connection through touch reaches even the highest profile individuals in the DRC. As one crosses the border, the first public photograph that one encounters on the Congolese side – not counting the skin whitening cream billboard - is President Kabila’s studio portrait in the DGM’s office (See Figure 40). Standing tall in a sharp blue suit, Kabila rests his hand on the presidential desk, securing his connection to the symbolic power of that presidential office. His use of touch, not just the physical association, draws the connection even closer. Touching spouses, friends, children or other people’s children claim a connection between them. In *photo famille* images, mothers and fathers commonly place a hand on the head or shoulder of their children, claiming them. However, the ambiguity of the image rules in such domains, and the message of association is never guaranteed to pass seamlessly from one individual to another (Hall 1993). The props are real, yet the linkages to their subjects are flexible and often heartily imagined.



[Figure 55]

While photographing for TRY international (Interlude 2) in Goma, I encountered a plethora of flexible touch connections. Anna requested a picture with her Bible. “Sure,” I said, snapping a picture of her holding the Bible up for the camera. Then I asked, “So why do you want the Bible in this picture?” “*Biblia*” she repeated flicking her eyebrows up – “See I come from Maniema. Do you know where that is?” “Yes, but I have not been there.” “Well, to get here from there it is two days of bus riding and then two days of walking. Where I come from people will pay 20 or even 30 dollars for a Bible like this. No one owns a thing like this. I was given this here in Goma. I own this!” The photograph of Anna and her Bible carried an intended narrative not of religion per se, but of wealth and prestige. Other women in the same room, who would not be returning home with that particular Bible, incorporated it, like the radio, sunglasses and a bouquet of fake flowers, into their portraits. Play connoting wealth, *kitoko* (cool), and modernity combined in the image’s final representations. Ownership was not required. The narratives were as imaginative as the subjects saw fit. “Photographic truth” becomes a terrifically flexible concept.

SECTION 3: HOW TO REPRESENT ACTION

Photo Rule 7: Stop. Use stop motion and mise-en-scène to show action

Touch memorializes a relationship between an object or individual and the photographic subject. However, the notion of association and contact is not limited to merely “laying a hand on” another thing while enacting poster poses. Carefully staged action also conveys relationships and shapes the narrative of a photograph. This notion of *mise-en-scène* (literally, put in place – made to seem “as if”) is another way to craft a story in an image. In *mise-en-scène*, photographic subjects make a claim to a thing or a narrative through posed action. These pictures are far from candid, but they nonetheless attempt to make it look “as if” they were caught in the act.



[Figure: 56]

There is a range of ways to create *mise-en-scène* photographs. On one hand, one can fully pause the action of the photograph. Often subjects will fill their hands with the tools of their trade, or engage in a frozen movement – a foot floating near a soccer ball, a saw blade almost sawing, fingers hovering as if typing on a computer, a spoonful of food paused just in front of one’s mouth. Each of these photos inevitably comes with two forms of *regard* (gaze). The first is an acknowledgment that this is a portrait photo. Individuals stare directly into the camera; they raise their eyebrows often just a bit as if to query – “did you get it?” Alternately, subjects concentrate on the prop or action, pretending that the motion is, in fact, taking place – that the hands are typing, the saw is sawing, that the ball is being kicked, or that an animated conversation is taking place.

[Figure 57]



Both the complexity and engrained nature of the *mise-en-scène* were made clear to me in late March 2014 when I led a photography workshop with local aid photographers. Frank, a communications specialist, refuted my claim that his photo showing his partner taking a photograph was *mise-en-scène*. “This is action!” he insisted. “He is showing that he is learning to take a picture.” I had watched Frank and his partner work out logistics of how the image would work. They discussed, then together they shaped his partner into an action-like position. Ultimately the photograph showed a hefty man pretending to take a picture. In a discussion, I pointed out that he is only pretending to be photographing as opposed to truly photographing. I contended that this was not action. “But doing a *mise-en-scène* is still action, not so?” Frank was adamant, “Miss Aubrey, I have to disagree, it is an action shot, you see his action is doing the *mise-en-scène*, so it’s all real action, right?” Well yes, and no. The action tells a story and is intended to replicate the idea of photography by tangling the intentions of the real and creative into one material photograph. I conceded. I was not going to be able to replace *mise-en-scène* with found action – not with that crowd.

Photo Rule 8: Keep control and avoid too-candid photographs

Truly candid photography doesn't play a role within the local visual field. Congolese photographic subjects are far more comfortable posing and enacting *mise-en-scène* than continuing their action in front of a photographer's lens. If a local photographer were present at a space of action – a dance competition, a fashion show,²⁴ a basketball match, or even a wedding (though much wedding photography falls under general *mise-en-scène*), photographic subjects would ham it up for the camera. Slowing down their action and exaggerating their movements, they would look at the lens and construct an inflated, theatre-like sense of self.



[Figure 58]

²⁴ So prominent are fashion shows that I once walked out of my house on a Saturday morning and in the back alley two pre-teen boys were practicing coordinated dance steps. “You look great!” I threw in as I passed. “What are you practicing for?” They responded nearly in unison, “Our school’s *defilé* (fashion show).”



[Figure 59]

There was, however, one way in which local photography indeed approached the candid. Similar to the *mise-en-scène* and exaggerated action photographs above, the Congolese *photo surprise* may occur in places of celebration, particularly surrounding ritual, dance, food consumption, or competition. These images were somewhat candid. The caveat, however, is that they occur only in very particular spaces where the featured individuals were aware of and accepted the camera. Patient, a young church-going student, explained, “My favorite photograph happened in church when I was teaching the children – I like my face in the picture because it is not angry. In the photo, I am giving the children markers so that they can draw something. You see that the children are looking at me; I like the quality of the photograph because a good photographer took it. He was a member of the church, and he was taking ‘surprise photographs’ to sell to us later on. I bought it for 500 francs (~50 cents); I like when photographers take

‘photos surprises.’” Gaspar, his friend, jumped in, “I also like surprise photographs! Especially in nature because it reflects my natural self – in principle, I like any photo with my wife when we are together, and we are surprised.” As Gaspar and Patient went on to explain, the surprise photographs were not shocking or unexpected, rather they were images born of unstructured action in very intentional, camera-aware situations. Surprise photos nonetheless, are not equivalent to candid pictures.

Truly “candid” photographs are often categorized by components of the photographic process – the subject’s lack of awareness of the camera, the absence of pose and subject’s gaze (Palmer 2011). Walker Evans produced a well known early set of candid photographs on the New York subway in the 1930s. Of those images, James Agee insists, “The paradoxical notion that only an un-posed photograph can reveal the truth about its sitter” (in Palmer 2011, 114). Evans shot through the buttonhole in his jacket, and often focused on the passengers who were asleep – “in naked repose.” Palmer goes on to further explain: “The absence of pose translates to the spectator’s desire for an account of the soul that will in some way be transparent... In theory, the absence (or I’d add the distance) of the gaze leads to the absence of the pose, which promises a more authentic encounter with the other. However the immediacy is an illusion; we are only ever given the look of revelation” (2011, 118). Candid images seek “truth” by restructuring the space of the photographic encounter. The photographer is recontextualized as “undetectable, armed, and on the hunt” (Zeronda 2010, 1131). Cartier Bresson goes on to clarify, “The creative act [of photography] lasts but a brief moment, a lightning instant... just long enough for you to level the camera and trap the fleeting prey in your little box” (cited in Zeronda 2010, 1132). However, such an idealized candid situation, where the photographer hunts and the subject is caught entirely unaware and in repose is exceptionally rare within the DRC's local visual field.

In Congolese photography, the photographs are constructed through subject-photographer rapport and negotiation that is premised upon a structured economic relationship. The photographer creates images that the subject not only will desire but also will purchase. Even

when not gazing at the lens, the subject's expectation, subjectivity, and self-crafting remain central to the photograph. "Truth," is not what drives photographic purchase. Play, imagination, and desire, on the other hand, do.

A GUIDEBOOK CONCLUSION

In the act of taking a single photograph the various engagements and combinations of intended real and the intended creative components merge. Specific norms about how one shows the face and the body shape the minimal requirements for *picha mzuri*. Beyond that, the clothing, inclusions, poses, backgrounds, *mise-en-scène*, and stop-motion engagement with the camera arise out of a pastiche of the subject's and the photographer's respective and collective ideas. In the eastern DRC, images are frequently playful and improvised. They reflect the region's bricolage, as they draw that which is on hand into narratives that articulate with modernity, regional power dynamics and wealth, glamour and wellbeing. Importantly, while the eight "guidelines" run into each other, one thing connects them all: The creation of a popular Congolese image is a conscious, purposeful act, which strives at its very core to please and serve the subject. And while there certainly exists a tension between photographer and subject as far as their representational desires, their collaborative actions and interactions shape the image's narrative, a blend of truth and embellishment.

Looking back at Simone's photograph through the lens of the normalized *mise-en-scène* and stop-action, it indeed becomes possible that the abuse featured – the desecration of the cadaver – was a perverse celebration. It very well could have been a form of *mise-en-scène*: a soldier naively engaging the journalistic camera to imagine himself as important and connect himself through touch, pose, and pretend action to the dead rebel body that he, himself did not kill.

CHAPTER CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I explored the local visual field of the photographic landscape. By tracking local photography from its inception in the east of the country to its current portrait-based trends, I have shown the role that interaction, bricolage, and creativity play in crafting intentional visual narratives. Moreover, by drawing the photographic histories, norms, and relationships together within the local visual field, I have show how Congolese images – even those that seem terrifically benign - indeed articulate with the region’s socio-political dynamics and varied histories. The eastern DRC's photography came into existence in a space that was photographically peripheral to two dominant states. When photography did arrive, and Congolese studios became regular fixtures in the city, the photograph became a central place to articulate the hope and possibility of the urban space. Today, Congolese popular photography continues to be a source of opportunity. For photographers, both studio and ambulant, it represents a chance for quick financial gain. For the subject, the image provides possibilities to praise the self (*le moi*) and opportunities to imagine oneself to be just a little bit more than one might actually be.

Moreover, as photography has become increasingly unmoored from the studio as the space of image creation, the image has become ever more improvisational despite retaining common studio-derived tropes of pose and background. Individuals pull props from what they have on hand and from what arises in the general vicinity as they make split-second decisions on the necessary associations that will construct them into their desired version of self. At the same time, photographers also work to improvise the background and what to include in the image, guiding the subjects towards nicer cars, or helping to instruct their fanciful poses and associations. Like early Congolese studio photography, many of these images engage references to the region’s powerful actors – the colonial officials, politicians, pop stars, and today the humanitarian power holders. However, this is not pure mimicry as a form of subordination, but rather a re-appropriation of the imaginings and debris of the individuals and the items, which

symbolize power and wealth. Like luxury cars or UN logos, such symbols enable the construction of images that engage items whose meanings have been unraveled and reassembled; the result is a visual object that shows approximately the same components, but from which the subject featured and those who view the photo, derive a potentially radically different meaning.

The contents and histories of the local visual field have come to develop a normative interaction in the space of the image creation. In the following chapters, I move across the photographic landscape to explore the humanitarian visual field. As I have done in this chapter, I will plumb the depths of its own histories, politics, and photographic expectations. Later in the dissertation (Chapters 5 and 6), I will bring these local visual norms back into conversation, as I attend to the spaces of overlap, where the practices and content of aid and local images come into contact. The interactions and representational inclusions of the local within the humanitarian provides an essential means to probe not only the politics of photography in the eastern DRC's frontier zone but also the social contours and frictions of the broader scape.

CHAPTER THREE

A “GOOD” IMAGE OF AID: TRENDS AND EXPECTATIONS

The previous chapter’s playfully imaginative photographs might have come as a surprise to some readers. Due to the region’s long saga of conflict and associated humanitarian action, the images that rise out of the photographic landscape and enter circulation in the global North have been historically biased towards sensational images depicting abuse, need, or atrocity. Moreover, some of the earliest globally circulating photographs of human suffering arose from within the Congo Free State (1895-1908). Shown in missionary and humanitarian lantern lectures across Europe and the USA, those images acted as unquestionable proof of the abuses committed and helped to motivate compassion, donations, and political change (Sliwinski 2006; Peffer 2009; Lydon 2010; Twomey 2012; Pavlakis 2015). The power of such humanitarian photographs to spur international compassion and action and to reflect global politics has been well documented.²⁵ In fact, the most common analytical lens through which these images, both historical and contemporary, have been engaged is patently western. We know a lot about what such photographs do in the west, and about the western photographers and agencies that created them.

Few researchers (including media critics, anthropologists, or historians) have addressed the negotiated, nuanced ways in which such photographs are imagined, produced, and feed back

²⁵ Researchers have analyzed images that come from spaces of humanitarian intervention for their power and efficacy to provoke Western perceptions, donations, and action (Dyke and Colvin 1989, Zarzycka 2015). They have also been examined for their inaccurate, cliché, or “exceptional” content (Benthall 1993, Campbell 2007, Manzo 2008), and their predatory nature that (re)victimizes the individuals featured (Linfield 2010, Sontag 1977; 2004).

into the region's histories, power dynamics, and visual norms.²⁶ To address humanitarian images within the context of the DRC requires examining humanitarian photography both within and across the porous borders of its visual field. While I have explored the ways in which Congolese photographers and subjects creatively interact and imagine themselves into a modern, glamorous sphere in the opportunistic frontier zone of Goma *et environs*, here I engage the humanitarian social spaces and photography from which they are typically excluded. In this chapter and the one that follows I make a temporary departure from the local visual field, traverse the photographic landscape, and engage the visual economy of the humanitarian images. Within the high walls, carefully delineated project sites, and intensely networked bureaucracies that craft the region's newest social and infrastructural borders, I examine how humanitarian actors imagine, produce, and manage their version of photography of the DRC and its residents. Despite the different image content, aid photographs nonetheless act similarly to popular photography in that the creation of the images, their consumption, and expectations respond to, and shape, the particular histories, desires, and power dynamics of the region's scape.

Within this chapter, I explore the humanitarian visual field through two angles. Through a political economy lens, I draw on the intertwined threads of various local and international histories, perspectives, global and local power dynamics I investigate the past and present expectations concerning "proper" humanitarian photographs. Then, by situating my analysis within the particular social and political scape of the eastern DRC's borderland, I examine the current content-norms, roles, and circulation paths that humanitarian photography is expected to follow within the newly drawn borders of humanitarian aid. Importantly, here I go on to address the entangled histories and photographs from the perspectives of international actors and global humanitarian institutions. However, in the following chapters, I complicate these top-down,

²⁶ Sanna Nissinen's (2015) recent work on photographic ethics in Bangladesh is a notable exception.

institutional perspectives by shifting to focus on the subjectivity and agency of individual photographers and photographic subjects.

ATROCITY PHOTOS AND THEIR LOCAL LEGACY

The contemporary humanitarian visual field in the eastern DRC sits on top of the scaffolding of the country's epic historical engagement with humanitarians and their cameras. At the end of the 19th century as colonizers, traders, and missionaries began documenting the region's people using the pseudo-anthropological "type" photograph, others used the camera to expose the outstanding violence facing the region and its inhabitants. Founded in 1904, the Congo Reform Association (CRA) became one of the globe's earliest humanitarian agencies. Focusing their lenses on the abuses within the Congo Free State, the CRA agents pursued both political and humanitarian objectives. Notable stakeholders such as Edward Morel and Roger Casement used a combination of text and images to lobby for the Congo Free State - the personal concession of King Leopold II - to become a Belgium colony. Simultaneously, the CRA strove to end the egregious abuses and atrocities committed by Leopold's *Force Publique* - his personal army - within the territory. Alice Seeley Harris, an American missionary for the Congo Balolo Mission, provided a significant number of images to this campaign.²⁷ The goal of the photographs was on one hand to document, and on the other to shock.

In the language of Roland Barthes, these images were redolent with "punctum" - "the wound the photograph causes, the arrow that pierces... that accident which pricks me but also bruises me, is poignant to me" (1981, 13). These image's sensational content over-rode the more

²⁷ However, the images were not limited to Harris' production alone. Mark Twain mocked in his lambasting fictive account of Leopold II, noting the power of the camera in the hands of many, or any, who happened into the Congo: "That is to say, the incorruptible Kodak - and all harmony went to hell! The only witness I couldn't bribe. Every Yankee missionary and every interrupted trader sent home and got one; and now - oh, well, the pictures get sneaked around everywhere, in spite of all we can do to ferret them out and suppress them" (Twain 1905 in Graham 2014, 141).

general “stadium” – the things that regularly happen and which “causes us to be interested in the image” (ibid.). Susan Sontag (2004) further argues that the punctum – the image's ability to shock – is what provides it the power to catalyze action. She explains, “For photographs to accuse, and possibly to alter conduct, they must shock” (ibid., 81). Through carefully created, almost always staged photographs that focused on the physical disfigurement and abuse of individuals, the images shocked and incited action precisely as intended. “As a direct result of the reformer’s public use of the photographs, the smoldering Congo crisis was transformed into a fierce bonfire. During the first decade of the 20th century, no issue so thoroughly occupied British public imagination as Congo reform” (Sliwinski 2006, 346). The combination of the Congo photographs with the circulation of famine photos from India and the massacres of Armenians solidified the power of the “negative” image. According to early evangelical humanitarians, Talmage and Klopsch, “the photographs and reports provided the ‘glimpses of suffering’ necessary to ‘make the pressing need known to the Christians of America,’ and to enlist their ‘sympathy and help.’” (Curtis 2015, 28). The photograph became a very useful means of providing proof of atrocity and inspiring international action (Batchen et al. 2012).

The content of the early atrocity photographs, like the discourse of brutal mutilation, has come to weave their own social lives within both the Congolese consciousness and humanitarian photography. These images have been tirelessly reproduced within the local milieu and burned into the Congolese awareness. Corresponding with the common contemporary mention of acts of “brutality” and more specifically, “mutilation,” these images have constructed what Nancy Hunt proclaims are “debris” (1999; 2008). “Some images from Leopold’s Congo traveled” she argues, “they were recycled, repackaged, and reframed, over and over again” (2008, 41). Harris’ photograph locally referenced as, “Le Congo Belge” is one such image. Her image featuring the *chicotting* [whipping using a coarse hippo hide] of a prone man has cemented itself within national consciousness. It has been reproduced as a painting by Tshibumba as one of the 100 depictions of Congo’s history (Fabian 1996, 68-69). It has spawned innumerable further

reproductions by Congolese artists ranging from Congolese superstars like artist-photographer Sammy Baloji (2015) and everyday Goma residents like Everest, an artist who paints, coincidentally, with his two mechanical hands.

More generally, for the past century, these early atrocity images have provided humanitarians and the Congolese alike with a cliché visual form through which to imagine brutality and horror. Hunt (2008) describes one such situation: After watching a film about the recent wars and rape in Congo with her Congolese friend, she encountered a particular reaction. Her friend, “cried out that the soldiers who had raped should all be killed. Then she suddenly changed her mind. ‘Instead,’ she declared, ‘they should cut off their hands’” (ibid., 40). I encountered similar verbal references to the Leopoldian era on a regular basis during my fieldwork. Additionally, I also encountered their material, photographic incarnations. For instance, while discussing Congolese expectations of humanitarian photographs, a Congolese NGO worker explained, “I’m always confused at what the head office wants for photos ... When I went off to Walikale [a territory of North Kivu to the west of Goma] I had a camera, and there were kids there with arms that had been machete-ed off - You know cut off at the elbow. I took pictures, thinking that’s exactly what head office needs to show to our donors. There is a real humanitarian need.” While I engage the clash of expectations present in this particular situation in Chapter 6, it serves here to show how present this history of negative atrocity images remains. The CRA, Alice Harris’ photography, and these early Congolese atrocity images more generally have been extensively explored elsewhere.²⁸ Nevertheless, these examples serve to show how on one hand the initial CRA photographs that paint the Congolese as victims of brutality in need of Western assistance constitute one aspect of a local visual history. On the other hand, the negative tropes and power dynamics established within such early humanitarian images have taken on their own lives. They have become re-appropriated within the individual stories and agency of the

²⁸ See Sliwinski 2006; Hunt 2008; Peffer 2009; Twomey 2012; 2015; Graham 2014; Pavlakis 2015.

Congolese. Moreover, they have influenced aid and the photography it has produced over the past century.

AID SPEAK AND THE NEGATIVE – POSITIVE PHOTOGRAPHIC BINARY

The punctum-ridden negative content of these photographs remains pertinent to the humanitarian visual field and the present-day photographic landscape in the eastern DRC. My reference to “negative” content speaks in generalities to the scene or person that is represented in the image – the hacked limbs, burned villages, the enslaved peoples, and the overarching human suffering. However, this term also reflects part of an ongoing debate about humanitarian photography where “negative” has become aid-speak for photographs which are “demeaning, lacking dignity, and untruthful... created in the power imbalance between those representing – the North – and those being represented – the poor, the South” (Lidchi 2015, 276). By drawing out the histories and debates concerning the content and power dynamics of humanitarian imagery more generally I provide another set of tangled histories which inform the eastern DRC’s humanitarian visual field and the expectations of what currently composes an appropriate aid image.

Humanitarian agencies situate their photography within a “positive” / “negative” discursive binary. This over-simplifying dualism refers to two polar nodes that classify the denotative and connotative content of images. Negative images connote suffering, conflict, and hardship, often-reflecting “Afro-pessimist” traits (Cohen and Manspeizer 2009; Johnson 2011; Lidchi 2015; Nissinen 2015). The representational content often features disasters, death, guns, violent interactions, and characteristics of suffering (e.g. wounds, downcast eyes, stillness, dirtiness). Compositionally, they expose dreary-colored images depict large-scale suffering and disorder or portraits connoting victimization. On the other end of the humanitarian image spectrum, which I address further below, sit bright, tidy pictures that show happy, hopeful individuals often in the active process of using the distributed aid items. At their zenith, the

negative images became critical for journalism and humanitarian aid. Speaking of equally journalistic and humanitarian appeals during the 1990s Susan Moeller notes:

Images of suffering and disaster are appropriated to appeal emotionally to readers and viewers... crises are turned into a social experience that we can grasp; pain is commercialized, wedged between the advertisements for hemorrhoid remedies and headache medicines [...] The selective coverage of foreign events is coverage of the deaths of the famous, the famines and plagues and genocides. Watching and reading about suffering, especially suffering that exists somewhere else, somewhere interestingly exotic or perhaps deliciously close, has become a form of entertainment. (1999, 33-34)

Negative images sold magazines and newspapers. They kept journalists in jobs and brought in life-affirming finances for the stringers and freelancers brave enough to parachute into the world's various conflicts. Simultaneously these images drew attention to the situation at hand and acted as evidence or proof that indeed that thing did occur. Support flooded into humanitarian coffers in conjunction with a humanitarian tagline or fundraising appeal, the photographs of the suffering of others, and of westerner (white) aid workers helping to solve the crisis (Benthall 1993; Moeller 1999).

The relationship between journalists and their images and humanitarian aid is longstanding. Journalists have been labeled parachutists, firemen, and worse disaster tourists – jumping in and out of global disasters in record time. For the past 40 years, technology has turned an art of expert foreign correspondence into a high-speed scoop report. Limited by the immediacy of timelines and hemmed in by an editor's assignments and instantaneity of vision, foreign correspondence has taken on an "air of triage" (John Walcott of U.S. News in Moeller 1999, 26). Triage requires speed and delivery where "journalists are trained in crisis and live for the anecdote that captures a perceived sense of place" (Moeller 1999, 53). With triage came "the sensational, visually gripping, and 'live' [which] has driven out the balanced, forensic, and considered" (De Waal 1997, 85). In places like central Africa by the late 20th century, this led to the repetition of tropes of victimization and disaster.

However, journalists are not the only actors involved in the production and use of such negative images. The relationship between journalists and humanitarians is a mutually beneficial one. On one hand, journalists require the aid agencies for many (sometimes all) of the following: access to the country, transportation, security, knowledge of where the “stories” are, access to centers of vulnerable citizens (clinics, care and feeding centers, etc.), the background to the conflict, translation services, accommodation, social and logistical services as well as emergency medical treatment. On the other hand, aid agencies require journalists for publications, images, and free international exposure. Jonathan Benthall goes on to argue that the media provides the “principal umbilical cord for agency survival and prosperity” (1993, 179). George Alagiah of the BBC argued in 1992, “there’s an unspoken understanding between us [relief workers and journalists], a sort of code. We try not to ask questions too bluntly: ‘where will we find the most starving babies?’ and they never answer explicitly. We get the pictures just the same” (De Waal 1997, 83). Some international aid agencies have the budgets to drive their own advertising campaigns but by the end of the 20th century, it was clear that nothing motivates donations like timely images of the NGO at work saving lives (Benthall 1993; Moeller 1999).

This connection between negative images and humanitarian disasters came to a head during the Biafran War (1967 – 1970) and the famines in the Horn of Africa (1983-1984). Of the war and humanitarian crisis in Biafra (Nigeria) in the late 1960s, Musaro notes, “Hardly anybody in the rest of the world paid attention until a reporter from *The Sun* - the London tabloid - visited Biafra with a photographer and encountered the wasting children: withered little wraiths. ... Suddenly Biafra’s hunger was one of the defining stories of the age – the graphic suffering of innocents made an inescapable appeal to conscience – and the humanitarian-aid business as we know it today came into being” (2011, 17). Notably, it was also during this war that Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) formed out of frustration with the neutral ICRC intervention, that its founders saw to allow gross human rights violation to take place (Redfield 2006; Givoni 2011). After the war had ended, the photographic deployment of negative tropes continued to ride a

wave of popularity. Then the Ethiopian Famine of 1984-1985 pushed the graphic images of human suffering to new levels. In response, Bono and Bob Geldof sang their patronizing “Do They Know It’s Christmas?” and raised money for the region’s international relief efforts. And again, photographic content spotlighted the stick-legged adults, nearly dead children, and white humanitarian saviors providing aid to suffering black victims (Benthall 1993; Moeller 1999; Campbell 2007; Manzo 2008; Campbell 2014).

These photographs responded to, and reinforced the type of aid that provided almost exclusively for human survival during “exceptional states of misfortune” (Bornstein and Redfield 2010: 12). Humanitarian assistance has drawn wide-ranging critique for providing only for the bare life (Agamben 1995) of the human subjects involved. The provision of food, shelter, water, and medicine does nothing more than keep beneficiaries alive. This is what Redfield refers to as handling humans through a lens focused on “species level needs and health” (Redfield: 2005: 12). Such aid has earned significant critique for stripping the beneficiary of their agency, rendering their bodies apolitical (Feldman 2007), and “reducing the subjective trajectories of individuals” (Pandolfi 2003, 374) and “impoverishing people’s political and social fulfillment and rights” (Ticktin cited in Robins 2009, 639). These critiques expose the connection between the aid itself and the similar ways in which the gaze of the negative photograph froze subjects in positions of passive suffering, framed them through their bodily loss and desperate need and articulated a moral call to help. Of morality and humanitarianism, Fassin writes:

Moral sentiments have become an essential force in contemporary politics: they nourish its discourses and legitimize its practices, particularly where these discourses and practices are focused on the disadvantaged and the dominated, whether at home (the poor, the immigrants, the homeless) or farther away (the victims of famine, epidemics, or war). By moral sentiments, are meant the emotions that direct our attention to the suffering of others and make us want to remedy them. (2011, 1)

In correlation with the species-level humanitarian actions, by the 1990s, such negative image content had become *the* way to represent African others through a humanitarian camera. Taking a

critical stance on the negative cliché images cycling through aid agencies and newspapers at the time, Susan Moeller argues, “there is a built in inertia that perpetuates familiar images. Without them, ‘reality’ becomes more complex, less immediately understandable and more ‘real’” (1999, 43). A closer look at the relationship between negative images and humanitarian agencies shows that the photos not only drove donations through cliché depictions but also became central in providing visual *témoignage* (witnessing). They transformed into a fulcrum around which a patronizing global power dynamic was leveraged.

Negative Photographs As An Incontrovertible Witness

War photographer James Nachtwey explained the camera’s relationship to witnessing succinctly. The tagline on his website reads: “I have been a witness, and these pictures are my testimony” (www.JamesNachtwey.com). In his Ted Talk entitled, “My Wish: Let my photographs bear witness,” Nachtwey argued, “I understood that documentary photography has the ability to interpret events ... It gives a voice to those who otherwise would not have a voice. And as a reaction, it stimulates public opinion and gives impetus to public debate” (2007, 1). For Nachtwey, as well as a range of journalist and humanitarian actors, photography became a way to communicate the need of a situation by literally asking their images to speak for those who cannot. In the famine photos in the 1980s and the 1990s images of Congo atrocities, for instance, photographs became seen as a hard-hitting, shocking way to let the bones or hacked limbs do the talking when the featured individuals did not or could not. Didier Fassin (2012) further explains the expectation that in humanitarian crises witnessing provides a means through which humanitarians speak for those experiencing the given situation:

The witness becomes a spokesperson for the victim [...] humanitarian workers [and their photographs] speak in the name of those who are assumed not to have access to the public arena. In so doing they illuminate, transform, simplify, and dramatize the words [and I add, images] of those they represent, in line with their ultimate objective, which is not so much to reconstitute an experience as to construct a cause. (ibid., 221)

Coupled with discursive accounts the negative humanitarian images composed part of what Michel Givoni refers to as a “truth regime” of humanitarian *témoignage* (witnessing) (2011, 58). The photographs indeed worked to motivate precise, cause-oriented action. In such cases, “experts” witness purported to carry the voices and images of suffering others to a distant global population. Through combined verbal and visual evidence, aid expert witnesses anchored “the power and resonance of humanitarian claims in an assemblage of fact and value” (Givoni 2011, 58). The negative humanitarian photograph became particularly useful as both a means to speak for others while supposedly representing the “truth” of a situation. The picture was intended to show the hard “facts.” Sontag argues, “A photograph passes for incontrovertible proof that a given thing happened. The picture may distort, but there is always a presumption that something exists or did exist, which is like what’s in the picture” (Sontag 1977, 5). Such images intended to witness gained their power from the assumed “found” nature of the image and its association with documentary realism.

However, as was explicitly discussed in the case of Simone’s controversial photograph (see Chapter 1), an image that may at first appear “found” may, in fact, have arisen from a situation that is anything but objective. Like their accompanying testimonies, negative images that are charged with bearing witness emerge from interactive and constructed photographic spaces. Concerning verbal *témoignage* Givoni noted, “Humanitarian testimonies drew their validity not from their correspondence with an objective reality but primarily from their very performance” (2011, 66). Negative humanitarian photographs purport to efface their construction and clearly stand as an objective witness to a situation. By refusing to question such photographic objects of testimony, one obscures the potential voices, politics, and logistics of their very construction.

Much like the corresponding negative humanitarian images, relief aid systematically reinforces the global power dynamic, placing the power of one’s life in the hands of international actors and their supposed benevolence. While dampening potential agency, by managing just

barely to keep individuals alive, humanitarianism acts as an intervention geared to mitigate death from major shocks, disasters, or population movements. These valuable critiques of the humanitarian aid address a particular form of humanitarianism found today in the most dramatic situations of displacement and disaster. Important to note however, as this research will also show, the local populations are not necessarily passive in these operations. Rather many incorporate humanitarian assistance into their survival strategies to, for instance, overcome shocks or gain financial benefit (De Waal 1997; Little 2008a; 2008b).

Mandating Positive Content

Despite their power to witness, an institutional critique against negative aid images began to surface in the 1980s. In response to the onslaught of images of global suffering, the Western public began to express symptoms of compassion fatigue and raise questions about the humanitarian practice. “Compassion fatigue” became a term to explain the barrage of negative images of death and disaster that increasingly reached viewers during the last few decades of the 20th century. As the public became numbed by their similarity and graphic content, the photographs lost some of their power to catalyze action (Moeller 1999). Moreover, an early opponent of negative images, James Lissner (1981) argued that such negative images both reflected and reified a system of irresponsible, bad aid.

On one hand, part of the photographic problem was their repeated negative content. On the other, part of the problem was what that content and the composition said about the power dynamics underlying the humanitarian industry. In 1987, Oxford released a report that attacked the standard aid images for this power differential and called for reform. The report explained: “These pictures overwhelmingly showed people as needing our pity – as passive victims. This was through a de-contextualized concentration on mid- and close-up shots emphasizing body language and facial expressions. The photos seemed mainly to be taken from a high angle with no eye contact, thus reinforcing the viewer’s sense of power compared with their apathy and

hopelessness (cited in Campbell 2014, 86). Importantly this power dynamic positioned subjects as passive and photographers as active. The assumption of agency fell solely to the western photographers who were assumed to hunt “the decisive moment” and create images that could stand as documentary truth. Moreover, the gaze implied within such images constructed what Elizabeth Edwards calls “metaphors of colonial oppression, [connecting] the Western gaze and the disempowerment of the subject” (2011, 172). While the image purported to decry the truth of a situation, its production and use for fundraising and education systematically denied the agency of the photographic subject.

By 1989, the negative images had received systematic critique from within the growing realm of humanitarian aid. The General Assembly of European NGOs met and adopted a visual Code of Conduct on Images Related to the Third World, which provided guidelines to NGOs for photographs and spurred discussion among stakeholders (Nissinen 2015, 299). Ratified and revised in 2006, this Code of Conduct now advocates strongly for “dignity over - but not to the intentional ignorance of – suffering” (Code of Conduct on Images and Messages 2006). Moreover, the document provides sweeping generalist guidelines for agencies; it states that images should “respect the dignity of the people concerned; [show] belief in the equality of all people; Acceptant of the need to promote fairness, solidarity and justice” (ibid., 2). Spurred by the various international critiques and the overhaul of the goals of the visual system, aid agencies began writing photographic guidelines through which they attempted to shape visual practice. With this shift humanitarian imagery moved from “negative depictions of passive, suffering, innocent victims, to narratives of the resilient victims told through positive imagery. It was an “ethical” solution to the problem of humanitarian imaging” (Nissinen 2015, 298-299). The “positive image” solution promoted a flood of photographs that address aid by focusing on its helpful impact – not its need.

Since this shift in visual policy, aid agencies have accordingly crafted their photography in such a way that it often engages the “positive” side of a situation with a particular eye focused

on the vague buzzword “dignity.” Standard positive images feature smiling women and children, aid agency workers interacting with community members, and any numbers of individuals engaged in productively improving their own situation. As this form of humanitarian photography took hold, the images and agencies adopted increasingly direct roles in the marketing. They relied less on journalists and began more regular, systematic production of their own photographs. This shift reflects “a contemporary attempt to renew the legitimacy of humanitarian communication – one that abandons universal morality and draws on the resources of the media market in which humanitarian organizations operate today” (Chouliaraki 2010, 2). However, I suggest that “abandon” might be too strong a word. In the eastern DRC “positive” images continue to rely on the established values of documentary realism and the “universal morality” of photographic witnessing, even as the current image has become conflated with outright branding and marketing.

This shift within humanitarian photography from negative to positive images also reflects the politics and scope of international intervention. Moreover, it directly corresponds with the drastic increase in the numbers of international and local non-governmental organizations (NGO). Up until the 1980s most international humanitarian aid was composed of humanitarian relief efforts and life-saving actions that temporarily keep a human alive with predominantly food, water, shelter, and medical care. In the 1980s however, NGOs entered the fray and grew to address issues of development and social welfare via projects focused upon poverty, gender, and personal capacity (Ferguson 1990; Crush 1995; Egelman and Haugerud 2005; Bornstein and Redfield 2011). These new NGOs bloomed in the era of neoliberalism, as states reduced their welfare programs; in the state’s withdrawal, they have taken up the delivery of social services. However, “even when NGOs have not been part and parcel of the state in a new guise, they are not inherently preferable to it. NGOs sometimes have been tied to local parochialisms, are not necessarily technically qualified to assume tasks that have been foisted upon them, and often lack a national vision for development” (Muelleur 2004, 3 in Edelman and Haugerud 2005, 27). This

decentralized development filled in for the withdrawing state, pushed beyond relief, and focused on longer-term issues than just surviving the day.

Importantly, NGOs conceptualized the problems of the global south as a lack of material goods, and a lack of the skills necessary to acquire those goods (Crush 1995; Karp 2002).

Unsurprisingly, the goods and skill training activities feature prominently in positive NGO image content. The notion of NGO-based development relied on rationalist thought and science to suggest simple technical solutions to social problems (Crush 1995, 9). It premises its action upon the belief that “material conditions should improve with the promise of an open and potentially infinite future” (Bornstein and Redfield 2011, 5). In the past two decades development has increasingly relied on notions of “capacity building,” “skill training,” and addressing social differences through a focus on “empowering” marginalized people (often women and discriminated-against ethnicities) (Cornwall and Brock 2005; Egelman and Haugerud 2005; Baaz 2005). From the 1990s forward, with the United Nation’s entry into the humanitarian scene, the international aid system expanded again to address issues of human rights as well as of security and governance (Duffield 2001). Just as the negative images that rose to prominence in the 1970s and 1980s became associated with the bare-life engagement of humanitarianism, the dignity-prioritizing photographs of the last three decades reflect the social solution-oriented state-like actions of development. By focusing on success and improvement in the future, the happy, smiling individuals in the photographs appear to be their own agents, capable of advancement with just a little help from their international aid friends.

Today positive images repeatedly meet western viewers via circulation on the agencies’ web pages and advertisements, their enormous subway and airport posters, television ads, and snail mail appeals for donations. However, while these newly optimistic images contain significantly different representational content than the passé negative versions, they nonetheless borrow from the same value system. In Goma’s expatriate circles the bipolar categorizations irritate those engaged in managing their creation. Ava, a bright British humanitarian lamented the

divide over a glass of wine at Chalet – one of the notorious expat hangouts. “God, it’s so fucked up.” She lamented, “Forcing people always to shoot [photograph] the positive side of things is just as bad as the old suffering routine! And it’s just as inaccurate.” Ava’s frustration, which culminated in her accusation that positive and negative images are equally “inaccurate,” speaks to their cliché nature. It also speaks to the silencing of other depictions. As “positive content” becomes a vital part of image policy, it narrows the range of possible representations and shapes the parameters of photographic action.

Despite their outright marketing and labeling, the images are expected both to witness and to appear to be documentarily “found.” I suggest that the documentary aspect of humanitarian photography – even in the positive images – is what Barthes calls a “myth.” Such a myth “allows the connotation to appear as denotative and hence literal or ‘natural’” (cited in Sturken and Cartwright 2001, 19). In other words, the natural-looking message carried by the aid image effaces the process, construction, and framing through which it was created. This is akin to humanitarian content that Henrietta Lidchi refers to as “a technical truth – something which in all probability could happen, rather than something that actually did happen unprompted” (2015, 290). She argues that agencies produce such humanitarian images with the goal of conveying unmediated reality to the western viewer. However, the image is the result of a “constructed – scripted and framed” encounter. Certainly the notion of non-objectives images is not new. Surprisingly within analyses concerning how humanitarian aid imagery is published and consumed, the very power of the photograph arises from the appearance of truth and documentary reality (Dogra 2007; Lidchi 2015; Nissinen 2015). The importance of positive images lies in marketing and justifying programmatic action to existing donors. Nevertheless, photographers and agencies alike continue to choreograph images such that they appear to be objectively “found.” Marketing piggybacks on visual *témoignage*.

NO NEGATIVE IMAGES ... WELL, MOSTLY

As much as Goma is a city vibrating with nearly 1-million individuals from center to edges, it is also a very small town. Word traveled quickly that I was researching photography and also photographing as part of my research. In November, Jane the silver-haired American founder of GROW International – an American-supported, Congolese-led NGO asked me to make the trip to their office to talk about their visual goals. She also was courting the potential of free photos. It took a few weeks of scheduling debacles, but eventually, I sat in a chair with plastic still on the arms in their concrete office building atop one of Goma’s more jumbled rock roads. Jane poured hot water into cups and then added a packet of Starbucks instant coffee to hers. “I avoid the Nescafe as much as I can,” she smiled and offered a cup. Coffee securely in hand, she began her explanation of her organization and its photographic goals. GROW provided skill training for women who had become pregnant out of wedlock with the goal of helping them take charge of their lives and learn to be independently capable even with an unplanned child. They use their photographs predominantly to “*plaidoyer*” – to fundraise and provide advocacy especially with the aim of raising awareness and support among their American partner organizations.

Talking both to her Congolese counterpart Angelique and myself, Jane explained, “We’re a humanitarian organization for development. We want to see durable changes on the large scale – and we do training, monitoring... we work with the government and consult with other agencies to make this happen. We’re motivated by a vision of Congo where the people are more interactive and engaged in producing sustainable change.” Then to Angelique, “We want her [Aubrey] to know that it is YOU who drives the representations here, not the donors. You need to manage all of these things.” Jane plowed on.

“Journalists and visitors come to Congo anticipating the ‘negative.’” She rolled her eyes and downed some more coffee. “They only see the bad around them and so that’s what they want to photograph. But we don’t want those images... It is important that we use the camera to express “this too is Congo” – bad things happen, but they don’t define the people they happen to.

... We want to show the hope and enthusiasm that young women have for life... There are more effective ways to communicate than just the negative. I remember this photograph in Rutshuru, there was a journalist, who just took all the wrong images. I wondered, why not take positive pictures and show the success and hope? But no, he wanted to show that things were miserable here. He took a photograph of a random woman – she was so dirty, and her hair was a mess. He thought that would help - that people would see that image and would want to help. But I sit here and think, why not show the positive side and see that potential aid and message go so much further?”

After a number of such conversations, I did take photographs for GROW and return them for feedback (e.g. Figures 60-65). While GROW's staff was enthusiastic about the images they believed embodied that “hope” and “positivity,” there was nonetheless a lingering hunger for the “negative image.” The negative had not been effaced but rather, it now composed a foil for the positive images that acted as marketing for their agency’s effectiveness. In response to my photograph showing a woman sitting alone on the steps, Angelique responded in Jane’s absence: “She looks frightened, alone – exactly what we strive to change over time. In a month, she will not look like that.”



[Figure 60 (above); Figure 61 (below)]





[Figure 62 (above); Figure 63 (below)]





[Figure 65 (above)]

Within this frame the positive images GROW hoped for represent the current state of image creation in and around Goma. Agencies strive for the positive, marketing image at the same time that they still feel the need to provide the negative image for situational context. Instead of being a catchall for the situation, their emphasis on the positive image and the disavowal of anything slightly negative reflects the new problem for humanitarian photography. Due to the way in which images have come to carry value through history and the shift from negative and atrocity images to positive marketing, photographs now have an imbued triple-bind. They must bear witness. They must advertise. And as I'll explain in the final section of this chapter, they must act as a form of accounting to international donors.

PUTTING THE “NGO” IN THE CONGO

The eastern DRC remained largely out of the humanitarian limelight until well after social development burst onto the NGO scene in the 1980s. Today the situation supports a dense combination of relief and development programs which all fall uneasily under the locally appropriated “humanitarian” label. In North Kivu – and Goma more particularly - the idea of humanitarianism takes on a comprehensive vernacular meaning. This borderland hosts one of the highest populations of aid agencies in the world and has done so continuously for over two decades. For the region's Congolese, the term “humanitarian” (used in its French form in French and Swahili conversations) casually delineates most any individual and equally any institution engaging aid-based international intervention. The Congolese tendency to collapse the concepts of relief and development into a singular category speaks to the lived realities of protracted intervention, as the agencies have taken on more and more social services, and come to function as a ruling power - like the state - over the past 20 years.

Where disaster, conflict, and displacement have become protracted, endeavors to protect the “bare life” of individuals sit alongside, or even on top of, existing efforts to improve social conditions and minimize rights abuses. During my fieldwork in and around Goma, agencies’ projects spanned emergency disaster aid, protracted care, and future-oriented development programs. The programs offered included everything from emergency food and medical assistance, to training for local police, sensitization regarding sexual violence, agricultural programs, radio emissions, art projects for ex-combatants, and so on. “*L’ONG*” (French for the NGO) is also employed locally to delineate the agencies, often making no distinction between UN agencies.²⁹

Moreover, at times development and humanitarian endeavors occurred simultaneously and overlapped in physical space. For instance, the United Nations High Commission for

²⁹ While relief and development NGOs and the UN humanitarian agencies were often conflated, MONUSCO, the UN’s armed wing remained distinct in the popular discourse and imagination.

Refugees (UNHCR) – perhaps the most strictly humanitarian agency, known for their “pure humanitarian” assistance of tarps for the construction of shelters, support in medical care, and food distribution – provided simultaneous humanitarian aid and development projects. Within the camps in the eastern DRC, they provided their usual care, while simultaneously pursuing “livelihood” programs such as distributing sewing machines to residents, creating a bakery, and training residents to construct bricks. Humanitarian aid and development took place in the same spaces, by individuals sporting the same “visibility” – boldly labeled 4x4 vehicles, badges, caps, and t-shirts emblazoned with the bright blue “UNHCR” logo. Ultimately, the collapsed categories and the blurry boundary between humanitarian aid and development, in fact, represent the muddle of relief and development distributed in the region.

The present-day DRC remains embroiled in one of the most complex sets of conflicts in the world with more than 40 rebel groups active in the east and a cumulative death toll from war-related casualties estimated to have claimed upwards of 6 million lives since 1996. Within this context, humanitarian intervention with its cameras, employees, and infrastructure of walls and razor wire has exploded onto the scene. Official OCHA estimates lowball the 2013-2014 number of international agencies in Goma at more than 100 while their local partner NGOs number more than 300. From the mid-1990s onward, Büscher and Vlassenroot (2010) argue that international aid flowed in three distinct waves into the eastern DRC. My research corroborates their position.

In the 1990s, a first overwhelming wave of humanitarian action arrived, connected with the cross-border fallout from the Rwandan Genocide and the ensuing displacement and infrastructural collapse linked to the Congo Wars. After the end of the 1994 Genocide (which left nearly 1 million Tutsi and moderate Hutus dead), 1.5 million Rwandan refugees of Hutu origin fled their country fearing retribution killings. As nearly 800,000 refugees huddled in makeshift camps around Goma, staring down death from malnutrition, cholera, and other diseases, more than 200 international aid agencies parachuted into the region in what Cooley and Ron call a quintessential “NGO scramble.” Due to the “unprecedented press and Western and international

interest” (Cooley and Ron 2003, 26), these agencies competed for 1.4 billion dollars of aid contracts from April to December 1994 alone (Borton and Millwood 1996). In the dollar-saturated, tense context, the flood of humanitarian intervention into the region resulted in interagency competition instead of cooperation. Ex-genocidaires regrouped in the camps, took control of resource distribution, engaged in forced recruitment, and outright launched cross-border attacks and led to the eventual closing of the camps in 1996 (Pottier 1996; 2002; Cooley and Ron 2003). Nonetheless, aid was tenacious. Even once the Zairian army stepped in to dismantle the camps, most of the aid agencies found reasons to stay on.

The second wave of humanitarians arrived in conjunction with the 2002 eruption of the nearby volcano. Set just 12 km from Goma, Nyiragongo erupted and covered forty percent of the center city in lava, causing much of the city to burn and displacing nearly 400,000 individuals. The third wave of aid arrived inspired by the encroaching CNDP (the precursors to the M23) conflict and the rising issue of sexual violence. This wave spiked from 2007 – 2010. During this time, the eastern DRC caught Western attention as it earned the colloquial titles of “the worst place on the planet to be a woman” (Enslar 2009) and “rape capital of the world” (BBC 2010). While cycles of displacement and need ebbed and flowed with the movement of conflict, aid remained. Agencies expanded and softened their original relief mandates of the provision of food aid, medical care, sanitation, and shelter to address issues of poverty, education, governance, sexual violence treatment and prevention, and the newest buzzword, “protection.” Aid simply was, and still is, positively everywhere.

Moreover, during the last two decades of conflict, disaster, and the associated humanitarian crises, the region experienced an outstanding level of photographic production. Despite the move towards more positive photographs, journalists and humanitarian agencies commonly contextualized the various disasters through images of suffering and need. These negative images shocked through their display of rain-soaked refugees huddled in poorly constructed huts, bulldozers shoveling cholera-killed bodies into mass graves, long trains of

populations fleeing yet another conflict, and raped women with downcast eyes or covered faces. For journalists, researchers, and some humanitarians and residents of Goma *et environs*, these exquisitely negative images of suffering gained the moniker of “Doom and Gloom” images. As the international wars ended in the early 2000s and conflict became ever more pocketed, aid agencies even more increasingly dove into development projects. And with the softening of their projects from life-saving relief to agriculture, education, good governance, protection, and sensitization, photographs increasingly slid into the positive genre.

Under the burgeoning realm of international development, certain buzzwords and policies have become increasingly popular. (I explore the photographic outcomes of these changes in the following section). For instance, in part as pushback to the critiques of top-down species level humanitarianism, the notion of “participation” has firmly taken hold. Participation on one hand indicates the role that the beneficiaries – the recipients of aid – play in crafting and controlling the care they receive. On the other, participation refers to a restructuring of the broader humanitarian system. While humanitarian agencies used to parachute into crises and dole out aid themselves, now through the theme of participation, they contract local agencies to run their projects.

Such bureaucratization is omnipresent across the eastern DRC where international organizations execute their plans through LNGOs. This top-down action reinforces both hegemonic power structures and the regionally-well-known aid hierarchy where beneficiaries respond to LNGOs who respond to INGOs who, in turn, respond to International donors. This hierarchical system is what Bornstein (2003) calls the “aid chain.” She defines this as “the diffusion of particular management approaches occurs within a complex web of relationships involving donors, intermediary organizations in donor countries, governmental and NGOs in recipient countries and ultimately beneficiaries at the local level. These relationships are – despite the wishes of many – often coercive and always unequal” (*ibid.*, 393). In Goma, such LNGOs are referred to euphemistically as “partner agencies” despite the fact that the Congolese staffed and run agencies rarely have anything resembling equal control of what projects, places, and means of

implementation they take on. These LNGOs implement the aid projects and deal directly with the beneficiaries, while the international agencies work through the LNGO via the provision of contracts and grants, workshops, the ever-increasing capacity training, and audits. An enormous paper trail of reports and photographs moves from the LNGO to the INGO and from INGO to the donors as a means to justify their work and support their existence. In Goma, LNGOs are everywhere. Some of the wealthier agencies own their own offices while many are hidden in back rooms of houses, or merely exist out of the faux-leather portfolios that the region's aspiring aid business men and women carry around, fat with grant applications for the newest sexual violence prevention program or agricultural irrigation scheme.

USELESS AID?

The billion-dollar annual aid industry drives the local economy in the eastern DRC. It supports a small army of employees and support staff including logisticians, drivers, house cleaners, gardeners, cooks, to trash collectors. Büscher (2010) estimates that the UN agencies and humanitarian actors provide the majority of the official employment in the city. These agencies contribute to a local version of NGO braindrain, whereby the most qualified and skilled Congolese employees work on a contract basis for international aid (Jackson 2004, 178). Moreover, the LNGOs grew so quickly in the clamor for humanitarian contracts, that they garner ample local critique. Jackson writes, "They are 'mushroom NGOs' (*ONG champignon*) which spring up overnight to avail of the manure (money) thrown over them..." (ibid., 179). These LNGOs by any name contribute to the alphabet soup of acronym-labeled organizations across the city. A few notable LNGOs are indeed well organized and only apply for grants for which they have training. However, the majority of the small agencies are developed ad-hoc, as their program managers hone their skills of applying for any and all international NGO contracts regardless of their competencies or education upon the subject (Kelly 2009). These contracts and

employment opportunities are coveted and lead to expressions of jealousy and accusations of what Patrick, a young photographer called, “*mdogo-ism*” – the problem of “hiring little brother” or more broadly encompassing in-ethnic or in-family hiring and contracting.

Moreover, despite the billions of dollars spent and the hundreds of agencies involved, aid has not necessarily improved the situation in the eastern DRC. Many have argued that the conflict and the humanitarianism are intimately intertwined. Humanitarian agencies regularly make deals with the rebel armies in exchange for access to roads, regions, and populations. In so doing, they provide rebel groups legitimacy in the eyes both of the international community and the region’s residents (Pottier 2002, 2006; Jackson 2002, 2004; Büscher and Vlassenroot 2009; Duncan 2014). For instance, Jackson writes:

NGO relief and rehabilitation projects provided easy pickings of political legitimacy for the RDC (during the Second Congo War). In a September 2000 interview, the administrator of Walikali territory, North Kivu proudly told me how he had recently visited a potable water rehabilitation project mounted by the veteran NGO GEAD. He gave the project an official “launch”... the Catch 22 was vivid: permission to access needy populations was to a large extent conditional on playing to the RDC’s (rebel group’s) political agenda (2005, 191).

Today as humanitarianism becomes ever more dominant in the region and the dollar now reigns as local currency, individuals increasingly look to aid to act as a state. Goma's residents lament the unpaved roads, demanding that the humanitarians should pave them. Activist groups lobby humanitarians to provide running water, arguing that too many of the region’s young die drowning in the lake as they collect water. Agencies help cover school fees, build hospitals and provide regular health care. However, aid acts like a selective state, to which only some (the neediest or those in particularly-focused-upon regions) have rights to access and benefit.

Z., a well-respected athlete argued concisely, “*Les ONGs ziko wabaya sana – wana handicappe batu hapa.*” (NGOs are very bad - they handicap people here). He continued in a mix of Swahili and French saying:

And besides – the humanitarianism is a business. Look at how many millions you get coming in and then how much ends up with the beneficiaries. Not much. It makes sense that people are angry. People in Goma are even constructing houses in the camps so that they can take part in the distributions. They take the food and the things away from those who really need it – and then the cars – the expat salaries are enormous – the houses! Look around you – 20 years, and see what has gotten better... *alors, pas grand choses* (alas, not too much).

Z's opinions have become standard in Goma, where activists and city residents regularly bemoan the lack of change, and the dependence aid has created. Of the cumulative effect of the past 20 years, a Congolese photographer for a major aid agency once described the ineffectiveness of humanitarian intervention through the “hacking” metaphor: “Aid is like this - Not much has changed, and not much has gotten better - someone hacks off your hand. Then aid puts a bandage there, but someone comes along again and takes your arm off to the elbow. More of the same aid bandaging. Then you find that your whole arm is gone, and the bandages didn't do a damn bit of good. After 20 years, the bandages have only changed, not the problems.”

In this space of questionable humanitarian success one thing is clear – humanitarians have become dominant global players within the region, and their photographs have become a prominent means to capture the power dynamics that arise on account of a history of colonialism, a crumbling state, and decades of conflict. Together these images and actors shape image content, the humanitarian visual field. The following analysis of the expected roles of the humanitarian photograph probes the way in which the trend of positive images merges with the financial and bureaucratic structure of humanitarian aid in the eastern DRC.

THE IDEAL AID PHOTOGRAPH

The method of implementing humanitarian programs varies by agency. Nonetheless, almost every organization involved in the eastern DRC employed photography as a means to document their actions and to drive support for existing and future projects. Photographs of crying Congolese

children and suffering masses of rain-soaked displaced peoples still can be found on search engines and in the occasional news report of the ongoing conflict. However, like the situation with GROW, such negative images have become the exception in humanitarian practice. Instead, positive-themed photographs have risen to be the expected and demanded norm. The indexical content of the positive picture might differ in accordance with the type of programs and projects the agency runs, but the optimistic “successful” message crosscuts the visual variety. For instance, an agricultural support program might show a woman in the field tending to her wealth of cabbage. A medical treatment program might feature a cute interaction between a child and the agency’s doctor. A skill-training program might depict men or women learning to sew, plumb, or do mechanical work. Each image, despite its obvious differences, nonetheless follows general guidelines and parameters qualifying it as a “good aid image.” Time and again both local and international aid agencies in the eastern DRC argued that these good aid images were the ones with the power to *parler* (to speak) or *frapper* (to hit).

The photographic ability to speak is synonymous with the expectation that the material image will act and do some form of work. Notably, photographs are material objects that not only have particularly dynamic lives as they pass between various publications, archives, and individuals, but moreover they are objects created with the very “intention” of having those later social lives (Edwards 2012, 222). Intention shapes the content that program managers demand and the scenarios upon which photographers train their cameras. Since photographs are intended to do some form of work later on, they also carry a particular form of agency in which they “become social actors, impressing, articulating, and constructing fields of social actions in ways that would not have occurred if they did not exist (Gell 1998 in Edwards 2001a, 17). With photographs poised to act upon their audiences, they, like the popular photographs in the DRC are intentionally constructed to “*parle*” through very specific means and to very specific audiences.

Above I have shown that the aid image draws from its negative-content past and its positive-content present in order to both bear witness and to advertise. These two forms of work

often sit in tension with each other. However, while crucial to the humanitarian photograph, they are not the only actions the image is expected to catalyze. It is supposed to do all of these things while also accounting for funding and programmatic progress to existing donors. In the following pages, I explore this triple-evidentiary role (witness, advertise, and account) of the photograph through a discussion with Rowen, the project manager for Merlin in Goma.

We met up in mid-October to discuss the role of humanitarian photography in their various projects. We sat in the attic office of the four-story Merlin building, just months before the British medical aid organization was taken over by Save the Children. Rowen explained her organization's use of photographs both in general and in relation to her specific work on the Rapid Response to Movements of Populations (RRMP) team. The RRMP carried out humanitarian assessments across North Kivu to evaluate the challenges of aiding newly displaced peoples. While elaborating on the roles of RRMP in the region, Rowen discussed her agency's understanding and use of their photography.

Aubrey: Could you tell me a little bit about Merlin's use of images and communications?

Rowen: OK, so we don't really have a communications person for North Kivu. We should, though; I mean we really need to do more – but it is not happening currently. But, the good thing is that all our teams have cameras, but they're not necessarily using them. As I said, no real communications person here, but we do have one in London. She's not in regular contact either, and we're missing quite a few kinda important expat roles. As a result, Merlin's visibility suffers.

A: Do you shoot when you go out to the field, or even here in Goma, with the projects?

R: I do, I have a nice little camera that I bring along especially when we're setting up clinics. I love photography –but I'm not professional or anything. Usually, I hand off the camera to my national staff to take pictures, as the subjects tend to get less angry when I'm not the one taking the same images.

A: What do you use your photos for?

R: Right now, not too much – we should get active on twitter and have a social media presence and network through them, but you know sometimes I put them up there, but often there's not a ton that we do with them. I mean the goal is visibility...

A: So have you used any outside photographers if you don't have a comms person here?

R: Recently we have used Bret and Ndiaga from UNICEF since we are partnered on some projects... Also, at some point, OCHA (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs) came to take some photographs.

A: So what do you do with your Merlin photographs?

R: Generally we take pictures of the beneficiaries to show our donors, and we take pictures of the zones and what happens / what the context is to show our other regional partners. Our contracts, especially for RRMP are just for emergencies and have pretty much a 3-month limit. So the context is important because we set things up to be taken over by other projects and agencies. We need to show them what the places are like. This includes roads, scenery, the mountains that you have to climb, the state of the health centers, the state of the buildings, what is in the structure – the beds – or the lack thereof – the lack of sanitary facilities, the lack of an incinerator, etc. Often we take pictures showing what’s missing to show the need though we don’t necessarily always use them.

Beyond that, though, there are also the photographs that show our activities. There are vaccination campaigns – the photos should show that “we have reached this many” – or “look how many people are coming out for them”. So specifically, in that case, the photographs give a face to what you’re doing – it is not just the stories and the numbers that get written into the report – you can say “this person was displaced, and they are now getting the care they need.” The photos show this, and so they help with Merlin self-promotion.

Additionally, we often like photos that show the logos. For instance, in a Kamango intervention, we have logos on everything. Bret took the photos for this – of the helicopter, the sacks of aid (with labels on them) the trunk. Bret’s good - he brought the stickers of all of the donors and put them on the trunks and the aid bags before the shoot so that they would all be there in each photo. The car has the logo, as do the tents that were handed out as an aid; banners are also good – they’re massive, and they have the RRMP and Merlin logo – basically we need to provide the logo of every donor possible. And if it’s funded via UNICEF (Bret’s agency) – they have to be on there too. And while we like logo pictures, the ones that are more important are the ones where the staff has a t-shirt on and is shown working, those photos do both – they show the projects, and they label them. That type of photo – the action photos - is really important.

As another example, we have some great pictures of people moving medical equipment through impossibly difficult roads, and over the hills and rivers. Unfortunately, the photos are all of the community members moving unlabeled bags of things. We can use them but only kind of. And they won’t ever get used in an international publication because it is just not clear what’s going on or where Merlin is involved. If we were smart, we would have made sure that anyone without a Merlin T-shirt had a Merlin labeled thing to carry – not unmarked sacks. Again it will be fine in the Merlin report at the end of the intervention – which will get internal circulation – but it won’t be published anywhere big. For promotion on an international level, or even really anything external to Merlin central, we have to have the logo visible. (Interview Oct. 9, 2013)

Rowan’s description of Merlin’s types of photography, and the roles those images are expected to play, is representative of the industry standard in the eastern DRC. Through this conversation she offers an entry point to unravel how such aid photographs’ content is purposed and shaped in part based on the expected circulation of the image and its associated triple evidentiary role. In the

following section, I draw upon her explanation to contextualize the way that aid photography is expected to function in contemporary Goma.

NGO Photographic Publishing and their Many Photographers

While lamenting Merlin's lack of an official communications person, Rowen draws out a variety of individuals who take images: their national staff, herself, their London communications person, and the communications staff of their larger partner agencies (here predominantly UNICEF and UNOCHA). These image-makers span the full aid chain from Donors and VIPs down to regional INGO employees, international consultants, and to local partner organization workers. These photographers vary drastically; they sport considerably different amounts of photographic training, awareness of the agency's mission, equipment and photographic skill. During my research, I interviewed photographers from a wide range of backgrounds including individuals from the DRC, Senegal, Mali, Japan, the USA, Belgium, France, Ireland, the UK, Germany, and Canada. Many of these photographers had educational backgrounds in journalism and communications while others, however, had attained the necessary skills through less formal means. Congolese humanitarian photographers who worked both within the regional headquarters (the INGO based in Goma) and within the local partner agencies also came from a wide range of backgrounds. Those who had access to good, well-paying jobs within the Goma headquarters often came from upper class backgrounds; some photographers also indeed had communications training. Usually however, due to the coveted nature of NGO jobs in the eastern DRC, nearly all employees are well educated and have chosen to work on a contract basis for aid agencies over seeking lower paying, less prestigious work for local businesses, universities, or institutions. A few of these Goma-based men and women had been trained by UNICEF's "Young Journalist" initiative, which provided a basic course in photography, video, and reporting. However, within the LNGOs despite the highly educated nature of the employees, many individuals who wielded a

camera had no formal photography training and minimal instruction on what they were expected to photograph.^{30,31}

Just as humanitarian photographers vary, so too do the potential “tracks” their images follow as they make their way towards publication (and their ability to do work). In the above conversation, Rowen described two different forms of photographic publication: internal and external. Internal images are visible only to the agency's network of employees and sometimes their partner organizations. In other words, these images are not for public consumption. In contrast, external images enjoy a wider, often global, circulation so that they can facilitate fundraising and international advocacy. Each image's track shapes the social trajectory of the photograph, and the work that it will be expected to do - be it accounting, witnessing, or fundraising.

Not long after speaking with Rowen, I found myself in a conversation with Laura, Merlin's then “Reporting Officer,” the most-communications-like role Merlin possessed in Goma. She further expanded on the work internal images are expected to do:

Our comms is ad-hoc, we do an internal newsletter and then we do monthly donor and partner reports. We tend to take pictures to fit into the comms material – the brochures, the newsletter and the stories and case studies that can be sent up to the London communications office. There is no comprehensive plan.... Generally, our photos are not for fundraising – they're more for internal documents that show our progress with our linked-up donors. In this, we want everyone to be aware that with these photos we can raise organizational

³⁰ An explanation for the lack of photographic training was that while agencies enjoy and rely on the photographs to witness, advertise, and account, training all of their staff in photography remains a low priority. T. a program manager for a large international agency noted that they do want the images from their partners, but training still falls by the wayside. “We give all of our partners and staff small cameras, but I don't think that we have ever actually trained them in what we want from them.”

³¹ Important to note, this set of Congolese humanitarian photographers commonly operated in entirely different circles from the studio photographers and *photographes ambulants* in town. While some elite studio photographers, like Mumbere from Studio Creatif, did get contract gigs with local or international NGOs, commonly they had little to do with aid agency photography. In part, this separation came from the notion that outside of communications jobs within the regional and international headquarters, photography was an “extra,” not a central part of one's job.

awareness, and this provides transparency to what we are doing.... We build connections through partnership within our network of organizations. So it is more reporting photography while the website (external images) are more for fundraising. Photos in the newsletter it is only the internal staff here in Congo that needs to sign off on them; for the fundraising or web, the photo requires permission from the staff in London. Also, the newsletter images are more personal to the agency. Our goal there is to show staff and donors what has been achieved. The snapshots of particular projects are important, and they just give an idea for the donors and the local staff of the progress and the need to continue. So they don't have to be terribly specific. They provide a form of accountability to accompany the report. It also provides recognition of the work, and it motivates people to keep the work going.

Internal photographs are the ultimate multitaskers. Images are saddled with the simultaneous work of providing transparency and accountability, justifying funding, crafting stories of progress and achievement, provoking the need to continue funding, and providing recognition and motivation for the staff. While partner and HQ staff produce the internal publications at regional level, external images come from a wide range of actors. Professional consultant photographers, “comms” (communications) photographers, all the way down the aid chain to employees of partner agencies who happen to get a photo “*qui parle*” can produce external images. The *siège* (international headquarters of the INGO), as both Laura and Rowen noted, controls the publication and circulation of these photographs. If there is no international hub, then the regional HQ takes over. External images feature in advertisements, mailings, web-publications, brochures, exhibitions, posters, and the ubiquitous aid calendars with the goal of “selling” the mission and the project (Slim 2003). These images are held to higher compositional standard. They, as Rowen notes, “give a face to what you’re doing – it is not just the stories and the numbers that get written into the report – you can say “this person was displaced, and they are now getting the care they need.” The photos show this...”

AJ, a researcher and coordinator for a religiously oriented agency, explained the difference between internal use images and the effective photographs that will see external publication. “These ones,” he said, pointing at snapshots that showed Congolese actors looking

straight at the camera while posing in their fields with their crops, “They’re OK. They act as proof that the local partner agency did the work they said they would. But they’re not that good and they won’t go on the website. We brought in a photographer recently, and she did a much better job. She had no problem getting right up close to people, on top of the truck, under the moving sacks of tarps, everywhere. She had no problem telling people to turn a bit, stop, move there, do this, do that. The photographs show action and they look candid. We’re hoping to bring her back again soon.” Humanitarian images tracked towards external publication must be appealing, well-composed photographs that show the agency’s mission in practice. They must also act as proof of effective aid, without appearing staged. The distinction between the images that AJ pointed at was the candid-looking action that showed aid effectively *in action*.

Who do these images account to?

As Rowen explicitly noted, both external and internal images are geared to please donors. Photographs have become one more example of the overly technocratic monitoring and evaluation (locally referred to as “M&E”) processes. These M&E processes have been part of aid reform since the mid-late 1990s. In response to calls to systematize aid and create a “vector for the transmittal of values and visions of development” agencies adopted “new requirements related to practice – from the format of funding proposals and programmatic content to reporting, financial software packages and specific staff training” (Bornstein 2003, 393). Photographs are a pivotal part of this M&E accounting system (Davison 2007); they are required in reports, regularly emailed to individual donors, and expected within documents that confirm the implementation of projects. Like logframes and accounting tables, photographs are handed up the aid chain commonly making their way from the local partner agencies to the regional HQ to the *siège*, to the donors who control the funding. It is there that they are expected to do their most important work – they account and inspire further contribution.

Bornstein notes, “Donors are driven by concerns to demonstrate an economic ‘bang for their buck’” (2003, 396), and the aid agencies who receive their funding strive to satisfy that concern and draw in more money in part through photography. With the increasingly short contract periods for development and humanitarian NGOs (for instance Merlin in the RRMP cycle the contract was only three months) agencies are consistently struggling to justify their existence and to retain their current donors and find new ones. This funding insecurity hamstrings the ability to learn from development failures, as agencies must push their non-successes out of the frame or repackage projects to make them appear successful (Twigg and Steiner 2002). The images help to provide what Duncan calls the requisite “appearance of positive feedback” (Duncan 2014, 138). Moreover, the push to gain and keep donors in light of short contracts leads to interagency competition and the use of agency funds for outright lobbying and advertising – including photography (Cooley and Ron 2002; Coyne 2013). Despite the DRC’s NGO cluster system that is supposed to increase cooperation between agencies that focus on similar topics (education, protection, gender, nutrition, etc.), aid is notoriously competitive for donors and finances (Bennett 1996; Aldashev et al. 2010, Coyne 2013). This leads to the hiring of external photographic contractors, and the creation of media jobs within the agency to satisfy the growing need to provide a visible presence of one’s work. This relationship is a humanitarian version of “Gresham’s law” where “the agency most determined to get the highest media profile obtains the most funds from donors (both the public and donor governments). In doing so, it prioritizes the requirements of fund-raising. Other (more scrupulous) agencies fail to attain the same level of public attention and suffer for it” (De Waal 1997, 138-139). The tension between satisfying donors and providing good aid is clearly evident in Goma’s humanitarian circus.

In such a dense humanitarian space where the contracts are amply available but highly competitive, simultaneous marketing and accountability have come to compose the essential job set of the region’s external photography. Visual accountability reflects the two top priorities of the donors: money and values. On one hand images must account for the use of the donors’ funds

– one can see that a school was built for instance by gazing upon its representation in a photograph. On the other hand, the images provide accountability for the donor’s values – usually articulated in terms of their “vision” or “mission”. For example, religiously-oriented agencies seek photos that contain the religious icons or similarly themed acts of appropriate charity, while education-inspired donors hope to receive ample images of happy children shown with the tools of the educational trade – books, pens, desks, etc. Sam, a photographer for a major international NGO, explained this “donor-pleasing” photographic strategy:

Donors are happy to see positive stories - so half the time we have to set things up to support the “happy face agenda.” If we are showing poverty and desperation, we need to show this in a rational way that will demonstrate the change from there to happy. But with no time (photography happens on a very tight schedule), there’s no ability to give a nuanced view. You have to jump immediately and photograph the idea you arrived with. The images you end up taking are arbitrary and overly optimistic. And at worst, they are dishonest. (Nov. 18, 2013)

These photographs aim to create an image of a situation that is transferable – it is an image created for somewhere else, for someone else. As such, the images sit in tension. They are to be evidence; they are to justify the action and spending for a particular audience, and potentially also sell the brand to other potential donors. With humanitarian photographs increasingly produced for the donor, their content is anything but candid and found.

Promoting the Brand

Program managers often found it challenging to describe what composed ideal photographic content. They rarely hesitated, however, in noting that the images should clearly credit the agency. As Rowen noted, showing the particular organization's logos, badges, and defining characteristics were essential. In aid-speak, these aspects are known as “*visibilité*” or “visibility” – a term used interchangeably in French, Swahili, or English. “With growing competition among nonprofit organizations for funding, practices are becoming more commercialized, and NGOs

have increasingly undertaken organizational branding strategies... NGOs have developed communications formats that are now called by the industry term, ‘visibility projects’” (Nissinen 2014, 299). The inclusion of a logo – of visibility – within a photograph ensures that the action of the day is directly attributable to their funding and action. Through their photographs, NGOs “prove” their actions, and successes. The photograph is not just evidence. It is *their* evidence.

For instance, when photographing a project on women’s rights for an international agency in December 2014 – during my first trip back post-fieldwork - I watched a group of three men rush into the hall with a painted banner. They slid in behind a panel of speakers and raised it as their photographer entered the room. The photographer took pictures of what had minutes before appeared to be a multiple agency effort to promote women’s rights. The joint effort of sliding their logo into the scene and photographing it created an association between the panel of speakers with the NGO (Figure 65). As the photographer exited the scene, the banner-holding men followed him out.

There were many similar ways to ensure that visibility made it into an action photo. For instance, in Rowen’s example the American comms photographer for UNICEF, Bret, had carried stickers with him of the particular agencies and donors involved. Before dropping out of a helicopter or moving bags of food aid or lumber or people, T-shirts were handed out, and stickers plastered to the food bags, the trunks of supplies, or the other distributed, moving goods. In Goma, visibility is everywhere. White signboards are omnipresent. Logos claim uniforms, t-shirts, banners, posters, fliers, folders, notebooks, pens, bracelets, and even basketballs for the given agency. Aid project sites and their offices boldly sport logos on their walls, gates, flags, and 4x4 cars (which sometimes drive with other versions of the huge logo-ed flags streaming from the roof or rear of the car). The inclusion of the logos made the difference between a “good” aid image that could be used internally and one that was publishable to the wider world.



[Figure 65]

Overall, humanitarian photographs in Goma are today shackled with more work than simply shocking audiences and catalyzing funding. Now, like the myriad agencies that have come to Goma and stayed, images have softened and expanded their roles; the good aid image has become the quintessential multitasker, as it is expected to witness the situation, account for the donor's funding (while catering to their values), and attribute all that success to a readily identifiable agency. In so doing, photographs are granted the power to "speak" premised upon the set of often-contrary "evidences" they expose.

However, despite the patently positive content, these images have not entirely escaped the scathing critiques of the 1980s. Critiques of negative humanitarian images from the last few decades of the 20th century drew on a connection between photographs and the humanitarian aid they provided. Particularly, James Lissner (1981) saw a negative connection, claiming that agencies were simply selling aid instead of educating the masses. As such, he argued, the aid they provided was not helpful, nor responsive to the on-the-ground realities (in Lidchi 2015). Today,

with humanitarian images serving to highlight the dignity of the subjects while acting also as tools for advertising and monitoring and evaluation (M&E), the situation is not particularly different. In a discussion of the South African NGOs and the various reports, logframes, and other M&E accountability tools they must fulfill, Lisa Bornstein argues, “The experience of NGOs in South Africa suggests that widely-used M&E systems have created incentive for deception rather than enhanced accountability, and have contributed little to the better project implementation or wider learning. Rather than reinforcing accountability, they are weaving webs of deceit” (Bornstein 2006, 53). Central to accounting, funding and fundraising, photography has become a central feature in this NGO web of deception. Unable to act as a truthful witness (if there even is such a thing), the humanitarian photograph rather espouses presumed truthful indexicality, while bearing indelible traces of its carefully structured choreography as actors from across the humanitarian visual field hamstring the creativity of the resulting photograph – forcing it into a tempered, sterile depiction that provides carefully choreographed evidence of the situation, the brand, and the agency’s progress.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have done three things: 1) tracked the changes in the content of humanitarianism as related to aid photographs over the last century, 2) contextualized the humanitarian engagement in the eastern DRC, and 3) explored the Congolese humanitarian photography from a bureaucratic point of view. These various histories and observations of aid’s overwhelming presence both draw from and contribute to the broader scape of the eastern DRC. Taken together, I showed how current humanitarian agencies and their photographs have mapped onto a history of colonialism, state collapse, and rebel group conflict. In so doing, I have outlined an initial structure-based understanding of the institutions, policies, and expectations that shape the humanitarian visual field. Of particular importance for this research, I have engaged these

histories and the contemporary expectations of the aid photograph to expose the slippage between (and a layering of) the established witnessing values attributed to negative photographs and the marketing-driven portrayals captured in positive images. I argued that in the contemporary DRC's context, despite their capitalist goals "positive" images are suspended in a challenging space of not-quite-truth: expected to "show" reality and witness a situation, while strategically advertising and accounting to their donors. They are burdened with a "triple evidentiary" role as they witness, advertise, and account.

The expectations of what a "good" humanitarian photograph will look like, and what it will "do" stand in stark contrast to the local visual field's photos. As I explained in the previous chapter, local photography's use of creativity, improvisation, and bricolage craft often unlikely and obviously-staged representations. Such representations clash with humanitarian desires to naturalize a scene; popular photography's dialectic interaction sits in opposition to humanitarian candid, found visual action. Were I to end the dissertation here, it would simply appear that the norms and expectations of aid images and local photography in the eastern DRC sit in mutually exclusive visual fields. However, in the following chapters, I look more closely at the ways in which humanitarian photographs are created in practice, and how the Congolese subjects engage their camera. By probing the relationships between structure and agency in the respective visual fields, I explore how these seemingly oppositional photographic strategies in fact merge, creolize, and both respond to and shape the power dynamics of the region's scape. In the next chapter, I begin this more nuanced exploration of photographic practice by focusing on the strategies and embodied knowledge that humanitarian photographers apply as they try to craft the proper triple evidentiary photograph.

INTERLUDE TWO

THE DAMNED “BEFORE” IMAGE

“*Nipicha pia!*” (Take this one too!) shouted Sara over the din of laughter. Impromptu photographic props gained momentum. Pulling from the ubiquitous plaid plastic China bags and suitcases, women brought forth their presently treasured goods. One resident of the center proffered a Bible; others, a pair of sunglasses, a radio; and a bouquet of fake flowers. To calls of “over here!”, “me next,” “let me hold it too!” the items circulated. Pulling on local photographic norms, each woman styled herself with the goods and posed for a picture. And like the others, Sara grasped at the objects in motion, stilling them only for a moment as she struck a pose. These were not pictures that the international humanitarian agency TRY International (pseudonym) would use in an upcoming exhibition, but I took them anyway, having promised to return prints to each of the women the following week.

TRY International sought ten photographs to represent Goma, DRC in Angelina Jolie and William Hague’s Global Summit on the Prevention of Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) at the British Foreign Office in 2014. More specifically, these ten photographs would tell the story of Healing Arts, a program situated within the broader Heal Africa complex in Goma. Heal Africa is a large Congolese-run humanitarian agency and hospital, which receives support for its particular projects – including Healing Arts – from large international NGOs like TRY International. With funding from TRY and a number of other organizations, Healing Arts provided (and continues to provide) skill training for the city’s female residents and women and

their children recovering from a myriad of struggles, including but certainly not limited to sexual or gender-based violence (SGBV). However, TRY was only interested in one particular story of their partner organization; one that they had already scripted. Their story focused on a trajectory of sexual violence recovery through art. That's where I came in. I was asked to photograph young women like Sara for their assignment that demanded ten "touching" and seemingly candid still images that followed TRY's carefully choreographed narrative. I had five days from the time I was briefed on the assignment to the submission of the final images.

In reverse order the required photographs were:

- 10) Image showing the exuberant success of the program
- 9) Image showing the solidarity of the survivors
- 8) Image and testimony that "backed up the strapline" ("Healing through Art")
- 7) Image of the teachers training the women in the arts
- 6) A "personal image" (portrait) with transformative quotes
- 5) The art itself –showing the women making the items, the range of things or people working together
- 4) A broad image showing the art classes – the most important thing is to focus on the women
- 3) The program itself - interaction and infrastructure. An image that shows what it has expanded into, and how it is using art to heal
- 2) An image from within Heal Africa Hospital – showing how one treats the physical side of sexual violence
- 1) The "Before" image

The day immediate following my briefing, I dove into the project – simultaneously paying attention to the required humanitarian images and the way in which the women at Healing Arts wished to be represented. As will become clear in the following chapters, simultaneous attention to the local and the humanitarian desires around and in front of a camera becomes fundamental to probing not only the dynamics of the particular visual fields but their sometimes tense, sometimes playful interactions. This project with TRY, however, posed a particular challenge – the "before" photo.

First day of Photography: Healing Arts

I showed up (at Heal Africa's Healing Arts and Transit Center) and explained very carefully to each woman that the images were going to be used for

exhibition images, research publication, and that I would also print and give all of the images back to them in the end. Consent was very clear, and everyone seemed happy about the project. The women took turns explaining to each other what I was doing and then posed, expecting that I would photograph individual photos of each of them – their portraits – and then be done. They were surprised when I stuck around and created more candid-like images of their activities as well. For the camera, women took off or re-wrapped their hair scarves and then dug around for their Bible or their body lotion. They wanted pictures with their children, their friends, and their food – “show me eating.” “Take a picture of me with my baby and my tea.” They didn’t want action shots unless they were stop-motion. One very spunky mom, Francine, asked me to follow her to the parking lot so that they could capture a family picture with Jo’s (a co-founder of Heal Africa) new yellow office behind them. She then turned and stood near the tree and wanted the cars from the Heal Africa parking lot in the background.

I could use some of these pics for 2-10, but TRY needs a “before” picture of sexual violence – which right now seems ridiculous. It is incredibly hard to shoot – the women are animated or are sleeping, they’re spending time with friends, and generally, especially when I’m there running around speaking my comically accented Swahili to everyone, they are not looking listlessly off into nothingness. Basically, I’m being asked to put together some form of artistic hint at what had happened and how bad things have been – not how bad they ARE. I won’t ever ask anyone to look sad like I have seen some photographers do in the past. This image seems to require cherry picking because an actual representation of “before” in the present sure as hell is not all that common. I find myself looking around doing the “do you look sad enough?” analysis. One woman was holding her stomach and clearly not doing well today, but her expression is just not tragic enough for that “before” picture. I hope I don’t have to resort to photographing from behind people (which everyone finds exceedingly strange) to get the stereotypically negative image. As I’m looking around for this image, other women came in and said, “Take my picture while I am talking” and pretended to have a conversation on a telephone while posing with her child. Image 1 – not today. (Fieldnotes May 12, 2014)

Molly, the program manager for TRY, described the “before” image as one which, “you know, shows what it was like for the women before they came here.” When she described this, I squinted at her. “You have seen them [those pictures] before – we need something that will provide the background about sexual violence in the DRC. We need something that acts as a visual for how they felt. Some of them have told me, ‘I felt like I was dead’ or like that beautiful image of the woman looking away, with her shirt falling off her shoulder that exposed her scars from the attack. Something like that. Something beautiful but devastating.” And while Internet searches for images of SGBV in the eastern DRC show hundreds of such beautifully devastating photographs, the process of actually creating such an image in the midst of shooting the standard

positively themed aid pictures exposed the way in which representational negotiations occur at the intersection of humanitarian and local photographic norms. Engaging these often at-odds expectations in the space where the images were created, in turn, provided a portal to examine subjectivity and the regional politics of power, aid, and representation.

After photographing on day 1, I sat at Lac Kivu Lodge's terraced working tables overlooking the northern edge of Lake Kivu. There, unlike in my apartment, I had access to constant electricity, a desk, and a great view, making that space one of my favorite photo editing perches in Goma. I scrolled through the images from that day for the second time. Sliding past more than 200 portraits, I found each to be as spirited and inter-subjective as the next despite the women's range of expressions, which might lead viewers to believe that some were not joyous images. I found my frustration mounting. As expected, there was nothing even close to a "before photo."

The following photographs are representative of the majority of the portraits I created that day (Figures 66 – 72). Just to clarify, they do not depict the ten final photographs that I sent to TRY. While the explicit advertising images are compelling in their own right, the photographs below show how local photographic trends of posing for the camera came to dominate the photo shoot and make it ever harder to craft the humanitarian "before" photo.



[Figure 66 (above); Figure 67 (below)]





[Figure 68 (above); Figure 69 (below)]





[Figure 70 (above); Figure 71 (below)]





[Figure 71 (above); Figure 72 (below)]



I looked at the images again and kept searching for what wasn't there. Images 2-10 (the "success" and "activity" images), had been simple. These images provided a form of positive marketing that referenced the process of the aid program, from hospital treatment to training to the independent creation of the sellable art products, including fabric goods, jewelry, clay stoves, and baked goods. For those images photography went smoothly, not only because the processes were indeed occurring at Healing Arts, but also because they drew on a performative tendency that resonated within local photographic norms (e.g. Figure 74 – 76). Poses could look acceptably "candid." The teachers – Marie and Chantal – played for the camera enacting yesterday's teaching for the class to provide ample visual fodder to show their education skills. Sara and the other women learning the various trades or receiving the care in the hospital were proud to show off their beneficiary status, and their capabilities by posing for portraits or enacting (unsolicited) stop-motion action for the camera.

[Figure 74 (below)]





[Figure 75 (above); Figure 76 (below)]



I continued to shoot for two more days, struggling to garner that singular “before” photograph while also navigating the desires of the photographic subjects and the bureaucracy of the humanitarian industry. It became hard in fact to take not only a respectful negative image but also a challenge to shoot the past – something that was, not what is. That damned before picture had begun to haunt me.

Day 2

I spent all day working on permissions, as Heal Africa changed their “verbal” permission tune and wanted every one of the women to sign a release form. Frank (their communications manager) and I are working on this. The photos are “meh”. I still don’t have a “before” shot. Babish, a caretaker of a disabled child, keeps pushing me to take pictures of her child, keeps telling me that they are hungry that they need help to fix her problems. What it appears she needs is a great physical therapist... but she keeps calling for and choreographing the photos, and unlike some of the other mothers who joke and want me to take their pictures playing around and with their children, she is direct and aggressive – “mzungu (white person), take this photo” “isn’t there anyone in the US that can help?” “Utabeba photo hii kwako, utaionyesha pale (You’ll carry this picture to your home, and you can show it there). As for the “before” photo – nothing today. (Fieldnotes May 13, 2014)

So I altered my approach:

Day 3

...Trying to get that damn first photo of suffering is ridiculous– most people are reacting to me, laughing with me at my Swahili, or relaxing with their friends. I refuse to pick off photographs with my long lens images and try to create something that is not. I don’t want to shoot from behind them – that’s considered weird. This is so irritating – it is not representative of the situation I see. So I changed tactics to tap into what was comfortable for the women - pose and interaction. I asked some women who seemed not particularly thrilled what they thought about this project and what they wanted to show the wider world – I asked them if they wanted a photograph, they said “yes.” Then I asked if they wanted to show something positive. One woman looked at me in awe, “Positive? Happy? No. I was shot twice, raped, and I am now just here just sitting and doing nothing – I want to go back home.” And another echoed this, “I am just sitting here with mawazo mingi (many thoughts). I have nothing to do, I was raped. Life is very, very hard.” So, I asked them if they wanted to be photographed for my research and the exhibition project, and asked how they wanted to show themselves. I took the pictures they wanted (e.g. Figure 77). Then, another woman joined in a bit later and wanted a similar photo- she laughed with her friend as they coordinated where to place their hands to shape the best unhappy picture. Once settled, they collectively sighed, and steadied themselves for the image (Figure 78 and 79). (Fieldnotes May 14, 2014)



[Figure 77]



Figure 78 (above); Figure 79 (below)



The set of interactions that in the end shaped both the positive portraits and the "before image" provided insight into a range of situations. These photographs occurred squarely within the overlapping space of the local and humanitarian visual fields. However, instead of two entirely different systems, the norms and expectations of both fields interacted and shaped images uniquely poised at their intersection. Moreover, the very process of creating these images showed the malleability of identity and representation. It opened negotiated space, where imagination and play were as possible as witnessing. Ultimately, the photographic project with TRY international was not the first nor was it the last hands-on photographic interaction within the intersection of local photographic desires and institutionally provided humanitarian assignments during my fieldwork. However, like many before and after, it showed how the resulting image is shaped by the processes of creation – where the subjects and the photographer navigate the scene, expectations, and each other to construct and influence the image's content and the message it will carry forward. As this dissertation will show, these interactions provide a lens to understand both the visual fields of the region and through them the social dynamics that shape the eastern DRC.

CHAPTER FOUR

STERILIZING THE NARRATIVE (OR) “YOU SHOOT LIKE A JOURNALIST”

“In local photography, people go looking for a camera. In humanitarian photography, the camera goes looking for them,” explained Ndiaga, head of UNICEF communications in Goma. This distinction between photographic action in the humanitarian and local visual fields is simplified, but it is not incorrect. In contrast to the local photographic subjects who hire photographers to gain a playfully exaggerated self-depicting photograph, humanitarian photographers troll project sites as they search for and create intentional pictures composed of specific image content and equally specific photographic subjects. In the previous chapter, I detailed the histories that together shape the foundation of the humanitarian visual field in Goma *et environs*. I also detailed the triple-evidentiary role the aid photograph is expected to play as it witnesses a situation, markets the agency, and accounts for the existing donor support. In that chapter, I addressed the structure-driven expectations of a humanitarian photograph from the point of view of the humanitarian program managers. Here, I engage aid images and their expected content from the perspectives of those who create them: the photographers and the in-the-field support staff. In so doing, I explore the social dynamics of humanitarian intervention within the eastern DRC’s frontier zone. In particular, I use a variety of ethnographic episodes to investigate the role of the photographer in creating an image that successfully satisfies the field’s triple evidentiary expectations. In so doing, I probe the exquisite choreographic lengths that humanitarian employees and photographers go to in order to control the photograph and the narrative it carries. Through the socialized knowledge brought about from shadowing photography, participant

observation, and interviews, I use this chapter to engage the tense, friction-laden connections between structure, agency, and power dynamics within the humanitarian visual field. In so doing, I endeavor to ground the theoretical notion of “a good aid image” within the particularities of the region’s context, as photographic practice both responds to and shapes the field itself and the social dynamics of the space in which it resides.

MAPPING HUMANITARIAN BORDERS INTO CONGO’S FRONTIER ZONE

As the last chapter argued, humanitarian aid has become an ever-increasingly powerful player in the eastern DRC’s frontier zone. Just as aid has shaped the economy and the development of Goma, it has also shaped the social realities for the individuals who inhabit the region - both international and local. However, despite the aid industry’s prominence, it does not compose a social layer whose power is evenly distributed over the eastern DRC’s frontier zone. Due to the omnipresent visibility, aid may appear to be everywhere. However, in actuality, it functions akin to the conflict in the region – establishing secure, pocketed spaces in which to engage and run the offices, travel and operate the myriad projects. Such pockets target only particular places, leaving the wider region to deal only with the reverberating, indirect effects of their presence. Aid, in essence, operates through the act of mapping borders onto the space of the eastern DRC. Borders can be conceptualized as two distinct, yet interconnected concepts. On one hand, in the literal sense of the term, borders are some form of physical boundary – the walls, boundary lines, Customs offices, etc. On the other, they become what Alvarez calls the a-literalist sense that encompasses the “social boundaries on the geopolitical border and also on all behavior in general that involves contradictions, conflict, and the shifting of identity” (1995, 449). While addressing photography in the frontier zone of the eastern DRC, I use this chapter and the following chapters, to investigate the literal and metaphoric ways in which the eastern DRC’s humanitarian powerhouse maps spaces of social and physical action onto the map of the eastern DRC.

Within North Kivu, practices of social exclusion and the physical construction to delineate space draw the discontinuous borders of humanitarian aid. Within cities, and notably in Goma, humanitarian aid's hard infrastructural limits often materialize as high lava-rock walls complete with razor-wire accents and enormous solid metal gates. Encircling spacious aid offices and employee housing, such enclosures often capitalize on beautiful views of the lake in the Himbi and Quartier des Volcans neighborhoods. Armed security workers man the gates that are prominently labeled with the agency's moniker. Fancy hotels delineated by equally high walls and metal gates accommodate aid VIPs and supply French-inspired fare and good wines. Meanwhile, expat and elite jet skis and expensive motorboats buzz along the lake, leaving wakes through which local fisherman paddle. In the spaces between their offices and their equally well-walled homes, international aid staff skips across town within locked-tight 4x4 vehicles. Humanitarians live, work, move through, and plan for the future of the DRC from behind these walls.

Entry into these spaces is highly regulated. Aid offices relegate passage into their walled-off space to badge-wearing personnel. At the guard posts of the agencies, all visitors are expected to "sign in" and then wait to be chaperoned to a confirmed meeting with the staff. The Congolese with no assigned meeting time are turned away at the door. By now, twenty years into the humanitarian circus, most of the city's residents have learned that the attempt to gain access is not worth their time. Moreover, the same social segregation perpetuates outside of the agency's walls. For international humanitarians, which bars, hotels, restaurants and even whole sections of town one is permitted to visit are delineated by the organization. The failure to comply could lead to a reprimand or result in a lost job. On the other hand, for the Congolese (with the exception of the small crowd of well-known elites), access to such "expat" places is curtailed through economic and physical means. In many cases, guards simply refuse their entry, and in others, the economic distinction between inside and outside is so high that the location becomes financially exclusionary.

Outside their social and infrastructural barriers, the city buzzes with activity as its residents pursue their hopes for an opportunity as they flow around the walls and steal glimpses of the aid agents and their activities from afar. The level of economic difference between inside and outside the humanitarian boundaries is commonly outrageous. While international humanitarians and the region's elite draw incomes upwards of the six-figure range, most displaced, working, and even middle-class Congolese residents must *se débrouiller* to cover their ever-rising rent, support their families, and carry out their celebrated ceremonies. For instance, Claire, a vivacious 42-year-old woman who lives in a rougher part of town near the Virunga market walks eight miles round-trip to clean rooms in a guest house. Her husband, James, who holds a degree in International Development spends much of his day seeking jobs; he received occasional work as a housekeeper, occasionally as a security guard, and proverbial "go for." Claire and her husband had completed their engagement and dowry ceremony in 2000. However, saving the money for a proper wedding ceremony took them a full 14 years. To the flashes of numerous local photographers, they eventually celebrated achieving an official marriage against the financial odds in June 2014. Hundreds of thousands of other individuals in the city - the restaurant workers, market vendors, moto-drivers, security workers, and low-level local NGO workers - hustle to get by within Goma's rising rents and beneficial-for-some economy.

This struggle becomes particularly evident in the spaces such as Bierere, a neighborhood that sits next to the Rwandan border, and Ndosho a southern suburb of Goma. High levels of crime, insecurity, and poverty mark both locations. Writing about Bierere, Vlassenroot and Büscher note, "For many, it is a zone of opportunity; thousands of people walk long distances every day from the peripheral districts to this popular center to do some *affaires* and to buy or sell goods for the best price. It is in this part of the city that important business deals are being concluded, yet at the same time where thousands of *Goméens* balance all sorts of survival strategies in order to have something to eat at the end of the day" (2009, 8). Bierere and Ndosho are two *quartiers* (neighborhoods) in which the hard borders, the walls of offices or homes of

international humanitarian aid, are rare. Rather, aid traverses Ndosho and Bierere and their slow-moving, loud, crowded streets respectively on the way South to the town of Sake and the IDP camps that sit outside Goma's southern suburbs and en route to the airport. Such closed-window 4x4 rides are filled with unspoken, yet palpable tension as the aid workers head to treat other people's poverty and other people's problems elsewhere, outside the city. This bordering has intensified over the years, but the "appalling contrast between humanitarian infrastructure and actors and the general working conditions of the state and local civil society actors" is not entirely a recent phenomenon (Kassa 2003). Despite occupying the same city (and province) the social interactions between these zones of life – the "Congolese" and the "humanitarian" – are often minimal at best.

Importantly, the exclusion and division created by the hard physical borders and the soft economic and social boundaries within Goma also expand outwards into the province. There, outside of the densely divided humanitarian hub, where aid agency employees make plans, file reports, account to donors, and reside, humanitarian action is bounded through the concept of "project sites." As mentioned briefly in the previous chapters, projects have become the go-to means through which aid is enacted. Behind walls and wires, health centers dole out their medications; displaced people receive life-continuing handouts; children gain an education, and individuals are sensitized to issues of sanitation, security, and health. The boundaries of projects mark what is aid space and what is not. The razor wire or white picket fences, the spaces demarcated by clusters of white *paneaux* (signboards), areas ringed in visibility-encrusted 4x4s, or places of distribution marked on humanitarian maps all help to chart new humanitarian borders into the eastern DRC's frontier zone. Pocketed just like the conflict, these discontinuous aid project sites shape spaces of opportunity and intervention. Moreover, they delineate who has access to aid and who does not. Such clearly bounded aid spaces are also the sites in which donors expect to see the progress brought about by their funding. Unsurprisingly, such project sites have become the primary locations where humanitarian photography occurs. Within the

borders aid is unquestionably king, and their cameras effectively depict their rule through their metaphorically rose-colored cut glass.

It's important to mention here that I make a distinction between "aid space" – the often-bounded humanitarian project and office space - and "humanitarian space." As Hilhorst and Jansen note, "Humanitarian space denotes the physical or symbolic space which humanitarian agents need to deliver their services according to the principles they uphold" (2010, 1117). This term is most frequently employed to refer to spaces made meaningful through the exceptional action they allow – such as safe havens, humanitarian corridors, and refugee camps (Hilhorst et al. 2010, 1117). While recognizing the utility of this term to speak to the specific need for exception, I engage "aid space" as a broader term which may incorporate the exceptionalism and the humanitarian aspirations of neutrality and independence, but which is determined by the dynamics of a space as a means to condition the subjectivities who enter in relation to the power dynamics defined in the humanitarian hierarchy.

While this power dynamic is clearly visible within project sites, the way a camera is received makes this distinction between inside and outside of aid space ever more clear. On the street near Virunga market, in a vibrant bustling part of town, I paused from photographing a basketball game to capture a few quick images of the heavily smoking Nyiragongo volcano, puffing away just 12 km outside of town. A middle-aged man stepped in front of me, "Who the hell do you think you are?!" he raged. "You have no right! NO RIGHT!" I raised my eyebrows – by this point I was very used to such anti-photography sentiments in town. "Is it so?" I asked, knowing that the law had changed and that since 2012 you no longer needed a permit to take photographs in public. This rarely held with police or other authorities so I still carried a permit from *La Department de Culture et Arts* all the same. He kept up, "Yeah! You think you humanitarians can just come here and take pictures of us in the middle of the day like this!" He snorted in my direction, "Imagine the idea of you doing this in Europe! In the city! Where there are pedestrians! You wouldn't dare. But here, you just think you can do what you want!"

Realizing how worked up he was getting, I pulled him aside and explained that a) I wasn't a humanitarian and b) photography within busy cities is part of the tourist economy in Europe. I showed him the camera screen, which exposed an image of the volcano and the very tops of people's heads. No one's identity was visible. Satisfied, he wished me a good day and strode off into the crowd. Photography by someone who looks like a Western humanitarian (see next chapter for a complete discussion of this identity) outside of a project site was akin to playing Russian photographic roulette.

However, when one traverses the boundary of the project site, aid is in control, and an entirely different power dynamic is at play. If an agency brings in a photographer, beneficiaries (also called participants) therein are expected to accept being photographed. Permission forms are rare (though they do happen), and subjects have few rights upon which to refuse or to confront the individual taking the picture. Certainly they can and do commonly resist the imposition. Some choose to avoid the image or leave the bounded space. Some cover their faces or turn away when a photographer persistently frames them through the lens. But such outbursts as above are rare; everyone inside aid space knows where they sit concerning the boundaries, and in relation to their position in the hierarchy of power. In a perverse twist of space, power and ethics, photographers fall in with western program staff and VIPs at the top of the heap, while beneficiaries inhabit the bottom-most rung. As long as they have permission to photograph the associated agency, the photographer has the "right" to rove the project space and carry out their work uninterrupted, while the right of the beneficiaries and the project is much more tenuous. The colonial-like power dynamics are terrifyingly evident. Peter Redfield plainly asks, "Does not the global (humanitarian) movement resemble a second coming of empire?" Then, referring to the western aid workers, he goes on, "Are not advantaged transients its prime agents, the new traders, administrators, and missionaries? Any properly anticolonial conscience goes on red alert" (2012, 358). Redfield's elisions between the power dynamics of colonialism and development are not new (see 1984; 1988; 1995; Brigg 2002; Marcus 2002, Kothari 2005). However, as I'll explore

below and over the next few chapters, the interplay of power dynamics stemming from the region's colonial and post-colonial histories are neither unitary nor do they delineate clear-cut or scripted action from both photographers and the Congolese subjects they frame. Rather, within the power and subjectivity-shifting bounded space of aid, these local-global dynamics reinforce sets of relationships from which individuals then navigate, manipulate, and craft their paths forward.

VIGNETTE 1

“Shadowing Photography” with Benoît Almeras-Martino and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) at a Bweremana Military Trial

After my first three weeks in Goma, on 4-5 September 2013, I hopped into a UNDP 4x4 and drove off to Minova and Bweremana (on the North Kivu / South Kivu border) with newly hired UNDP communications photographer Benoît Almeras-Martino. His co-worker had introduced us at a happy hour at Chalet, an upscale restaurant with a bar directly on the lake. Chalet's Wednesday night extravaganza is an overwhelming expat affair – another soft border - where drinks come with names like “lava” and flow for two hours in two for one deals before settling to their usual elevated prices. Each week, many of the city's young expat crowds (often still wearing their badges) meet for a bit of mid-week debauchery, while their drivers waited to drive them home. Chalet's regular Wednesday event allowed me to meet a range of humanitarians and set up research concerning their respective photography. A week after Benoît and I met, I arrived in his spacious UNDP office. Benoît, who held a communications degree and had worked in a variety of NGOs both in Congo and abroad, was new to Goma. However, he was not naive about the type of images his organization expected of him. After an hour of describing the ways he works to shape proper aid photographs, Benoît offered to take me into the field the following day so I could see what he was describing.

The trip Benoît invited me onto addressed UNDP's attempts at promoting “good governance” within the region. This particular project was a military rape trial in Bweremana –

located nearly two hours the south of Goma. The UNDP and a range of international NGOs supported both the FARDC army and the police in the fight against impunity – particularly concerning sexual violence. This set of good governance initiatives had become ever more important in the region in the wake of the 2012 mass rapes in Minova – just another 15 minutes south. After the M23 had captured Goma in November 2012, the FARDC army fled south to the border of North and South Kivu. In Minova alone they have been accused of as many as 126 rapes, as well as accounts of forced labor, theft, and murder (Human Rights Watch 2014). Since then Minova has become a hub for projects concerning justice, the fight against impunity, and the prevention of sexual violence.

A few kilometers north of Minova, Bweremana became the site of a military tribunal. This event showcased both the UNDP's training of FARDC officers and the success of the mobile courts that the UNDP supported. On the day we arrived, the mobile court was on the second day of a trial that evaluated the guilt of four FARDC soldiers who had been accused of raping girls and women. The previous day, the rape survivors had given their testimonies. We arrived at the mobile court set up on the soccer pitch in Bweremana in time to hear the full day of deliberations surrounding the four verdicts.

We parked next to a few other white NGO 4x4s in the field and hopped out of the car into a crowd of local townspeople who had gathered to see the trial. They, however, grappled for a view from outside the project space. We wove through the crush of bodies until we reached the razor-wire border that had been drawn by UN MONUSCO blue-helmeted soldiers. Once inside the encircling wire, we were within the project site and, therefore, free to photograph. I spent a good portion of the morning watching Benoît shoot. I tried to discern what narrative he was trying to craft, what elements he chose to include and exclude. As part of methodological trial and error, I photographed him photographing, watched what he avoided, shot over his shoulder trying to mimic his composition and inclusions (Figures 80-82).



[Figures
80 (top),
81 (middle)
82 (bottom)]



Shadowing photography became a technique that over the course of a year enabled me to learn to see in a different way. As I noted in chapter 2, with the help of local photographers I worked to develop an “eye” to both recognize and create successful popular photography that praised the subject and employed the surrounding physical environment to creatively building a narrative. In humanitarian photography shadowing photography took on a slightly different execution, which shifted in response to the dynamics of the humanitarian visual field.

In both local and humanitarian photography, this method first drew on Cristina Grasseni’s notion of “skilled vision” (2007). Grasseni employed videos to learn how to see the beauty of brown cows. Through her camera's lens she learned to see the animals for their composite parts and qualities. Her practice of using a camera to focus her eye trained her ability as a fieldworker to be able not just to talk to individuals about the parts of the cow but to gain knowledge through her vision - through her embodied ability to see as if through their lens. Grasseni’s work draws heavily on phenomenological anthropology – particularly on Tim Ingold, whose aim is, “to understand how people perceive the world around them, and how and why those perceptions differ” (Ingold 2011, 323 in Pink 2013). For Grasseni, and consequently for myself, this “learning to see” became a process that involved not just the observations or analysis of the fieldworker, but the awareness which arose through processes of socialization (Grasseni 2007, 64).

My camera, like Grasseni’s video camera, became a vehicle to train this embodied, sensory knowledge. By researching literally through my lens in the eastern DRC, I gained the socialization in how humanitarian and local photography should look. Through the act of observing and photographing alongside communications photographers I was able to not only examine the angles, inclusions, and avoidances of aid and local photographers respectively but also to understand the decisions each actor was making. I was able to see what they cropped out of the frame when they lowered the camera, and the decisive humanitarian photographic moments they waited for or avoided. This method made me conscious of how I photographed, and what

photographers like Benoît did. Moreover, though, through attempting to see as a humanitarian photographer, shadowing photography came to teach the implicit knowledge necessary to recognize and capture a proper aid photograph as it happened.

In theory, shadowing photography should have allowed me to observe and mimic photographic composition, while photographers worked in the field. However, as with all methodology, this ideal participatory action became only part of how the process functioned. Photo shoots ranged from minutes to hours, and the longer the period the more difficult it became to just follow someone and take the same pictures they're taking. Honestly, there's also only so much anyone can handle having you shoot over his or her shoulder. Especially at the beginning, when my humanitarian compositional eye remained unformed, shadowing humanitarian photography consisted of a combination of taking "their images," observing, and also falling back upon taking my "own" images.

As I mentioned in earlier chapters, I came to the eastern DRC with a background in photojournalism, documentary, and communications photography. However, I had no systematic awareness of how I had been trained to see the world through my lens. This act of both becoming aware of both one's reflexive visual practice and biases was eye opening. I had to both gain an awareness of my own visual practice and equally learn another. Dianne Hagaman in her work *How I Learned Not To Be a Photojournalist* (1996) explains a very similar situation to my own. Trained as a photojournalist, she found herself learning to see and shoot differently during her MFA project that came to engage a broader social story about alcoholism, evangelism, and the Native American population of Seattle. Hagaman writes, "I took what I knew about photography for granted. It was a hard-won skill I could count on. I knew what a 'good' photograph was, and I knew good work when I saw it. It didn't occur to me then that a big chunk of my field work would be an exploration of how to make photographs that communicated my understanding of what I was studying more fully than those 'good' ones could" (ibid., 2). Hagaman, like Grasseni

after her, argued that the way one uses the lens could either limit or expand the questions that one can explore and answer.

The Bweremana trials proved to be a critical encounter, where my lens helped me to shape better questions and also gain implicit knowledge of what humanitarian photography was and how it was done. Throughout the day, Benoît and I shot the same event. We moved around each other and framed images. While I strove to shadow him the whole time, my old photojournalist eye kept hijacking the patient calculating needed to compose the humanitarian image. As a result, my shadowing was far from perfect. The resulting sets of photographs are organized by photographer and respectively expose Benoît's steady humanitarian eye and my struggling one mostly composed of a mishmash of ethnographic and photojournalistic angles. By separating out my impatient, non-humanitarian images and Benoît's successful aid photographs below I ask readers to engage the collective differences in how we each portrayed the same event. The distinctions speak to both the politics of expectation surrounding a "good aid image" and the skilled vision that is necessary to shoot like a humanitarian. Ultimately, during my fieldwork, the comparison of the pictures from that day shaped my awareness of what a humanitarian photographer looks for and what makes a good humanitarian photograph; the embodied knowledge came far later.

Benoît Almeras-Martino: Humanitarian Photographs

Benoît shared his edited photographs from the Bweremana trial on Flickr. He generously provided the rights to use those images here. I selected the images for use here and have attempted to include a representative range of the photographic content that he focused on that day (Figures 83-92).



[Figures 83 (above) and 84 (below) by Benoît Almeras-Martino]





[Figures 85 (above) and 86 (below) by Benoît Almeras-Martino]





[Figures 87 (above) and 88 (below) by Benoît Almeras-Martino]





[Figures 89 (above) and 90 (below) by Benoît Almeras-Martino]





[Figures 91 (above) and 92 (below) by Benoît Almeras-Martino]



Aubrey Graham Not-Quite Aid Photos:

While I tried to shadow Benoît and train my eye to see differently, I nonetheless reverted to my usual “eye” – shooting the situation as I would have otherwise – as something strung between the eye of a photojournalist and photographic ethnographer (Figures 93 – 101).



[Figure 93 (above); Figure 94 (below)]





[Figure 95 (above); Figure 96 (below)]





[Figure 97 (above); Figure 98 (below)]





[Figure 99 (above); Figure 100 (below)]





[Figure 101]

HOW A PHOTOJOURNALIST IS NOT AN AID PHOTOGRAPHER... YET

“That’s a nice shot,” Benoît said as he watched me photograph two men struggle with a military prisoner. “But you shoot like a journalist.” It was neither compliment nor insult, but the point was clear – I was doing something noticeably different. I pointed my camera at the action and framed what I saw to be the decisive moments. A soldier tore strips of fabric from a worn out military cloth and tied the accused’s wrists behind his back. Roping his wrists together was a subtly violent gesture; the prisoner grunted against the pressure. Benoît didn’t shoot this. He merely lowered his camera and watched. I aimed at the relations that brimmed with tension between the supervising FARDC soldiers, their accused brethren, the lawyers (in black), the UN blue helmets, and the townspeople.

Benoît’s photos, on the other hand, seemed to engage the trial in a sober, orderly light. “We’re using these images to set examples,” he explained in a retrospective conversation in November 2014. The positive photographs expressed what “should be,” not necessarily what

“was.” At the trial in September 2013, some relational aspects were less than ideal. The prisoners had been sitting on the hardened red dirt in the center of a field for the entire morning. Around them, international NGO-supported lawyers and judges in flowing black robes and fluffy white pom-pom-ed sashes evaluated the cases presented to the tribunal with an air of suffocating authority. Benoît avoided photographing the conditions in which the accused were held. He turned his camera away from any violence or injustice and the disorder with the crowd (unless they were happily celebrating). Skillfully, he navigated the hundreds of yards of large *fil barbulé* (barbed wire) whose coils drew an aggressive border between the audience and the prisoners. Trying to photograph around the barbed wire was complicated; he had made a conscious choice to avoid it.

Nonetheless, Benoît's ability to maneuver the situation proved that he was a knowledgeable shooter. It also confirmed that he was capturing very intentional moments. In comparison to my uninhibited camera, he appeared reserved. He shot with his fixed lenses, mainly his 50mm, which gave him a relatively narrow view of the unfolding events; he composed his images slowly and patiently. He would work his way around the outskirts of the tarp and barbed wire areas and shoot portraits of prominent military figures. He would wait; making sure his frame included the equipment (e.g. the microphones) and other accouterments that symbolized organization and order. Of course, he also ensured that the UNDP logos made it into as many shots as possible. He photographed from behind the military culprits and took a handful of pictures of the accused standing with their hands behind their backs looking out to the judges who presided under a painted banner that told of the sponsors of the good governance project.

While Benoît's photographs - and likely mine for that matter - carry an air of documentary reality, they are nonetheless all constructions. Each was carefully crafted through attention to the props and composition, which drew a photographic frame around the soon-to-be-visible aspects of aid. Moreover, first thing in the morning, Benoît and Henri (his UNDP partner) arranged vests. Henri arrived with only one bit of visibility – his badge. However, one of UNDP's

4x4 drivers had a full field vest with UNDP (or the French acronym PNUD) emblazoned on the back and front. Henri donned the UNDP logo-encrusted vest and re-arranged his badge so all would be visible. In so doing, Benoît ensured that the number of images with effective marketing would be more than those with just the visibility-laden land cruisers and the banner in the background.

It was only when the crowd went wild with excitement at the acquittal of two military members that both Benoît and I naturally began photographing the situation in a similar fashion. We ran with the crowd; we jockeyed non-competitively for a position as we shot from above our heads in the middle of the crowd so to capture the sweeping elation around us. We simultaneously watched and photographed the men as they were dragged inside a dark wooden house only to return dumb-struck and covered in the granulated white flour (a sign of celebration and achievement usually showered on individuals at graduation) and wearing new sandals. Throughout, women danced and ululated around them. While our movements had been at odd angles to each other earlier in the day, the celebrations showed a common motivation – capture images of elation, happiness. The excitement and positivity over-ran the seeming chaos. Such positivity and action inspired decisive moments for both journalistic and humanitarian lenses.

By 3 PM we were done. Sunburned, we piled back into the waiting UN vehicles as other UN staff loaded them with plantains to bring back to Goma. We had both shot a few memory cards worth of images and respectively had a few hundred photos to sift through. As I looked through my images a few days later, I processed the photos that demonstrated the actions and the emotions of the day to the best of my “way of seeing.” One image, which I shared with friends and family, drew interest for its contrasts. The picture showed a child framed by rings of razor wire, while a woman jumped in the background in response to the acquittal. Benoît took a look at the image and noted, “Great shot – I wish I had the same inspiration.”

Inspiration wasn't Benoît's problem. Rather within his UNDP communication's position, his creative ability was yoked by the need to “auto-censor” through his camera. His photographs

had to emphasize order, positivity, and functional development, brushing the photographic excess, and visual dirt and disorder under the rug and out of the intentionally controlled composition. Benoît's images were tidy, functional, and showed a significant UNDP success. In the interview the day before, Benoît had explained, "The photographs represent the examples – they show that 'it is like that here' – or more precisely, that 'it needs to be like this here.'" He expressed the expectation of the photograph and the positive "ideal" that they established. He continued, "The photos need to show that the project is orderly. No one wants to see disorder – it all has to be well framed; it needs to show that people are organized – but it's best to show the means through which that organization is done. You have to show the action." As the conversation continued, he explained how he understands his personal process of photographing:

One tries to be representative of the place where one is - where one takes the photograph. But all the same, one must auto-censor – one must not take photographs of spaces that are not well organized. If for instance, at a maternity, it's not well organized, one must limit oneself and take only the close-ups and the formulaic pictures. One does not show the holes in the floor, holes in the clothes, or similar things. One knows that the final destination of that photograph is with the donor – the person who has given money. You don't want to show that it is not organized. Moreover, the mission of the organization is always in our head. But you must auto-censor.... the situation must be transferrable to your audience. (Interview translated from French Sept. 4, 2013)

His careful, "auto-censored" photographs of the speakers, the lawyers, and the crowd did exactly this. He merged the witnessing of the (idealized) situation with the logo-based marketing, and the order, which accounted to donors that the project was being well executed. The photographs say nothing regarding the evaluation of the verdicts. Their goal was to speak to the situation only in vague generalities, showing something between "it was like this" and "it should be like this." In contrast, my failure to properly shadow and shoot like a humanitarian led to my engagement with the action in a less structured way. With my journalist-ethnographer's eye, I focused on the discord, tension, the negative, the action, the precariousness, the borders, and the disorder – in an attempt to capture the broader context and the details of the situation as it was. Nonetheless, my

images are no more “true” than his. Rather, they show the variation in the available depictions of a space and a project. They show how the expectation of whom you are shooting for shapes what you compose. They show how implicit knowledge takes shape across the lens and provides not just an understanding of what one must shoot, but the ability to recognize the image as it arises from the chaos and disorder of most project sites.

HUNTING THE RIGHT PHOTO

Learning to see as a humanitarian meant consciously engaging the expectations of the humanitarian visual field and taking action to shape the scene through the lens. I knew how to capture the action, but I needed to tighten the frame, to learn to control and sanitize the content, and to look for logos. Interestingly, this was directly the opposite set of learning that Hagaman went through during her experience of breaking with her particular journalistic training and moving towards a more ethnographic frame. In contrast, she had to learn to loosen her frame by moving from close-up centered images of her subjects to wider-angled frames that encompass the meaningful excess, tension, and relationships in front of her. On the other hand, I had to bow to the triple evidentiary expectations and allow them to shape my visual options and to foreclose the more ambiguous visual narratives. To properly shoot like a humanitarian, like in local photography, I had to become intentional as much about what I left out of the photograph as what I decided to keep in.

Benoît’s methods to achieve the images he knew that the UNDP would want were a process that involved small amounts of staging, significant amounts of time, and a knowledgeable, auto-censoring eye. In the opinions of other humanitarian photographers his tactics were considered effective but time-consuming. In other words, it was one version of photographic practice, but it was not the only way in which photographers and others came to shape image content. Some shot haphazardly, ignoring and unaware of the photographic

expectations within the humanitarian visual field. Others hunted and maneuvered so as to carefully shape useful photographs. The variation in photographic tactics spoke to the way in which the triple evidentiary image, while attainable, is indeed an ideal type. It is not a simple formula that everyone knows and can reproduce in every humanitarian situation. Rather, the structure of the field is loose; instead of hard and fast rules, it functions as a set of guidelines. In practice, one's level of training, the expected use of the photograph, and a myriad of other tiny individual factors and shooting styles shaped the way in which individuals crafted their images.

Frank, a Congolese communications worker at a large Congolese NGO, had no formal training in photography or video. He was hired into a position of communications manager due in part to his language skills and general affability, but also due to the highly rumored process of *mdogo-ism*. His family members and other Nande people worked in the organization, and no one seemed surprised that after the entire media team was dismissed, someone like him was asked to take over. Unaware of the broader mission, the internal or external image tracks, or who he should be producing the photographs for, Frank explained, "I understand that the photograph is about illustration that allows others to understand the situations. But I don't know, when I go out in the field, I just take pictures *par hazard* (by chance). I don't leave the office with a goal for photography. For photos, I merely go out and see if I find something cool. *But en tout cas vraiment* (in all cases, really), I take photographs *par hazard*." After the bombing in 2013, Frank displayed photos on the Internet within an article calling for immediate donations to help the many individuals who had been wounded. The photographs mimicked the 1905 image of Congolese atrocity, and showed gore, truncated limbs and the newly operated flesh of the survivors. Fat black rectangles had been added in the editing stage to block out the identity of the photographic subject. Frank received pushback from the donors about his photographs. No additional funding arose. His images, he was told, were too negative. While he could discursively articulate the approximate goal of the image (to illustrate), Frank showed that the ability to capture good humanitarian images was not simply a given for someone in a communications

position. Rather, it was a learning process that conditioned one's eye, recognition, and sensibilities.

On the other hand, Marc a West African with a communications degree who headed up the communications department for an international organization within the health and nutrition sector, employed a different form of photographic tactics. As we sat in his surprisingly well-window-ed office Marc explained the expectations that shaped his images and practice in the field. "I need to capture the human being as the center of it all. Food security is central, and it is important to show that we are in the process of helping this happen –we need to show the person and their active participation in this process. The car or the bags of food (with the logo on them)– that doesn't say much on its own. We need to show that the organization has a connection with the people." When Marc would arrive in the "field" (a common synonym for project sites) however, he explained that he was commonly confronted with a challenge. Beneficiaries acted differently when he raised his camera (I directly explore this phenomenon in the following chapter). Laden with his agency's visibility and wielding a large Digital Single Lens Reflex camera (DSLR), Marc was unmistakably a humanitarian. While Benoît used the tactic of auto-censoring, and Frank pursued no tactics, Marc took a different track:

For me, I don't announce when I'm taking pictures. Like that, people don't change their comportment or their position. I don't want people to change their position or their situation – I want them to keep being in the process of working, like that I can take the picture that I originally saw. The photograph is ruined if they stop doing what they were doing because they saw me. If this happens, I leave the scene, and I come back later. Then from further away I take the picture. Like that, the photograph has the appearance of being real. Often I also have to deal with the problem of children trying to jump into the photograph, so I try to get them to do something else to do off to the side of the image so I can get the uninterrupted scene. (Interview May 7, 2014)

The resulting pictures are intended to perpetrate Barth's "myth" of flattening constructed, hunted interaction into the seemingly found "truthful" documentary photographs that bear supposed witness. Shaped in part by the loose parameters of the humanitarian field as defined by the

expectations of the photography and the associated hierarchical relationships and power dynamics in the sites of photographic production, consumption, and circulation, Marc made a set of calculated decisions. Through his maneuvers of distracting the children, going away briefly, and shooting from further away, he expressed agency and could fulfill his role within the loose structural expectations of the humanitarian visual field. However, his expectations of the photograph rubbed up against that of the subject. Such a situation was not uncommon. In fact, such action has received critique for nearly half a century. In 1977, Sontag wrote that photographers wielded their camera like a gun as they sought the unadulterated, un-posed moment. Subjects in such idealized situations are expected to have neither control over, nor input into their image. “They are to be unable to determine its composition or context or mode of distribution” (Palmer 2011, 111). In the seeming hunt for the candid humanitarian image, tactics like Marc's strive to efface the subject's agency, by creating distance between the potential interaction between subject and photographer. Such candid, “objective-seeking” photography teeters on the edge of voyeurism, the camera technology of one-sided capture, power, and control (Sontag 1977; Tagg 1988; Linfield 2011).

Importantly, whether hunting, censoring, or *par-hazard*-ing, the agency of each of the photographers speaks to the myriad actions possible within the humanitarian visual field. While the photographs are given a set of loose parameters into which they are expected to fit, the practice of the photographer is not bound by nearly the same level of structural constraints. Relying on Sherry Ortner's (2005) theorization of subjectivity and agency, I conceptualize the actor as able to semi-consciously navigate the structures in which they exist. And structure here is shaped loosely by the broader space, institutions, the visual humanitarian field and the expectations of the work the image should later do. Individual agency neither sits in direct opposition or tension to the structure, nor is it entirely defined by it. Rather as actors, photographers and photographic subjects respond to the structural expectations, relationships, and physical realities of a situation. Their actions fall along a spectrum between challenging and

reifying the social structures within which they reside (Giddens 1984). For humanitarian photographers like Benoît, Frank, and Marc, this give and take – the friction - between structure and agency allows them to shape their photographic eye, their strategies to attain the desired image, and their interactions within the humanitarian visual field - and through it, with the broader scape.

VIGNETTE 2: AID THE WORLD PHOTOGRAPHS BENI

In the discussions above, I detailed the actions and decisions of Benoît, Frank, and Marc, all photographers who strove to create images that would meet their agency’s needs. However, they are part of a much larger network of individuals who must ensure that their photographs indeed satisfy the given agency’s mandates while still appearing found. In fact, for most NGOs the notion of the lone photographic cowboy hunting and framing the best visual game is not only a rarity, but it is also decontextualized from the larger picture of bureaucratic aid power dynamics. The “hunt” for the good image (greatness is rarely expected) includes a host of actors, actions, and negotiations that prepare the photographic scene and shape the potential message to be carried forward. When one zooms out, a different, more comprehensive view becomes visible. It is not only the photographer who carefully casts the image content and strives to meet donor and management demands. Additionally, the humanitarian agents immediately involved with the projects (the local partner agency employees and the project staff including managers, translators, and even drivers) jockey to mold the message carried in the resulting material photograph. (I have intentionally left the role of the photographic subject and bystanders out here as I explore these in detail in the following two chapters).

In early October 2013, I was back at Chalet. In the swirl of expats and their drinks, I stole a moment to catch up with Benoît. While we debriefed on how his recently mandated “R&R” (rest and relaxation) trip had gone, I updated him on the direct photography I had, in turn, created

for the UNDP in his absence (see Chapter 6). We were midway through laughing about the UN's fanatic demands for photos with "visibility" when Alex arrived. Alex was a vivacious woman in charge of an important international agency's advocacy team. Joseph was with her. (Goma is a small town as far as expats are concerned). As the four of us dove into photographic conversation, Alex offered up an idea – her agency would fly Joseph and I north to shadow their communications team in their upcoming actions outside of Beni. She argued that Joseph could use the trip to take images, make contact with demobilized child soldiers, and find some publishable story to run for the Associated Press that would make both her agency and him look good. Out of unexpected kindness, she also figured it would also be useful for my research to be able to shadow a communications team composed of Jason, a videographer and writer from their Canadian *siège*, and Cheryl, AW's communications person and photographer. The plan quickly fell into action and within the next few days, Joseph and I were briefed, photographed, given AW badges, and shuffled onto a prop plane to Beni. Neither of us was particularly sure why we had been offered this kindness, but we knew the trip would be interesting.

Before heading North, I interviewed Jason, the Canadian communications expert, about his plans for the travel and the expectations on the images that he and Cheryl would produce. He explained:

We arrive, talk to the staff, maybe we'll have to go to the stakeholders and talk to all of them again. Aid the World people there will have already briefed the beneficiaries that we're coming and tell them a little about our communication goals. Then Cheryl will translate my questions into Swahili, and we'll film the interviews, or, at least, get audio of them. In the interviews, the people will tell their stories and will talk about how the program impacted their lives. After that, I tend to ask them questions about their dreams – such as "now that you have recovered, what is your dream for your future?" We use action photos to illustrate the story... The communication goal is to lift the children's voice and the voices of the stakeholders, the police, pastors, local NGO, civil society, etc. (Interview Oct. 15, 2013)

The idea of "lifting their voices," transferring their stories draws on the notion of witnessing as one carries the situations and voices of those in far off places to western spaces. However, the

stories that Jason sought and the voices they would “lift” had been predetermined by the *siège*. He explained that it was normal for AW that the donors, media outlets, and the *siège* might instigate the need for photographs in places like Goma. “For instance,” he said, “they might ask for example for a story on trafficked children in Thailand – they will brief us on what they want – and then we will make a field trip, get information for the story they want, and then we try to get a photo that corresponds. When we’re done, we’ll send them the story and a folder of images attached to the donor-support office at the *siège*, and then they can take a look and choose what they want.” He went on:

On an institutional level, the photographs are for the donors – it (the donors) is why we exist. So they have to be our primary media target. We’re one of the top three NGOs for private donations, mainly come from our sponsorship programs. So the goal with photographs is to get people moved by a situation and then encourage them to give... We do a lot of research, and we’re pretty good at knowing the market. In the 1990s we did a lot of advocacy in a bad way – now we’re doing it better – we still have to show the issues, and the struggles of people or they (the donors) don’t feel the need to give.

Jason knew the images he needed. He knew how to find the quotes and photographs that would “lift people’s voices” and provide donors the requisite triple evidentiary images. He knew how to hunt representations of the simultaneous hope and need of the beneficiaries. I was, however, surprised at how he, Cheryl, and his team collectively did this.

AW in Beni, the good, the bad, and the Mise-en-scène

Once again this trip was a good place to try to shadow the photographers; I worked to take similar images – pictures of aid photographers at work while trying my hand at humanitarian photos.

However, I found myself confounded with the process around me. It was so utterly unlike any journalistic or ethnographic experience I had encountered that I found myself constantly tacking back and forth between attempting to take their images and backing up, zooming out, and photographing the particular ways they were constructing and controlling their scene. During the

process, as in all cases, I explained my research to everyone involved - from Jason and Cheryl to AW's Congolese employees and the photographic subjects.³²

Together with AW communications and national staff, we head out of Beni. After 45 minutes Ignace and the team of national staff saw the pharmacy they were looking for. Apparently we were looking for Jacques an ex-child soldier, who knew we were coming. He was somehow identifiable by the location of the pharmacy. It turns out that it was his pharmacy. Before going to see Jacques – a random villager – “Japan”- walked up pulls out a brand new \$10 bill and puts it up to his face, saying, “Mzungu nipicha” (white person take my picture). “Why do you want the picture?” I asked. “Because the money shows that I have prestige.” OK. Then we met Jacques. He’s working in his pharmacy. Jacques is ex Mai Mai (rebel group which has been active in central / the Grand Nord of North Kivu for some years) and was involved in Phase I of “Bounce Back,” AW's demobilization and skill training program. He has since built his own life, now owns a motorcycle, and runs his pharmacy. He has been able to buy a shamba (small field) and a parcel (a housing plot) where he lives with his wife and his two kids.

We crowded into a small home near the pharmacy. Inside with mud wasps occasionally dive-bombing us, the conversation was stilted, and comprehension faltered badly. There was a discussion about whether or not Jacques agrees to be on video – is he under 18? No? But not really? Yes? No? OK, so he’s over 18... but this foils them a bit since their work is on children. So AW folks clarify that he was indeed a child during demobilization? In the discussion AW keeps emphasizing the role of their training in getting his life to where it is now. This proves challenging. AW didn’t train him to be a pharmacist. They trained him to be a mechanic.

Cheryl: “Like would you want to go back into the wars if AW hadn’t helped out by providing skill training?”

Jacques: (after a clear while of having a hard time understanding the question): “I am lucky, I have a pharmacy, I want to be a mechanic, and I have a house now...”

AW national staff, Ignace: “Would you go back to the armed groups though?”

Jacques: Not now that I have a field. Before I didn’t have a good chance, I wasn’t lucky, but now I’m doing well.

Ignace again: “But now you have a field, a motorcycle, a pharmacy...You were able to buy everything through the mechanic work that you did, right? (Every AW staff member enthusiastically nods at Jacques. This is clearly a critical question.) Jacques pauses and then agrees by nodding.

³²In this particular case, I made a concerted effort to distinguish myself from the humanitarians around me. I was not always successful. In part as a reaction to what I saw as a frighteningly scripted encounter where the activation of unequal power dynamics was rife, I also worked with the AW photographic subjects to create co-created portraits. Encouraging each beneficiary to tell me what type of image they wanted to keep, I would compose non-humanitarian photos. Before leaving Beni, I found a photo studio, printed the pictures and handed them back to AW national staff to return to each beneficiary. All I can do is hope that they indeed arrived as our tight timeline prohibited my ability to return them myself.

Jason: “So with others in your position, I understand that sometimes it was hard to dream and to think a future. So when you were in the armed groups did you think about your future at all? Were you able?”

Jacque: I didn’t have any projects then.

Jason: So now that you are out of the groups in part due to AW, what are your dreams and projects?

Jacques: Now I have a pharmacy, I have a field, I have a family, (and then he seemed to remember the fact that for AW the motorcycle was important and added) and a moto. (Fieldnotes Oct. 19, 2013)

Outside, with permission, they took pictures (Figures 102-106):



[Figure 102]



[Figure 103 (above); Figure 104 (below)]





[Figure 105 (above); Figure 106 (below)]



Outside the mud-wasp home, I watched photographers create collaborative, candid-looking images. Ignace and Cheryl worked to convince Jacques that there was value in these photographs. They argued that the photos would help donors see the situation, and would inspire them to donate to AW, which would allow AW to help out other young Congolese men like him. Through Jason and Cheryl's framing, I came to recognize the closed-down frame – her images focused only on Jacques and the immediate interactions around him. The townspeople who ringed the one ring humanitarian circus are left unrepresented in the resulting images.

At the pharmacy AW wants photographs showing him in the pharmacy – then Jason says, “let's do a *mise-en-scène*” and Cheryl grabs an attractive girl from the crowd. “Come on,” she said, “pretend to buy something.” Jason, cut in to help with the staging saying, “We need to see money – let's see money pass between hands, not just the medicine.” So Jacques grabs a roll of Congolese bills out of a small box that once contained eye drops. Following instructions, he hands the roll to the random girl. The two photographic subjects both pose in stop action. They pause to show the money and the medicine pass from hand to hand. Cheryl explains, “*onyesha namna gani unafania kazi*” (show how you do your work), “*buyers du fond wanataka kujua moyen yako kufania kazi, kisha watanipe mingi*” (the donors want to know what you do for work, then they will give a lot). Cheryl is continually reinforcing the potential for further financial giving. After the pharmacy, Cheryl and Jason walked with Jacques to his motorcycle and asked him to show them his motorcycle mechanic skills. He posed crouching and looking at the middle of the bike – his back to the camera. They thanked him for the effort, but it wasn't an image they could use. They asked him to get on the *moto* and look like he's fixing it. I nearly shook my head in disbelief. No one fixes a motorcycle from on top of it. He did as they asked and astride the bike, he began to tinker with the gas cap, looking directly at the motorcycle. Jacques is not only cooperative, but he seems somewhat pleased to be in the photographs.

The *mise-en-scène* structured the scene, provided the organization, and the sanitation of the context; nothing was out of order. The project came to look like it was a booming success –

like Jacques' motorcycle skills had turned him into a successful member of society and kept him from returning to a rebel group. The town itself was pushed to the rear of the camera where they remained un-featured, despite their enthusiastic engagement in the photographic process. The bystanders had not been AW beneficiaries at any point. Based on AW's visual strategies, there was no reason to show their presence to the donors. During that shoot in Beni, the photographer not only had to recognize the good aid image that would fulfill the visual mandate and "*parole*," but they also had to choreograph the photograph to illustrate the clear success of the designated program and nothing more.

While these *mise-en-scène* images where individuals "*fait semblant*" literally "pretend" for the camera, raised ethical questions in my mind (Were the agencies not going to tell their viewers that these were reenactments?), I found I did not worry too much about the ethics of the subject's engagement. While the power dynamics of how the images were shaped was stark - AW proposed poses and scenarios from which Jacques navigated - in nearly all cases, subjects, like Jacques, were eager and often downright cheerful about participating.

As with popular photography, AW's use of *mise-en-scène* allowed for a dialectic interaction across the camera and a careful construction of the image's content. Clearly, as in this case, humanitarian images might appear found, but their underlying creation tells a different story. As in popular photography, the camera became a place of imagining and of crafting a subject into an exaggerated sense of self. The cooperative humanitarian *mise-en-scène* did exactly this. The photographs played and they praised – they showed Jacques as successful. He was photographed touching the objects that were important - the money, the motorcycle - drawing into the photograph the intended-creative aspects that help narrate the desired visual story. Yet these images showed intended real characteristics – one's face, ones' body – and the subjects were often proud of the identifiable aspects of the image. Ultimately, the humanitarian *mise-en-scène* sat squarely at the intersection of photographer, subject, translator, communication and national staff desires. It provided a form of performative photography similar to that which the

local population knew – an interactive, imaginative representation crafted by many. It also avoided the uncomfortable candid creation of a found photograph.

In a follow-up discussion with Cheryl, she showed me the photograph of Jacques she planned on sending to the international HQ. It showed Jacques sitting on his bike tinkering with the gas cap. This photograph, she explained, was better than him in his pharmacy. Despite the fact that the pharmacy is the most visible success in his post-demobilization life, it was not a project that AW had facilitated. Rather the motorcycle picture will be sent to HQ and eventually potentially find its way into the hands of AW current and potential donors.

In sum, this shadowing incident in Beni repeated at five different sites over two days and exposed another means through which photography is created in the field. A successful photograph told more than just one story. It justified the work and ability of all who benefited from the agency's salaries and funding, while simultaneously striving to appear to witness, account, and advertise. Conditioned by the structures that both employed them and expected products from them, each individual engaged in such a way as to craft good, usable images and simultaneously legitimize their own role to AW. National staff, hoping to remain relevant, had primed the previous beneficiaries of AW's arrival and prepped them for what the images and interviews would capture. Communications staff asked leading questions and crafted *mise-en-scènes* that featured a tight, closed-down frame, and an effective effacement of excess and construction. Ultimately the verbal and the photographic products functioned as well controlled versions of Lidchi's "technical truth" – the thing that did not exist, but which could be imagined to exist.

WHO ELSE CONTROLS THE IMAGE

So far I have explored the agency of the individual photographers and the in-the-field staff, who help shape the content of humanitarian photographs. However, a striking number of workers

across the aid chain are involved in crafting a careful image and controlling the photographic message; in addition to the photographer and on-the-ground staff, others include project managers, communications officers, and partner agency employees. Each, in their own personal ways, strives to shape the image from behind the scenes, and often well ahead of time.

In March 2014, Benoît was headed out on another photographic trip, this time to Kisuma in Masisi – a two-hour drive southwest from Goma. The day before, he had called and asked if I wanted to visit the UNDP’s joint venture that focused on food security to train cows to haul carts. Since August, I had become used to photographing and observing primarily medical and skill training programs, even legalistic ones. Cattle training – called “*dressage des vaches*” seemed like an excellent, if absurd, opportunity. The day proved to be nothing less. It was full of fabulously ridiculous river crossings, stuck trucks, lush green hills in the Masisi region, and a herd of unwieldy cattle. The goal was to head to a field near Kisuma village where project staff instructed local individuals how to train the cows. As it was explained to me, the purpose of the “*dressage des vaches*” was to teach the cows to pull carts and thereby, reduce the loads that women endured on their way to the weekly markets. The cattle and their carts were intended to handle the bad roads and simultaneously empower women. At least, that was how the program sold its operation.

Benoît, the UNDP program lead – King, and I climbed the footpath up and over the top of a few hills and alongside *sombe* (cassava) and cornfields. Benoît and I took what I consider to be “pretty, but useless” pictures of the landscape as we walked. I chattered away in Swahili to everyone we passed. Everything appeared normal until we arrived just minutes from the training field. “*Jambo!*” A young woman greeted me, “*Habari gani? Uko Sud Korean! karibu sana*” (How’s it going? You’re South Korean, welcome!). It was typical of the Congolese to state what they observed. I often received comments in Goma consisting of, “White person, you’re riding a motorcycle!” or “Foreigner, you’re eating grilled corn!” The “you are South Korean,” however came as a bit of a surprise. A minute or two later, a passerby yelled to his friend, “*Les*

photographes Sud Koreans wakafika!" (The South Korean Photographers have arrived). Then, "*Tuko furahi sana kukugaribisha, Sud Korea iko mbale sana, pole ya safari!*" (We're very happy to welcome you, South Korea is very far away, sorry for your long travels). I squinted, correcting people, "No, I'm America, and he's French. What?" I finally turned to King in exasperation, "What's with the South Korea thing?" He shrugged, "Oh, the other NGO partner on the project was supposed to have brought a team of South Korean donors to visit the project yesterday. The population must have been briefed that the team was coming to take pictures. The Koreans have been delayed. Guess they think you're that team of donors."

In the training center, a set of sheds resided, demarcated by a sparse barbed wire fence that bounded the project. Inside the aid space, the beneficiaries' performances were enthusiastic. People hammed up the positive relationship with their cattle for the camera, and a numbing white noise emanated as more than twenty people repeatedly said, "(Name of their cow) *Kula majani, kula majani...*" (eat grass, eat grass) as they hand fed their stalled bovine beauties. While it was mostly men training, feeding, and providing grass to the cows, Benoît sought one of the few women working there for an interview and a few photographs. We then spent the next hour wandering the site, talking to the participants and taking very similar "action" photographs showing order, functionality, and the success of the program.

As we compared photographs afterward, I was surprised to see how the gap between my photography and Benoît's had closed (Figures 107-112). We laughed at the transferability of the images. Cows, women, and order - I had learned to see like a humanitarian! Beyond my general enthusiasm that I had indeed learned to see, I was startled by the way in which the photos had been prepared in advance - how the partner agency had "prepped" the beneficiaries for a day of photography. As I began to ask around about this process of "preparing the subjects," I found it was not in the slightest bit uncommon.



[Figure 107 (above)]



[Figure 108 (above) Figure 109 (below)]





[Figure 110 (above) Figure 111 (below) Photos by Benoît Almeras-Martino]





[Figure 112 (above) Photo by Benoît Almeras-Martino]

In an interview with Adele, a Congolese woman in charge of communications at a Northern European agency focused on issues of forced displacement - she explained that in fact, preparing the scene was critical for her agency's photos. She couldn't risk upsetting beneficiaries or any surrounding individuals when photographers came to create images. Photographers were on tight schedules, and for them to correctly do their job she needed the subjects to cooperate. "I sometimes begin to talk to the beneficiaries a month in advance," she explained, "and sometimes I go back and forth many times to make sure that the beneficiaries understand that a photographer is coming. I make it clear what that visitor needs to see in the images... With people here you must always speak to the people ahead of time so that they will understand how these images will help them. We really need these images to show the situations in which people are living, and we need people to cooperate in order to get the right images."

Preparation of the subject and the zone became a means of invisibly choreographing authentic-looking images. It was one more way to maneuver for control of the message. As I began to dig at this point, I found more and more evidence of the struggle for image control at numerous levels of the aid chain. It was not just the photographers and the immediate program staff who employed particular types of photography to keep their jobs and justify their programs. Rather, a similar struggle arose at each level of the aid chain as humanitarian actors silently shaped the scene, the beneficiaries, the role the photographer was to play, and the image content they should create.

VIGNETTE 3

“I SHOW THEM HOW AND WHEN TO MAKE THE PHOTOS”

The first interaction I had with Jon occurred at random. We bumped into each other through a common friend, and the initial conversation set the tone for an interview that was to come much later. “I’m a logistician,” Jon had explained, rolling his eyes theatrically and implying that he didn’t think much of his job but might think far more of himself. “Do you enjoy it?” I asked, not sure where to take the conversation. “God no. I have to work with national staff.” He looked at me expectantly, like I was supposed to know what that meant, and worse like I was expected to empathize. He took my silence as an opening to elaborate, “My fucking dogs could do a better job...” I cut him off and excused myself from the conversation. Jon’s demeaning of the Congolese employees in his agency placed him on a far edge of the region’s power dynamics. He would have preferred complete segregation in the work place.

Six months later, when setting up the interview with his European international aid agency, I didn’t realize the Jon I talked to on the phone was that same Jon until I pulled my motorcycle to a stop in his agency’s walled-in gravel driveway and found him leaning against his

office doorway. To my surprise, he was happy to talk. His initial demeanor never faltered. Here's a long snippet from the interview:

Jon: Our professional photographers are sent to Goma from Berlin – they are usually consultants, and they are clear about work they are going to do before they get here. They are briefed in Berlin, and then they get to Goma, and they go with us to the field and they have their photo sessions. They go to the health centers, for instance, and they take pictures of our staff treating patients – they do this for marketing. Our people have to be wearing visibility. Often these visits to Goma are no more than one week (in total from leaving Berlin to returning to Berlin). We bring them to the “field” (where their projects reside outside the city), and we show them what they have to see.

A: How / do you prepare them for the field?

J. They are briefed and prepped in Berlin, then I brief them again in Goma. But also we prepare the field – we tell all the people who might be in the photographs that we are bringing a visitor. We call beforehand and clear this with the *chef de groupment* (head of the area). The commanders of the armed groups are made aware that a photographer is coming.

Me: Can this photographer shoot whatever they want?

A: Photographers that are sent from Berlin are hired for a purpose. Their job is to work for our agency. They don't get just to shoot whatever they want. And they have to clear my security briefing beforehand. I am very strict with them. I don't want photographers fucking up what we have created. So they are only allowed to take pictures where I tell them they can. They are never allowed to be alone. I show them how and when to make the photos. If the situation is fine, then we take the camera for a walk and judge spot by spot. But every time they have tried to shoot something in a difficult environment outside of our project we have had to set out the rules for respect and engagement ahead of time. I mean they are walking around with very big equipment. Everyone sees it. It makes no sense to hide it, so they just have to keep the lens down so that unless they bring it up to their face, it is very clear that they are not making photos. We also make sure that they wear our visibility. Our t-shirts etc. That's for their security. We need people to think that they are with us.

Me: Is there a difference in that professional consultant photography and the images your staff is expected to take?

J: For us, the photography that we make has no spirit – it's just important to make the photo – it is nothing other than what it is. It shows what is in place. This house is there. I don't care about this fancy shit. I just need a picture to show the house exists or that the activities are happening etc. With the professionals in the fundraising departments, there are more emotions; there is colorful context. In the marketing side of things, people want a better photograph. They say they want positive images, but also, I know they want to see the negative images.

Me: What do pros shoot?

J: They shoot “feeling” photos. I will show you some later. These are photos that go in our annual report that we send to all donors.

Me: What does the shooting process look like?

J: The camera changes everything. The first hour of photographs are shit. Basically its just 45 minutes to an hour of kids. We try to give our photographers

as much time as possible, but we understand we can't always do that... But we all know that the first hour of the photography will be shit. I will even help to distract the locals so that the photographer can get a better photograph without everyone staring directly into the camera. So we try to set up the visits so that we go less places but have a bit more time. In the past, we have gotten 2-3 photographers a year, but we also have been experiencing a relatively calm environment, and there is time to take people around.

Visually, though, the agency sets it up so that we can take the easiest pictures and ones that will work. For instance, I take photographers to the health center, where we interact regularly. It's a confidential environment, which is tricky as patients need to know who is who, but the only people inside the center are those who are benefiting from our aid ... So importantly, everyone there is a beneficiary and have already seen the benefit, so they are more willing to have their pictures taken. The staff of the health center will then explain why they need to take photos. They will usually say that they need a report for the donors to show accountability and explain what they are doing and why they need to continue to do that. The patients there need to hear this, and I want them to know this before we even show up.

Usually, I will ask a nurse to explain before we go in or bring out the camera. Then there is a briefing with the staff of the health center, discussing what we are doing and why we are doing it. That way we get good "natural looking" photos while treatment is being done, because the patients don't have to get involved in a *mise-en-scène* situation. We don't do that per se. We take pictures of real patients coming in – not *mise-en-scène* with just anybody. HQ will like what we do in the end.

But there is a tension between marketing and fundraising and us. They want us to find the sickly children, and instead I decide to show whoever I want. Sometimes Marketing and Fundraising (M and F) cannot send staff to take the pictures, so we have to do it. But we have more humanitarian sense, and we have to live in this environment. I will NOT make a photo because they want it. If I happen to be in a situation to make a photo that is really happening, fine, I'll take it. But I won't stage it. It is against my morality. And frankly, M and F just has to accept that. Or send someone else to do my job. (Interview March 6, 2014)

The humanitarian photographs created in Jon's agency show a significantly long social trajectory – starting sometimes months in advance of the actual shutter snap. Ultimately the photographer frames the image and depresses the shutter release. However, these humanitarian photographs are also conceptualized and fastidiously prepared by a number of other humanitarian actors who seek to uphold the existing structure. By the time the photographer arrives on the scene, their expectations have been set and they have likely been dually briefed. In the case of a contract photographer, whether or not they are familiar with the region's dynamics they are brought to the field and given "you can shoot that" and "keep your camera down" orders. Moreover, by entering

the project site – in this case, the health center funded by Jon’s agency – they enter a well-bordered space. Inside, the social dynamics open space within which to create the humanitarian photograph. The resulting well-choreographed “positive” image carries the goal of showing the order and success of a project. The tactical maneuvering that results in the humanitarian photograph, be it a *mise-en-scène* or a carefully hunted seemingly candid depiction, exposes the careful planning and interconnected agency of numerous actors across the scape. Together, poised at a range of locations in the aid hierarchy, they work to maintain the structure of the visual field and the social dynamics of the region’s scape.

CONCLUSION

This chapter opened a discussion of the shape of humanitarian intervention and the practice of its photography in the eastern DRC. I have mapped a sense of the structure of the humanitarian visual field and begun an examination of the practices that both reify and change it. By opening a discussion of the hard and soft humanitarian borders, I showed how they shape pocketed spaces of opportunity and exclusion across the map of the eastern DRC. Moreover, by focusing on the humanitarian actors within aid spaces - notably photographers, communications, and program staff - I have connected the photographs’ triple evidentiary expectations and positive visual policy to the social dynamics of the eastern DRC and the powerful but pocketed action of international intervention. Through an exploration of the nuances of the actors’ photographic maneuvering, subjectivity, and action from a range of focal lengths, I showed the simultaneous diversity of personal agency concerning the humanitarian camera and the unity of the desire to control the photographic narrative.

By zooming in on photographers’ strategies of auto-censoring, hunting, and using *mise-en-scène*, I revealed a range of tactics employed to satisfy humanitarian photographic expectations, as one closes down and controls the scene. Zooming out, I engaged the multi-actor

interaction that collaboratively shapes the to-be-photographed scene. Each photographer, communications officer, partner agency staff member, translator, program manager, etc., strives to mold the photograph and its narrative. Caught between various desires and expectations, the image becomes central to a web of sometimes-fraught meaning making between different members of the scape. Backing the view out even further, I have explored how these processes are accompanied by strident efforts to constrain the photographic message, not only by determining which image content to photograph, but also by “preparing the field.” The images that result of the photographer’s framing, the program team’s creative staging, and the preparation of the scene speak to the anxiety around the photograph – the desire to control it. Akin to the example of Simone’s picture that I explored in Chapter 1, humanitarian images also compose sites of power, where actors attempt to shape and harness the visual narrative to their subjective beliefs and needs.

The way in which the humanitarian image is carefully controlled and crafted responds to and reifies the social dynamics of the region. In the cases discussed above, the photograph provides a critical interface between international donors and local action. The images efface the chaotic urban scape, as well as the hard and soft borders of humanitarian action. Instead, they show carefully sanitized works of collaborative choreography - an ideal image of a much less complex space.

Each vignette drew out distinctly different styles and types of agency involved in creating clean, focused, orderly images that are sterilized of distracting visual excess. They also show how the need to control the content can and often does lead to the intentional crafting of a decisive moment; the “found” image is a built image. They complicated the belief in the humanitarian photograph as witness to the scene – showing these witnessing episodes to be careful performances (Givoni 2011, 66). However, the collective choreography and individual decision are not fixed. Rather, they shape a complex photographic engagement that opens places to see

agency, power, and the subtle means through which individuals move across, probe, and challenge the scape.

By shadowing aid photographers as they engaged the humanitarian visual field and the bounded aid-spaces of the eastern DRC, I gained an embodied understanding of the structural tensions and expectations that encouraged the production of sanitized images, and the appearance of success and control. This “skilled vision” (Grasseni 2004), was necessary to both navigate humanitarian photographic situations and to look beyond the chaos, disorder, and conflict, in order to recognize and craft the requisite good aid image. Moreover, I came to intimately understand the way in which the humanitarian photographer and their composition becomes a highly ordered process, part of a structured system which through razor wires, walls, and signboards craft a distinctively social and political space.

This chapter has predominantly focused on the agency of humanitarians and their photographers. However, the Congolese photographic subjects, like Jacques, are not passive in how they engage the humanitarian camera. I draw Congolese subjects back into the discussion of aid photography in the next two chapters as I probe the overlapping spaces of the photographic landscape. By exploring how Congolese photographic subjects engage aid project sites and their notions of humanitarian photography, I connect subjectivity with the triple evidentiary role of aid photography and regional histories that have shaped notions of bricolage and *se débrouiller*.

SECTION THREE

**VISUAL NARRATIVES, EXPECTATIONS, AND HUMANITARIAN PHOTOGRAPHS
AS CONTACT ZONES**

CHAPTER FIVE

WELCOME TO DISNEYLAND (OR) “NO! TELL HER THAT YOU’RE HUNGRY”

Even in aid spaces, the local desire for a *picha mzuri* (good photo) remains. Constructing those particular images takes time. Kanyamohoro, *chef du bloc* 16 (chief of section) in Mugunga III Internally Displaced Peoples (IDP) camp dove into the photographic process for the second time in two weeks. He whisked his youngest child inside his tarp-covered home to change his clothes while he sent another of his children to find and shine tiny patent leather shoes. At the same time, his cousin dashed back to their small house to re-dress their infant. A search then commenced for socks. Kanyamohoro leapt to action again, digging around inside his home until he found two that matched perfectly. Fifteen minutes later, the children were dressed and ready to be photographed. Carefully Kanyamohoro placed the children on the ground. “*Tst tst tst - alo bebé – alo alo alo,*” he cooed, encouraging them to look up and engage with the camera. In the thirty seconds before they began to cry, I composed three photographs.

Kanyamohoro was one of over a hundred different individuals who took part in my co-creative portrait sessions in Mugunga III. The week before, when we had sat discussing his story of displacement, of humanitarian photography, and of leadership in the camp he had asked for a portrait in his home and one with the members of *bloc* 16 surrounding him (Figures 113 and

114).³³ The following week, before we began the baby portraits, I had returned those images. The residents of the bloc eagerly grabbed the photographs and passed them among themselves. They touched the surface of the picture indelicately, enthusiastically tracing the people and pointing to those they knew. Kanyamohoro, like many of the eastern Congolese, was enthusiastic to take advantage of free photographs and had innumerable ideas for the images. With the screaming children sufficiently comforted on the backs of their older siblings, he pulled me aside. “Now, let’s go to see my machine and take a picture.” After a short walk, he settled behind his sewing machine and posed to create a *mise-en-scène* of his daily work. He laid his hand on top of the balance wheel, claiming both the device and the job it provided. Flanked by two of his older children, he grinned at the camera. I arranged the focus and framing, placed him in the center - as was the Congolese studio photo norm - and manually adjusted the f-stop and shutter speed. As I depressed the shutter, I froze a collaborative image whose representation developed somewhere in the intersection of his self-illustrative desires and my compositional eye - somewhere between his expectations of my photography, and my anticipations of his role in the camp.

³³ I printed and returned at least one photograph of each pose to each photographic subject. Before photographing any portrait I discussed and obtained verbal consent in regards to the way in which their photographs would be potentially used in in exhibitions, print, and web-based publications.



Kanyamohoro [Figure 113 (above) Figure 114 (below)]



Co-creative portraits, like those of Kanyamohoro, are distinctively positioned. Due to their dialectic production set at the intersection of the desires of the photographer and subject, they enable the photographer-researcher to engage the interaction and social nuance of photography that rarely leaves a visible trace. Through discussion, participant observation, and the photograph itself, co-creative portraits provide space to focus on how images are actively co-produced and layered with meaning. By valuing the space and subtle actions, conversations, and negotiations that happen in front of, to the sides, behind, and across the camera, this participatory method afforded a means to both experience and read the power embodied but often effaced in the resulting photograph. In this chapter, I use an exploration of the dynamics of self-representation within a particularly aid-saturated “aid space” to understand the dynamics of a frontier zone space affected by long-term humanitarian engagement and various regimes of distribution and power. Specifically, within Mugunga III Internally Displaced Peoples camp I engage the overlapping areas of the photographic landscape and probe how meaning is made and negotiated in the spaces where the expectations of the local and humanitarian visual fields meet, collide, and contradict.

DISNEYLAND, THE INTERNALLY DISPLACED VERSION

Throughout my fieldwork, I used Goma as a hub and followed photographs and photographic processes out to project sites across the broader North Kivu province. Tracking the production and use of images was fruitful; it provided me the experience to learn to see and understand the nuanced details that humanitarian photographers seek. It also exposed me to the often tacit efforts that a range of aid actors enact in order to shape and control the content of their images.

Moreover, such camera-based research also afforded me the opportunity to engage the wide array of hybrid development and humanitarian projects that speckled the province. However, after a few months of research, I realized that my research needed a more grounded understanding of what happens photographically in project sites. With the tight time restrictions that bound aid

photography, I found that I rarely had enough time to engage fully with the Congolese photographic subjects about their representation in humanitarian images. What they desired and why they chose to pose the way they did - or why they went along with humanitarian *mise-en-scène* suggestions - remained elusive. Often, when I traveled with humanitarian crews, I struggled to get out from under the assumption in the eyes of the photographic subject that I was one of the people whose camera might also show their likeness to donors and draw further aid. This associative position and restrictive time frames led to a limited understanding of the agency and subjective desires of the Congolese photographic subjects. Thus, in addition to following humanitarian camera crews, I realized I had also to do something different; I needed to base myself with an aid project site.

It wasn't long before I was introduced to a perfect location to do this: "Disneyland." "No, I didn't get anything done this week!" exclaimed Jeanne as she took a drag from her long, thin French cigarettes. She paused and looked out over the lake from the veranda of her rented colonial era home. "All I'm doing is playing Disneyland manager. Set up this tour, set up that visit. Get people out there. Get them back. Everyone just wants to go to Disneyland, never mind actually doing anything about the problems of displacement!" She pulled another drag, arranged her scarf, and settled into sullen silence.

The "Disneyland" that Jeanne complained about each week was, in fact, a nearby IDP camp - Mugunga III. The paradoxical association between Mugunga III and Disneyland originated from the camp's popularity for visitors and aid agencies. Set just a 45-minute drive from Goma, Mugunga III had become simultaneously the region's most visited IDP camp and the place where NGOs and UN agencies piloted projects. Nearly every errant aid worker, VIP, celebrity, and journalist who arrived in the region blocked a few hours out of his or her schedule to visit the camp. They could hop in an agency 4x4, spend less than an hour on the region's bad roads, gain a surface-level sense of "what Congolese displacement looks like," take a few pictures, and be back at their lake-side hotel in time for sundowners. These visits happened so

frequently that frustrated United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) coordinators like Jeanne had casually dubbed it “Disneyland.” Managing “tourist” visits to the camp took up so much of their time that they found coordinating projects therein to be difficult. On a weekly basis, UNHCR employees would roll their eyes and rattle off the tally of that week’s excursions to see displacement at Disneyland.

The photographs produced in those short VIP trips commonly focused on one hand on the suffering of the camp’s residents, life in the lava-rock landscape, and the sprawl of thousands of individuals marked by the repetition of white tarp-covered homes. Internet searches for images of Mugunga III over the past five years show journalist representations featuring rain pounding the white tents, hoards of desperate-looking refugees, and children playing on the ground in front of the most run-down homes. On the other hand, like the images discussed in the previous two chapters humanitarian photographs created at Mugunga III attempt to show positive representations of the innumerable projects run within the humanitarian space of the camp.

Over the months, I viewed and received numerous descriptions of such positive photos. Jeanne showed me images of UNHCR's brick making operations situated on the edge of the camp. The photographs were unremarkable, showing smiling people actively forming mud and concrete blocks. Joseph had once taken a photographic contract with Vodacom - a cell phone company – to capture images of their philanthropic work as they provided a phone booth from which resident could make free phone calls to their family members not inside the camp. He framed smiling men and women against the red Vodacom boutique as they happily talked into a phone. Others, like Marc, took pictures that specifically featured the women of the camp. He explained, “I focus on the *mamans* (mothers) and show that she still takes care of her family despite the challenging situation. We (his agency) like to show that she is smiling with her child despite everything. It is not just suffering – we love showing the *mamans* who sew, for example, or who have succeeded at men’s work like making shoes or training men how to cut hair.” While such positive photographs had become increasingly common, individuals of all levels of the aid

chain nonetheless created a full range of images – even sometimes taking “selfies” in the most dilapidated parts of the camp. “Its simply disgusting” sneered M. another UNHCR worker.

DISPLACEMENT IN MUGUNGA III AS STRATEGY

The UNHCR crew undoubtedly had their hands full. The region around Goma had supported innumerable waves of displacement and migration for much of the last century. Since the 1980s, Goma has become a place of refuge, a safe-ish haven located between moments and spaces of conflict. When the collapse of the Zairian state coupled with the conflicts raging to the south (in the hills of South Kivu) and the north (in the forests of Ituri), hundreds of thousands of the Congolese fled their homes and sought the security and opportunity of the region's urban spaces.³⁴ Displacement accelerated through the turmoil of the 1990s and 2000s. By 2003, an estimated 3.4 million individuals were internally displaced across the country. North Kivu hosted 1,209,000 of those internal refugees (Kassa 2004). While many *deplacés* (the displaced – also called *wakimbizi*) settled within or the near the city, others sought the benefits of humanitarian aid within the established internally displaced peoples camps. Due to the push of conflict and poverty and the pull of urban opportunity, Goma has become a place of strategic shelter, promising a safe-ish harbor from nearby “hot” spaces of conflict, which reverberates with the potential for economic growth.

Until the 1990s, refugee camps were rare and relegated to cross-border flight. Without the option of settling in established, humanitarian-supported camps, populations came to reside precariously along the outskirts of Goma or in the bustling areas like Bierere – one of the oldest neighborhoods. While these “internal refugees” had fled incredible violence, they also sought

³⁴ From the north, families fled the *Hema-Lendu* violence in Ituri, in the south thousands fled the *Banyamulenge* and *Simba* conflicts in South Kivu, and from the West the population of now Maniema and Katanga fled the violence and struggle.

ways to get by, economic opportunity, and security. In response to the sudden growth of the urban population, in the mid-1980s, the civil society of Goma had initiated development schemes and micro-credit lending aimed to strengthen local development and self-sustainability of the communities (Kassa 2004).

With the population flows, Goma became ever more diverse; *Tutsi, Rega, Mbema, Shi, Hutu*, and *Nande* among others occupied the same urban space; together they had to *se débrouiller*. In the growing urban area and its outskirts, residents of Goma *et environs* shifted jobs and identities as needed in response to the politics of the region and the opportunities for gain. A good friend, P., whose family migrated into the area during his childhood, tells wild stories of his various roles under the different regimes. By the time he was 25, he had worked odd jobs in Goma, traded timber across the Zaire - RCD-rebel-controlled borders in Masisi. He had accepted a job as a driver for an array of rebel groups who intermittently controlled the territory around Goma and had innumerable tales of swashbuckling bravery and luck. By the time aid became prominent in the area, he had begun learning English and took odd jobs as a part-time fixer, part-time photographer for the aid agencies, and part-time Karate teacher for the expats. Like the hundreds of thousands of other individuals who had come to Goma *et environs* seeking refuge and opportunity, P. had learned to be crafty and flexible, bringing different versions of himself to the fore as he hunted opportunity and avoided disaster.

As nearly a million refugees flowed across the borders into Goma *et environs* immediately following the Rwandan genocide in 1994, the area's nascent civil society initiatives crumbled (Kassa 2004). International humanitarian agencies took control of the social infrastructure from refugee camps, to hospitals, to schools, to soccer pitches. Simply put, with the advent of aid, survival strategies and financial opportunity for the region's residents and *déplacés* diversified. For the newly displaced populations, self-settling in the city remained a viable option, while taking up residency in the newly formed camps composed another. Self-settling indicated moving into the urban areas without being officially identified as a displaced person; this option

generally placed individuals outside of the rights to claim humanitarian aid. The camps, on the other hand, were a space in which individuals expected to be able to rely on aid for their survival. Each individual and family has a different understanding of how camps function and each makes their own decision weighing the opportunities and constraints of aid and the camp conditions. For any families who had relatives in Goma, their choice often was to temporarily combine households until the conflict ebbed and they could go home. During the M23 war from April 2012 to the end of 2013, the neighborhoods of Virunga, Majengo, and Ndosho swelled with freshly displaced urban refugees. The camps also received refugees and remained in flux as *les déplacés* arrived and returned as they saw fit. Camps provided short and long-term survival strategies, despite their inherent instability. The government, who cited problems of aid dependency and wasted expenses, regularly threatened to and did close camps.

Mugunga III attracted a wide range of individuals who had run from conflicts including the CNDP (2006-2009), M23 (2012-2013), and attacks by the Mai Mai and FDLR, as well as other rebel groups in the interim. While some residents had recently fled and were only temporarily settled in the camp, others – especially the elderly and disabled – had made camps their permanent homes. In response to camp closures, they would migrate to the next open aid-supported opportunity. Alphonse, a 50-year-old resident of Mugunga III explained this pattern of displacement:

I come from the parish of Matanda in Masisi. I have lived in camps since 2007 when I fled due to Nkunda and the CNDP. I started living in Bulengo camp, and then I came here to Mugunga III in 2009. I came here together with my wife and my children. However, on the road to here, we had problems, we ran with nothing, just our feet, but as we passed by Ngugu and the places where the people dig for minerals, we were caught by the CNDP and I was thrown by my arm. Then they used the *finbo* (stick) on me. (He shows his deformed arm from a break). I was able to get away and I ran with my 9 children to a camp near Goma. Now I only have 8 children though. (Interview July 14, 2014)

By the time I arrived at Mugunga III, the camp's boundaries within the volcanic hills just outside Goma had come to host a diverse population from a range of ethnic backgrounds and regions

(most notably from Masisi and Rutshuru). Each camp-settled refugee had weighed their opportunity and risk and decided to arrive and remain in the camp. A range of studies has shown how Central African refugees navigate similar choices of self settling or residing in a camp (e.g. Malkki 1995, 1997; Kaiser 2005, 2006; Finnstrom 2008). Of Sudanese refugees in Uganda, Kaiser writes, “Refugees with business interests or the wherewithal to get involved in trade, professional activities, or other non-agricultural activities asserted their desire to remain in (camps near) urban settings to pursue these objectives” (2006, 607). Camps can be launching sites for various entrepreneurial activities, but these choices are situated within a network of strategies for survival and success. She further argues, “A significant number of people are not fixed in either a settlement or a non-settlement context, but somehow bridge the gap between the two, deriving advantages from each” (ibid., 609). In the Sudanese context, this meant that refugees would often collect food rations at the camps before sharing those rations or outright selling the goods. In the eastern DRC, the relationship between the town and the camp had become complex. With more than two decades to hone their dualistic success and survival strategies, the eastern Congolese have learned to use creative bricolage to make the best of bad situations. Busenga, a 58 year-old woman explained her strategy and struggle:

When I ran, I left Walikali with only my feet and my children. To return? I do not know how I will do that ... it’s a big problem to try to return. All the same, here (from her base in the camp) I work; I sell my things in Virunga Market (in Goma 15km away) and here. Then I come back here again – here I am happy that at least I have my work – but it’s still hard to sell things and have enough money.... If there is money... it is possible... but it is still very difficult.
(Interview July 11, 2014)

Busenga’s strategy is common. During the week, a number of women and most able-bodied men who reside in the camp are largely absent. Each morning they walk or hop the crowded mini-buses into Goma to hustle or work. Located only a handful of kilometers from the outskirts of Ndosho’s commercial and market district, the camp in fact provided a fabulously facilitative launching pad for such survival strategies. Additionally, women would brew beer or hike out into

the fields that ringed the aid site to farm beans and cassava. Others would chop and burn timber for *makala* (charcoal) to trade in the camp, in the thriving market that had grown along its single entry road, or in town. Children managed the temporary houses and attended the nearby school that an international aid agency had built and provisioned; a limited few would wander into town to beg.

[Figure 115: *Mise-en-scène* in the Mugunga III market]



Many individuals maintained a hybrid life set between the camp and the city. By retaining residences in both the camps and the town, they benefited from the aid rations and the opportunity of the urban hustle. Conversely by 2013, it was known that non-displaced townspeople would sometimes build homes in the camp in order to take advantage of the handouts. These tactics had become prevalent enough that by the time I arrived, the World Food Program had taken to distributing food unannounced at odd hours of the night. They argued that it was the only effective way to identify who indeed lived in the camps and needed aid; if someone

was not sleeping in their home when they arrived, they could assume that they were neither residing in the camp fulltime, nor in need of the distribution.

HUMANITARIANISM AND THE MEGA PROJECT SITE

Mugunga III was an interesting space in regards to aid. The location itself was enormous – what I call a “mega project site.” In contrast to the myriad individual project sites that dotted the map of the eastern DRC, the IDP camp was both a dedicated aid space and a composite of many nested humanitarian initiatives. The eastern DRC camps are run in coordination with the UNHCR and the DRC state-sponsored *Commission Nationale pour les Réfugiés* (CNR). These agencies delineate the physical space of the camp, and its layout. They also provide order, security, and arrival and exit packages to its residents. Upon arrival, these aid kits may consist of a tarp, some food, potentially a pot and a basin, and some oil, though the list of items varies depending on the level of need, donor support, and the speed of response necessary. Return packets commonly include some cash, seeds, a hoe and transportation to the approximate region.

Aid does not end with these arrival and exit packs. Once a family or individual settles in the camp, they have access to a range of other agencies that provide support and projects. The World Food Program (known by its French acronym: PAM) contributed food (beans, oil, semolina) and necessities like soap while organizations like MSF, Merlin, and Heal Africa supported medical care. Age International helped the elderly; Handicap International aided the disabled; UNICEF and a range of child-oriented programs addressed the physical needs and education of camp children. A large number of programs pass through to sensitize against sexual violence; and other simply provided additional services – such as the Vodacom free cell phone calls and the myriad small projects like brick making, sewing classes, and community development support. Agencies facilitated skill building and poverty reduction, and also provided handouts that targeted “*les vulnérables*.” *Les vulnérables*, as a DRC humanitarian category, has

come to include rape victims, the handicapped, the elderly, and individuals with HIV. Like most projects, programmatic attention for *les vulnerables* sometimes lasted years, sometimes only months, and many dwindled in correlation with waning donor support and media attention in the region. In 2014, as the conflicts subsided on the outskirts of town, the WFP diminished their food provisions to help encourage residents to return to their homes. Nonetheless, *les vulnerables* still received full rations, medical care, and tarps.

Managing this mega project site was complicated. The number of agencies who had a stake in the camp was large and constantly in flux. Coordination meetings traditionally broke down into what one WFP employee described as “bullshit bingo” where agency employees seemed to gain credibility for calling one another out for their lies and inflation of data. Equally, for the Congolese residents of the camp navigating this mega site took a constant effort. Not only did they balance opportunities inside and outside of the camp, but many also strove continually to gain access to additional aid. The fact that there were so many humanitarian actors and their projects – and moreover, so many agencies that were doing a spotty-at-best job of providing aid – meant that the beneficiaries were constantly in search of more. With so many lackluster options, residents jockeyed for additional access. Mugunga III became a space of nested humanitarian projects, where it was possible to occupy more than one at once. Residents played humanitarian twister attempting strategically to keep a foot, arm, or a hope within a variety of different projects. Simply put, the more projects one was able to occupy as a beneficiary, the more aid one managed to access, and the more opportunity for success and survival arose.

BEING A BENEFICIARY WITHIN THE BORDERS OF AID SPACE

Ilana Feldman notes, “Humanitarianism is several things at once. It is an arena of legal regulation meant to protect civilians and refugees ... [and] humanitarianism is also a discursive field” (2012, 156). For instance, the label “refugee” has received ample academic attention (Malkki 1995a,

1995b; Bakewell 2000; Pandolfi 2003; Finnestrom 2008; Feldman 2012). It has been addressed both for the type of aid the term mandates and also for the way in which the individuals who access these labels manage and strategically deploy this identity. “Through its work of naming – naming refugees, non-refugees, victims, etc. – humanitarianism helps define a political actor though these are often political actors without a clear political status. It delimits a discursive space of claim-making, shaping a field of humanitarian rights based in obligation and compassion” (Feldman 2012, 157). Such claims-making takes shape in the eastern DRC through the visual and discursive embodiments of “beneficiary-ness.”

For the past 20 years “*bénéficiaire*” has become common local parlance, dotting Swahili, French, and English conversations alike. This label of “beneficiary” is in part determined by the power of the aid bureaucracy. Within aid spaces like the IDP camp, there exists a distinct restructuring of one’s position from the outside society to the interior of aid space. The very practice of aid makes this re-positioning clear. The razor wire around the camp or picket fence walls around the health stations acted as they are expected to. They separated the space between where the humanitarian hierarchy and its associated power dynamics are clearly defined and places where they are not. In aid space in general, the hierarchy follows this approximate logic: the *siège* employees are on top, followed by the “country head” and then a range of program managers, communications and finance people. Below them, the partner agency employees operate, working directly in the field and implementing projects. Beneficiaries find themselves at the very bottom of this hierarchy. There, they are expected only to comply, participate, and receive. Nonetheless, beneficiaries are far from passive. They maneuver the system from that very bottom position, and commonly strive to gain additional access, additional skills, and ultimately, more opportunities.

Akin to its sister buzzword “participant,” the label “beneficiary” shapes the political potential to engage personally with aid and access the humanitarian system. However, how this happens is not always an obvious or easy process. Cornwall notes, “Participation as praxis is,

after all, rarely a seamless process; rather, it constitutes a terrain of contestation, in which relations of power between different actors, each with their own “projects,” shape and reshape the boundaries of action. While a frame might be set by outsiders, much then depends on who participates and where their agency and interests take things” (2008, 276). The borders of aid space alone do not determine access to humanitarian goods and services. Rather, individuals within each space must maneuver, perform, and network so as to make claims for different levels of aid as they tack between any number of local identities (e.g. single mother, brother, seamstress, friend, vulnerable) and weigh their options for success and survival.

Flexible identities and associated strategies were particularly important in mega project sites in part because “beneficiary” is not always a well-defined category; it does not apply willy-nilly to any and all Congolese. Rather, it includes only those who fit the spatial, temporal, and categorical mandates. Projects operate in specific locales and often provide aid only to those who can literally show up. Additionally, constrained by their project cycles and contracts, agencies offer projects and aid for bounded periods of time – sometimes two months, sometimes two years. And importantly, humanitarian organizations seek beneficiaries with specific qualifications, for instance: displaced women; unmarried women with children; rape victims; the elderly; the disabled; orphans. Many also merely hunt for beneficiaries who will fit the category of “vulnerable.” Within this region’s well-conditioned mega project site, certain names, identities, and labels have traction to shape potential not only discursively but also photographically.

CO-CREATING DISNEYLAND PORTRAITS

By January 2014, I had gained permission from the UNHCR and NCR to photograph and conduct research in Mugunga III. I was hopeful that there, I might be able to watch as camp residents regularly engaged humanitarian cameras. Each week from mid-January to mid-August of 2014, I

made the 35-minute motorcycle ride down Sake road. I hopped a right at the fading remnant of a local NGO's previous presence in the camp, a large faded cerulean blue cement sign that showed two white hands holding a red heart with "AMOUR" written across the top. Each week, I would park my motorcycle in the lot created to hold aid 4x4s and *camions* (trucks), sign in with the UNHCR / CNR agency, and (after a few visits) independently wind my way up the main street. Over time, as I wandered the various blocs set along the narrow lava-rock lined paths, I increasingly moved to calls of "over here!" "Take my picture today!"



[Figure 116: Janine Amoro requested a photograph with her means of business – her charcoal - and her son.]

The camp president insisted, "Journalists and humanitarians are out here nearly every day. *Wanazoweya* (people have become habituated) to the camera." While it took a while before I overlapped with humanitarians or journalists, the very aid-ness of Mugunga III was overwhelming. Aid visibility littered the space; acronyms were printed or painted on tarps, buildings, signposts, bathrooms, and health centers. Moreover, each resident I spoke to

understood aspects of their personal positionality based on their access to nested programs of medical care, the amount of food aid received, and other projects with which they were involved. Nonetheless, waiting for humanitarians to arrive and take pictures proved mostly futile. Instead of waiting, I walked the overrun and windy paths through the camp, and began a project centered on two things: 1) asking individuals about their experience with and hopes for aid photographs and 2) creating their portraits.

In the making of these co-creative portraits and in the conversations and interactions that shaped them, I came to engage the contours of camp residents' identities as they played to, challenged, or subverted humanitarian and local expectations. Each week I became ever more interested in and aware of how subjects' expectations merged with, were challenged by, or changed through, their dialectic interaction with the photographer – in this case, me. In the previous chapters, I paid significant attention to the photographers and their agency. However, whether in front of a local or humanitarian camera, subjects are rarely passive in their representations. While many other publications that focus on humanitarian photography have not outright denied the agency of the photographic subject, they nonetheless have turned a blind eye to it. Instead, they have prioritized western institutions and the compositional “eye” of the photographer.³⁵ Sontag (1973; 2004), Tagg (1988; 2009), Linfield (2011) and others notably prioritize the agency of the photographer for their control of the photographic object and their control of or abuse of the photographic subject. Sontag, for instance, sees photography as a tool to re-victimize the vulnerable photographic subjects. For her photography is “predatory” at its best, “a sublimated rape” or a “quiet murder” at its worst (Sontag 1977). In softer critiques individual

³⁵ For instance, this critique applies to photographers like Sebastao Salgado, a UNICEF Goodwill ambassador, who might have made suffering too pretty (Cohen et al 2009, 89-90), Or how war photographer James Natchway might have made the misery and the chaos of war seem too serene (Linfield 2011, 211). Yet, regardless of whether a photographer is famous or anonymous, blamed for beauty or murder, they carry the assumption of agency for the construction of the image's content and therefore, its transferrable message.

photographers are simultaneously credited and blamed for shaping the content of the photograph with no reference to the collaboration, interference, or agency of their photographic subjects.

In contrast, while acknowledging the power of photographers, I also examine the photographic act from the position that subjects inherently have agency and actively engage their expectations and desires in front of the lens - whether a local studio or a humanitarian aid photographer holds that camera. In the DRC, with its particularity of being a space of protracted humanitarian intervention, the photograph is rarely a neutral feature of the humanitarian process. Moreover, within the hierarchical social structure of aid space, photographic subjects are seldom naive in how they engage the camera. Through co-creative portraits, I probe how in the commonly photographed space of Disneyland camp residents engage expectations and photographic norms for the humanitarian camera, despite the enormously divisive power dynamics under which they operate.

Each portrait grew through the conversations I had with camp residents in which they described their displacement narrative and detailed how they wished to be represented in a photograph that they could keep. Ethics were of an utmost importance here; in each case, I explicitly detailed who I was, what type of research and publications these images and interviews would be used for, and perhaps most important for that social milieu, I made it patently clear that I was not a humanitarian photographer or a journalist. To avoid confusion, I never shadowed humanitarians or worked as a photojournalist within Mugunga III. My presence each week was the same - I interviewed, took pictures, and returned the prints from the week before. In the discussions about how individuals wished to be featured in an image they could keep, I would ask them where, with whom, and how they would like me to take their photograph. Part of this interaction often looked and sounded something like this segment of a conversation with Furaha from March 2014 in Mugunga III:

Aubrey: What do you want to show in the picture we're going to create?

Furaha: I want to show that I am happy.

A: OK. How would you show that? And where would you like me to take your photograph?
 F: Like this (crosses arms and looks evenly at the camera). Even here is good.
 A: Would you like it inside your house or next to it?
 F: Can I have two - one photograph inside, one outside?
 A: Sure. Do you want anyone in the picture with you?
 F: Inside, only me – take it *mnene* (close up). Outside, I'll call my children – I want a *mrefu* photo too (a vertical photo which shows one's whole body).
 A: OK, ready? (I go to pull the camera out of my bag).
 F: Wait. Let me change my clothes. (F disappears into a backroom of their home, then returns with a fresh shirt, neatly tied headscarf and her son)
 A: OK... ready?
 F: Yes (F picks up an armband showing she works for Médecins Sans Frontières – holds that and her son in the image (Figure 117). Outside, she shoos away a crowd of neighborhood children and brings her family and friends close, looking directly at the camera (Figure 118)).

Through this interaction, I was both able to engage with Furaha's discussion of her representational desires and watch her subtle inclusions and exclusions within the photographs. Her portrait is obviously far from "found"; each component that she brings to the fore and mid-ground – her child, her MSF armband, the placement of the UNICEF bag behind her – are all choreographed intended creative components meant to craft an environment and a particular vision that mimics local studio-like portrait photographs. Intention echoes in her words, while imagination shapes her un-described actions as she prepared for the photograph – changing her clothes and coordinating what aspects of her life and the found environment would feature. Despite her location in an IDP camp, prestige and pride nonetheless whittle their way into her depiction.



[Figure 117 (above) Furaha inside her home in Mugunga III camp; Figure 118 (below) Furaha with her family and friends outside in Mugunga III camp]



Critical research arises from this combination of the action, image, and discourse born of the interaction around the camera. Co-creative portraits open a communicative space where the photographic subject and ethnographer's interaction shape the resulting material photograph.

Speaking of the notion of performance as entangled with paintings in the DRC, Johannes Fabian notes:

Attention to performance means noticing everything (well, as much as possible) that helps us to approach the artists and the ethnographer's work as action or as events that occur in time and space, in physical and cultural settings, in the presence of objects as well as persons. Such an approach demands that we consider how narratives are not just constructed but how they are performed; how conversations are not just carried on but performed; how a series of paintings is not just lined up but performed in what is aptly called a "show." In doing so, we become better able to not only understand how painting is joined with storytelling but also to show what happens in the ethnography of such creations. (1996, 249)

The act of photography and the interaction that shapes it become central in the role of knowledge production and transference of a photographic narrative. Co-creative portraits, like my shadowing and direct methods, engage anthropology's lopsided relationship with photography by bringing visual knowledge production and the camera back into the "field." In the dialogic space of photographic creation, experiential knowledge is produced between the two individuals (and occasionally bystanders) as they collaborate (to varying degrees of equality and awareness) in the creation of a single image. This space of interaction and collaboration engages the photographer's desires (their composition, lighting, skill, and expectation of the later use of the image) as well as the enacted representational aspirations of the subject (how they desire to be seen, who they think the photographer is, who they think will see the resulting image, and what role they imagine this photograph may play within their lives). Throughout the process of subtle negotiations, research ensues, and knowledge is produced through, and around the camera.

CO-CREATIVE PORTRAITS – ENGAGING POLITICS THROUGH REFLEXIVITY

Through the co-creative portrait process it becomes possible to explore directly how the Congolese move through their subjective understandings and expectations of the photographic landscape. Participating in how residents in the mega project site tack back and forth across politically and socially imaginative representations within local and humanitarian visual fields, facilitated deeper understandings of those fields and their norms and visual expectations, but also of the politics and social dynamics of the region's scape.

Moreover, quite by accident, the local interpretations of who I was enabled me to engage directly in the local politics and imaginings of this particular aid space. Within visual culture studies, Elizabeth Cameron has employed similar visual methods as a means of challenging the value of candid fieldwork photographs and exploring informants' desires for specific forms of self-depiction. Of her fieldwork portraits in Zambia, she notes, "I gave the sitter [here referred to as the subject] as complete control of the photograph as possible. They chose who would be in the photo, how they wanted to present themselves in dress and comportment, where the photograph should be taken, etc. My only input was in framing the image within the photograph itself" (Cameron 2014, 142). While her description of rural Zambian photography importantly explores notions of modernity and prestige within popular rural photography, her account leaves out a critical aspect of the interaction and engagement. While at the very end of her chapter she briefly addresses her "betwixt and between" position as an expatriate who signifies resources and modernity, yet it is exactly this reflexive identity that contributes to shaping the photographic interaction.

Within the mega project site of Mugunga III this meant that at first glance, for many residents, I appeared to be a humanitarian. The fact that I am a *mzungu* (white, foreign) woman

who carries a camera placed me within this politically salient assumption.³⁶ While the *mzungu* identity across East Africa is commonly associated with tourism, North Kivu assumptions linked this identity to humanitarian aid. Expressly, the *mzungu* label engages both the frustration with the legacy of ineffective humanitarian intervention, the financial opportunity presented by the aid business, and the hopeful possibilities of access to aid programs, goods distributions, and employment. Further, this assumed humanitarian identity indicates wealth and the imagined potential of connections to the West. Thus, while I was distinctly not working as a humanitarian,³⁷ initial reactions to my camera and me at Mugunga III tended to reflect the anticipations, demands, and frustration of humanitarian engagement in the region and more directly, in the camp. For instance, this reaction was not uncommon:

A young mother strode purposively up to me in Mugunga III IDP camp, holding a child who was busy sucking on a stick of sugar cane. “Mzungu! Take a picture!” She demanded. She pulled the sugar cane from the child’s mouth, placed him on a mat on the ground and took a step back. The child began to wail and reach up towards his mother. She raised her eyebrows at me – a clear, “I told you so” expression on her face and pointed at her child, “Take a picture, my child is starving” (Figure 119). I tried to counter her assumption about who I was and why I was there. “You’re sure this is the picture you want... You know I’m not a humanitarian or a journalist...” I began to explain my research. She cut me off and indicated that I should take the picture of the crying child. I did. She thanked me “Asanti, Mzungu,” she said, then more calmly, asked for a photo with her friends and siblings in the typical photo famille style. (Fieldnotes March 14, 2014)

³⁶ Throughout my fieldwork, I carried either my large Nikon D700 or D800 or a smaller full frame mirror-less Fuji x100. For most co-creative portraits I employed the Fuji x100 in order to distance the perception of me as a journalist or professional humanitarian photographer - an identity, which carrying the huge Nikon tended to produce.

³⁷ In other spaces in North Kivu, I applied the method of “direct photography” where I would photograph for an aid agency in order to learn about their processes and expectations of photography. In order to avoid confusing outcomes, I never conducted direct photography in Mugunga III.



[Figure 119]

Despite my regular protests and explanations that “I’m a researcher, not a humanitarian, not a journalist,” my identity and the photography I was asked to produce frequently articulated with local expectations of the humanitarian visual field. Looking out from what appeared to be a problematic social position, I engaged with photographic subjects as they choreographed image content to expose their particular problems as if for a humanitarian lens. Within Mugunga III, as I’ll explain below, the imposition of humanitarian expectation upon my camera commonly occurred in the early months of this research. Despite the steady change over time, there were still some days where, even after five or six months in camp, residents whom I had not met before would mistake my identity and make claims in front of the camera that attempted to establish their rights and needs as a humanitarian beneficiary.

“Take my picture, take my picture!” – Everyone was grabbing at me for things. Today was more aggressive than normal probably because it was Saturday and the men who were usually out working were just hanging out at the camp. They looked at me like a journalist / humanitarian. Immediately the pleading stories

started as residents detailed how bad it is in the camp, how they would like to go home but the need X, Y, Z (mainly tarps, houses, transportation, etc.)... aid. Claims to beneficiary-ness and dependency were everywhere. "WRITE DOWN MY NAME. MY name, MY picture, ME. The "moi" was overwhelming today. Every one of those men wanted something for themselves. I placated everyone as much as I could, then made an excuse to head for the center of the camp where I knew people and could escape the aggressive demands and assumptions. By the time I reached block 14, it was relatively quiet, and I walked through the camp's familiar smell of fermenting corn and the ghastly sweet reek of sewer. I returned photos to those I had photographed last week and was asked by a ton of people to take more photos, give more. There were lots of people I hadn't seen before. GIVEMETHIS – hands out, MZUNGU! 200 francs! I moved around and got through about six interviews and portrait sessions. Today was full of lots of bystanders telling others how to pose or how to respond to questions. One older woman, Katerina, who I was interviewing was hard of hearing, so one man was "translating" of his own volition. He used my same Swahili words but just yelled them in a higher volume. Then from the crowd that had formed, individuals would yell out the answers. "What do you want to show in photographs?" "TUNAPASHUA BASHES! NJALA!" (We need tarps! We're Hungry!) "Where would you like your photo to be taken?" Katherine answered, "in my house, and also outside my house." But the people in the crowd would yell – "Hata hapa" "Kamata hapa pia" ("Even here," "take the pictures here too"). (Fieldnotes May 18, 2014)

Despite the commonality with which residents associated me with humanitarianism, such a categorization was not permanent. In Mugunga III as in Goma, this label was destabilized by other identifying factors. For instance, I spoke Swahili and French, operated independently, drove my own motorcycle, and walked alone while most humanitarians travel in their well-secured 4x4 vehicles accompanied by translators and other national staff. Moreover, I spent significant time with seemingly average people in equally "normal" circumstances – at home, in the office, on the streets. I had hoped to dodge the personal association of being assumed to be a humanitarian during my research. Despite my best efforts, however, it was this accidental and problematic articulation with the region's politics and power dynamics that made co-creative portraits so productive. They came to expose not only how individuals within aid space navigate the photograph and the broader photographic landscape, but also how they envision and navigate their social position within and the politics of the eastern DRC's humanitarian-run borderland.

THE AGENCY OF EAGER HUMANITARIAN PORTRAITURE

The initial portraits, especially from the first months of my research in Mugunga III (January and February 2014), directly engage the expectations that I was related to the humanitarian industry and its power dynamics. When I first arrived in the camp, I spent the afternoon wandering between the homes in bloc 1 with the *chef du bloc*, Sebastian. Mugunga III at the time had 85 blocs. Sebastian led me through his bloc and introduced me opportunistically to those who were around – a population that on that day turned out to be represented by mostly aging women and a few men. I spoke with each resident about his or her flight, life in the camp, their experience of having been photographed before, and their desires to be photographed now. The following photographs are representative of resident’s early-on photographic desires (Figures 120 - 123)



[Figure 120 Marsiane]



[Figure 121 (above) Alphonsine; 122 (below) Baraka]





[Figure 123 (above) Nhedi]

I was both frustrated and disappointed with these images. Despite my best efforts to distance myself from the power dynamics of humanitarianism, subjects consistently desired representations that looked akin to negative humanitarian photographs from decades past. What I only realized far later was that this frustration was the beginning of an understanding of the fluid subjectivity of individuals within the region as they drew on their politics of expectation from both local and humanitarian visual fields. What I saw in the early days in the camp was a consistent representation of victimization, which correlated with the seemingly stock stories of flight, suffering, and humanitarian need. For instance, Alphonsine and Marsiane explained their displacement:

Alphonsine (Figure 121)

I am 60 years old. I have a problem with my stomach. I am hungry. But I ran from Masisi three years ago. I want a photo to show I'm not well. I'd be happy if someone gives me something. A picture does nothing. Tomorrow I will still be hungry – I can't be happy. I want a stick to help me walk; I don't want an operation. My body has already finished. But a walking stick [crutch] to help my

legs that would be good. My shoulders, my knees, they hurt a lot. (Interview translated from Swahili. Jan 30, 2014)

Marsiane (Figure 120)

I am 75 years old now; this is my 4th year here. I come from Masisi. Heal Africa, they already took a photo of me. In that photo, I wanted to show that I was hungry and to say, “help!” Some white person maybe a French maybe an English person took it. I want to show suffering and hunger. Hunger, that’s it! I was happy to have the photo taken – it will bring something to heal the hunger. It was six months ago that they took it and then I was getting food because I am a vulnerable. (Translated from Swahili. Jan. 30, 2014)

Marsiane, Alphonsine, Nhedi and Baraka each wanted photographs near or in their makeshift homes with the rocks and tarps as backgrounds. They each chose and posed carefully.

Alphonsine, for instance, waited for me to raise the camera. As I did, she placed her hand on her stomach with a thunk, directing attention to her physical self and her experience of hardship.

With surprising spryness, Marsiane stripped off her headscarf so that she could show her white hair - indicating her age. She theatrically laid both hands on her face to show her suffering.³⁸ Over and over at Mugunga individuals described their desire to be depicted so to show that all was far from well – they wanted to reveal their personal level of *uzuni* (sadness) and *teseka* (suffering).

Over and over, as the camera was raised, their head sunk into their palms as each resident reached out to associate themselves with physical illness or hunger. The photographs represented the intended real aspects of the person while incorporating posed, creative depictions and associations that ferried a narrative of suffering. Nonetheless, these sad, negative images were pleasing to the subjects in them. Marsiane saw her photo the next week. She smiled impishly and laughed at her white hair and her hands on her face. “Yes!” she exclaimed, “here I am showing that I am suffering. It is a very good picture.”

³⁸ This was clearly explained to me when discussing which photograph to use for a direct photography project with PJB – a local basketball NGO. I pointed at one I liked and the head coach looked at me earnestly – “That one?” “Yeah, that one is good, no?” “No, don’t use that. That child with his head in his hands, he is showing that he is not well; he is suffering. We can’t show our donors that photograph. We need something more positive,” he said. In the end, we chose to use a completely different image.

Sebastian, the *chef du bloc* with whom I moved about the first day, concretized both this desire to show hardship and the interactive relationship that shaped the photograph even in saturated aid spaces. During interviews and portrait sessions, Sebastian would appear behind me and interject relentlessly: “life is hard here!” “Say you’re suffering!” “Show teseka!” My co-creative portrait session with Emanuelle Busa Busa provides a clear example of this dynamic:

I have been displaced for 4 or 5 years. I have a wheelchair. Someone maybe a journalist from Vodacom took my picture making a call. I got to get on the phone and say, “Hello” to people. I was happy with the photo.” (Sebastian is provoking her to be more negative, she pauses.) “But I’m also still very hungry and my heart is full of suffering. Me, I want a telephone so that I can call. I can’t go to the Vodacom booth (to make free calls) because I don’t have any shoes. (Interview Jan 29, 2014)

I asked her what type of photograph she would like me to take as I sat with her in front of her tarpaulin house. She reached back inside and pulled out a plastic jar of body lotion, put it near her face, and almost smiled for the camera. I clicked a photo (Figure 124). Sebastian jumped into the scene and snatched the lotion out of her hand and threw it back inside, saying “*Hapana! Mambiya ‘njala’! ‘Hakuna chakula’*” (“No! Tell her ‘I’m hungry!’ ‘There is no food’”). Placing his hands on his face, he instructed Emanuelle to make the appropriately sad, suffering image. She did as she was told, looked at him, and then turned to me, “I want to show that I’m hungry.” She placed her hands on her face (Figure 125). I took another picture and then turned in utter frustration to Sebastian. “Sebastian, *unaarabisha recherche yangu!*” (Sebastian! You’re wrecking my research). He just chuckled and scampered over a short volcanic rock wall. From a few meters away he was unrelenting in his mischievously giggling and influencing. I tried to reverse Sebastian’s provocations and explained to Emanuelle that it was OK if she wanted another picture with her body lotion. This did little good. I became another powerful individual influencing the photograph directly; Emmanuelle accepted my intervention and then looked from Sebastian to me as she tried to balance the representational desires brought to her representation. The resulting photograph was nothing but confusing – body lotion and suffering combined (Figure 126).



[Figure 124 (above); Figure 125 (below)]





[Figure 126]

Strategic depictions of suffering do multiple things for the photographic subject. On one hand, they document their plight and provide a chance to be recognized and seen. On the other, they make claims to the humanitarian camera. These visual bids asked for access to aid by articulating the beneficiary's social location as one who has nothing and needs help from the more powerful aid agency and its actors. This is not a naïve act. Caleb Kabanda, a fixer who helps journalists and filmmakers complete their work in the DRC explained his take on this phenomenon. “In my work I have seen times when the guys want to exaggerate things – there is a *maman* who sees that you’re there with the whites, and she sees the money; She needs assistance – so she wants to show that she will die from hunger. She does it so that people will help her, aid her. She’ll put her head in her hand for a humanitarian photo.” In *Mugunga III*, these suffering-based bids were not pure imagination. Undoubtedly, life was hard. Hunger did lead to deaths in the camp, and many residents with glaring health and medical issues were left unaided. Their suffering for the camera both memorialized a validation of their experienced hardship and explored their hopes of

potential political and material gains that might be furnished by aid. Contrary to arguments about the re-victimizing nature of negative humanitarian photographs, here camp residents operationalized such tropes for their benefit. Ironically, for many, power stemmed from the visual embodiment of disempowerment.

Concerning photographing suffering, it's necessary to note that up to an undefined point of personal distress and disaster, I understand photographic subjects (even those displaying suffering or who have experienced extreme hardship) to possess agency. They can and regularly do react, resist, enact, engage and also intentionally shape and develop their representation in accordance with their personal expectations and hopes. I find it particularly useful to draw on Saba Mahmood's use of Foucault's paradox of "subjectification," "where the very processes and conditions that secure a subject's subordination are also the means by which she becomes a self-conscious identity and agent" (Mahmood 2005, 17). The humanitarian power dynamics within aid space situate current and potential beneficiaries at the very bottom of the hierarchy. They have minimal bargaining power and even less ability to make decisions about what support they receive and how they receive it. However, by identifying visually with that lowest-in-the-hierarchy position - the position of the "one who needs help" - they are using their subordination to the humanitarian system consciously and powerfully.

However, in so doing their agency is circumscribed. The ability to act and expect to be addressed is limited by, in this case, the border of Mugunga III's mega project site. Their agency in front of the camera is contingent on the arrival of a humanitarian camera in the camp in the first place - a situation over which they have next to no control. Despite the contingencies upon which their representational agency resides, residents nonetheless have options and manage their representations as they see fit. This form of agency functions akin to Holly Wardlow's notion of "encompassed agency" which she argues is a form of "action that produces effects, but effects whose ends are beyond the individual's actions and for a wider purpose" (2006, 13). Wardlow insightfully applies this limited form of agency to reflect the limits of female action within Huli

populations in Papua New Guinea. Here, the similar notion of circumscribed agency serves to enrich this research by acknowledging the cunning, aware ways in which individuals consciously play into the existing humanitarian power structure and hierarchy, despite their inability to control the responses such actions will draw from the particular organization or encompassing aid industry. Within the borders of aid space, to choose to suffer for the camera was not just strategic; it was powerful.

SIMPLE NARRATIVES, COMPLEX SUBJECTIVITIES

Seeing suffering in places of displacement is, of course, nothing new. Such images are reminiscent of normative Western depictions of refugees and their tenuous living situations. However, in composite these repetitive image tropes and the stories that encase them act to craft a set of particular, collective narratives that express both agency and intention. As such, these photographs and the descriptions of individual flight behave similarly to Liisa Malkki's mythico-histories. Malkki (1995) argued that the collective oral histories of displacement and persecution that Burundian Hutu refugees tell and retell within Tanzanian camps were "heavily moral stories whose purpose was to educate, explain, prescribe and proscribe" (1995, 54). These stories delineated self and other as they situated the Hutu as both victims and rightful rulers of Burundi. Through a combination of moral and mythical elements, these collective stories became part of narrative "world making" as they "constructed categorical schemata and thematic configurations that were relevant and meaningful in confronting both the past in Burundi and the pragmatics of everyday life in the refugee camp in Tanzania" (ibid., 54-55). While clearly addressing different histories of place, politics, and flight, the diverse ethnic population at Mugunga III nonetheless had their own sets of mythico-histories that were both discursive and visual.

For the camp residents tales of rebel group attacks, flight with absolutely nothing - "*ya miguu yangu tu*" (with only my feet) - attacks and rape along the long road to the aid sites, and

collective hunger, suffering, and hardship in the camps composed the normative short narratives. However, unlike the Burundian mythico-histories that emphasized distinctions between “us and them” and articulated rightful claims to their homeland, these Mugunga III tales of harrowing flight and perpetual suffering were perforated with hints and pleas that resonated within the acting humanitarian power structure. They spoke directly to the politics of the bounded aid space within which each resident resided. The depictions of flight and arrival with nothing combined with accounts of hunger, attack, and general suffering. They articulated the “lack” - the stories that included clauses of “I can't because I don't have [__fill in the blank__].” As such camp residents made claims to the encompassing humanitarian agents and industry for further food, tarps, shoes, schooling, and medicine. For women moreover, discursively highlighting an instance of rape, once a taboo subject in the eastern DRC, now exposed the need for the humanitarian community to take action and situated individuals clearly with the powerful category of “*les vulnerables*.”

The photographs that accompany such descriptions make corresponding visual statements. These images function as a twist on the local photographic norms where, in interactions between photographer and subject, they craft carefully staged photographs that praise the “*moi*” of the individual featured. These literally “self-at-the-center” humanitarian-purposed portraits employ the representation of self as a way to make claims for both personal and collective need. As individuals touch specific objects, parts of the body, choose backgrounds, and present parts of their context to the camera, they construct an image that hangs in an awkward balance between local photographic norms and expectations and humanitarian content and power. The collaborative and intentional performance within this camera-delineated space shaped representations that were flexible, malleable, and open to suggestion. However, unlike Malkki’s collective mythico-histories in the Tanzanian camps, the residents of Mugunga III showed that their discursive and visual understanding of self and situation was far from singular.

PRIDE AND DISPLACEMENT

Early in my research in Mugunga III a conversation with Bernadette brought this intentionality and the resulting maneuverability across the region's visual fields to the fore. Inside her small tarp-covered home, she relayed her experience. Her husband had died in the war. She had fled with nothing but her child. She had suffered violence and rape at the hands of the rebels in 2009 and again in the fields around the camp. Since then, she has made a life for herself brewing and selling fermented corn liquor from her home in the camp. Near the end of the conversation, I asked her how she would want to be represented in a photograph for a humanitarian audience. She pulled up her shirt and undid the wrap around her waist. Carefully sliding the fabric to the side, she exposed long jagged horizontal scars - the corporeal memory of the attack during her rape. "I want to show that I have suffered and that I have nothing. I'd like for them to send me to school," she said. The photograph would have shown off an outstandingly intimate aspect of her by highlighting her rape. Despite the intentionality and careful staging, this would have been an image that would have been nearly unthinkable within local photography.

Bernadette however, was not bound by that singular representation. When I asked how she wanted to be represented in a photograph for my research - one that she could keep, she re-wrapped her cloth skirt. Walking to the back of her small home, she stood tall and placed a hand on the plastic buckets where the corn fermented into alcohol - making the association and her ownership clear. In a second image, she called her children inside and organized them in front of her. "This will be a memory (*souvenir yangu*) of the camp," she said, "I'm responsible for my family here. That's what I want in a picture." Over time, the co-creative portraits came to echo both a navigation and a creolization of visual fields that Bernadette signaled. As the individuals featured disassociated me from their humanitarian assumptions and placed my camera and self as more closely related to local *photographes ambulants*, they redesigned how they presented themselves for the lens. Through these co-creative portraits, the population of Mugunga III exposed their flexible and opportunistic subjectivities. They had more than one visual narrative.

In another example showing the shift of visual expectations, Maska explained that she wished to be featured in a *picha uzuni* (sad photo) with a picture of her sister showing “how they were before” (Figure 127). The “old” image of them shows them in their home in Masisi territory before the conflict forced them to flee to Mugunga III. She explained that she wanted to show how full her life had been and how little she had now. However, as Maska and I continued to interact throughout the months, her photographic desires changed. She wanted photographs showing her looking *mzuri*. At one point, she pointed to a small plot of marigold flowers growing a few tents down from her own and made it clear that that space was ideal for her image. Her *uzuni* (sad) photographs tacked towards more playful depictions of herself and her family, imagined creatively into the beauty of a small plot of flowers (Figure 128).



[Figure 127: “I want to show me with my sister – the way it was before.” Maska – Mugunga III]



[Figure 128: “Aubrey! Take my picture in my flowers!” Maska- Mugunga III]

Like Maska, after a little more than a month of regular discussion and photography, camp residents began to show how even in such spaces of challenging living conditions, they could navigate the photographic landscape to craft other representations. Suffering was not the only viable image. Rather, they requested my camera to create studio-like photographs knowing they would receive the free printed photos the following week.

Today Mama M. wanted to show me her new baby “Mwangaza” (Light) – who she had given birth to between the time I last took her picture and when I gave it back. I went to visit her again and today photographed her new addition. Then, I headed to the market at the entry to the camp. I got highjacked as usual by people who wanted images of their children and their friends – so I talked to a few young women who were quite tenacious. They changed their clothes and wanted all the usual pictures – the mrefu photo, the mnene photo, the crouching photo, the image with their children and the photograph showing only one’s self. Justine received quite a few laughs as she reached into her blouse and pulled her breasts higher up and then patted her no-longer-pregnant belly. She then stood tall and posed, seemingly aware she was beautiful. Later an older woman demanded aggressively that I take her picture. NOW! I finally said, “Alright” and we sat down to talk first. When I took her picture, a child tried to pose with her. She struck at the child, who scrambled away laughing hilariously. Meye

peke tu! (Only me!) She shouted as she scowled and took another theatrical swing at the child. Her photo was firmly moi-based and firmly “local.”
(Fieldnotes May 23, 2014)

These co-creative portrait photographs came to reflect popular depictions enjoyed within the local photographic field. Individuals merged intended real and intended creative aspects of the image. They desired their faces and bodies to take center stage for a picture that they have otherwise creatively crafted by changing their clothes, gathering their family, and scrounging for a variety of props so as to look *mzuri* and improvise beauty and success. Hands touched that which was important to them (bags, flowers, handi-bikes, MSF armbands, and even a toilet seat provided by an aid agency) and forged the associations between their self and their work, family, and items that carried pride and prestige (Figures 129-133).

[Images on following page]



[Figure 129 (above) Aimé; Figure 130 (below) Furaha]





[Figure 131 (above) Timoté “Make sure you see enough of my bike in this one.” Figure 132 (below) Angelique]





[Figure 133] (previous page) Kitza]

Many of the locally-styled photographs within this aid space strove to glorify the subject and expose their pride through how they dressed and their associations with their family, and objects that signaled of modernity (e.g. western-style posters, cell phones, and bikes). Others drew the humanitarian paraphernalia into their visual narratives of success. Take for instance Mama Kitza's image (Figure 133): At first glance, due to the child hanging in the scale and the UNICEF / PAM visibility in the background, this image may look similar to those that appear beside "donate here" instructions in magazine ads and non-governmental organization (NGO) websites. Then again, Kitza's slightly pursed mouth and resolute gaze might undermine such an association. Pride challenges victimization. This collaboratively created photograph is anything but cliché. It sits suspended within the intersecting webs of photographic meaning, norms, and desires caught up in both Congolese studio-like photography and humanitarian imagery that together define prominent fields within the region's photographic landscape. By closing her hand around the scale, Kitza connects herself with the technology of her job. Unemployment is rife in the region and the visual ability to visually "prove" that one works is important. Moreover, her desired placement with the scale - the technology of her work - and in front of the logos of various humanitarian agencies connects her to her work and thereby the powerful network and economy of aid. The phantom hand that tilts the scale towards the camera belongs to the child's mother, who with Kitza, helped to choreograph the image and to ensure the clarity of the forthcoming visual narrative. The poignancy of touch and narrative is not limited to the scale; in her right hand, Kitza also holds her cell phone, a non-accidental photographic inclusion that connects her to realities outside of regional hardship and helps her produce a visual narrative that engages modernity, globalization, and consumerism.

Over the eight months I photographed in this mega project site, my more-than-100 co-creative portraits exposed both the agency and the flexible subjectivities of the individuals

featured. Moreover, in the overlapping space of local and humanitarian visual fields, these photographs articulated the creolized expectations that shaped them. On one hand, the co-creative portraits show how photographic subjects applied local visual expectations of interaction with the photographer and bystanders, as well as the popular norms of careful staging, to craft humanitarian-looking representations. On the other hand, these portraits show how individuals incorporated humanitarian visibility and memorabilia into their photographs to craft studio-like portraits that exposed prestige, pride, and positive narratives of self. Even where hardship and suffering are normative living conditions, the camera opened space for communication, creativity, and performance as residents dragged norms and values of humanitarian and local photography across the porous borders of each visual field.

HUMANITARIANS IN DISNEYLAND: SILENCING INTENTION

Mugunga III shows the playful, imaginative, and ultimately creolized means of collaboratively creating a photograph, regardless of whether one intended to show suffering or success. In this chapter, to explore the dialectic knowledge produced in the photographic encounter, I have paid attention to the nuanced performance that these images take on. However, as I mentioned at the beginning of the chapter I was certainly not the only photographer roving through this humanitarian Disneyland. Despite similar experiences in photographic creation, many of these photographers chose to craft their photographs as “found” and allow them to better service the evidentiary needs of the humanitarian image. Moreover, by attaching captions that describe the action and ignore the pose, they re-shaped the undoubtedly creative, imaginative spaces to efface the presence of the photographer and the for-camera performance. The example of Mama Z. shows the crafting of this “myth” in striking visual form.

In late May, five months after I began frequenting Mugunga III, I stopped to chat with Mama Z. Mama Z was a tailor whose machine and make-shift shop sat next to the main market

thoroughfare in the camp. Every time I walked by she'd greet me, "Hey Mzungu!" She'd cackle, and then, "*Nipicha leo!*" (take my picture today). For a couple of months, I had focused on Blocs 1, 2, 14, 15, 16 and 18. As I passed by, I'd answer, "*Badaaye, mama, badaaye*" (Soon, Mama, soon). Finally on May 26th, I started photographic work in the camp's market and made Mama Z. my first stop. While she sat behind her old sewing machine waiting for a sewing job to arrive, she explained her flight.

Z: I ran in 2006. I'm from Masisi Territory. At that point, we were fleeing the CNDP. I ran and ended up at Bulengo camp with my sister. But there they were missing food and support for us. In 2010, I moved to Mugunga III after they had closed Bulengo camp. I came here too because I heard that they had aid for the handicapped. Life is hard here – that's all. We're missing food – this is the fourth month where WFP has not provided food rations, and with my legs not working, I am not able to go to the forest to farm and collect charcoal. So things are hard.

A: Have you been photographed before?

Z: I was photographed by a NGO a while ago. I don't remember which one though.

A: What did you want to show in those photos?

Z: I wanted to show the problems that I have. Today I would want to show the big problem with food that we have here. No one is giving us food. I want to be able to buy even sugar, as I'm still unable to bring in my own food and charcoal from the forest.

Mama Z's description echoed the sentiments of most people that I spoke to in the camp. She peppered her story with opportunities for aid to swoop in and help. However, for the photo she desired, Mama Z explained that she wanted her photograph with her machine – right where she sat just as she does every day. She wanted to show that she worked and that the machine was hers. I took an initial photo as she laid her hand on top of the machine, claiming it through *mise-en-scène* (even though there was no work – no cloth to sew that day). She looked squarely into the camera. I backed up enough to provide my desired compositional context, turned the camera horizontal and set her one-third into the viewfinder, leaning down to equalize the level of my camera as best I could with Mama Z (Figure 135). The following week I returned her photographs and she grinned as a crowd blossomed and children and adults alike snatched her

photographs from each other while she smiled and waited for the chaos to settle. “*Asante mzungu yangu*” (thanks my white person) she grinned.



[Figure 134 Mama Z.]

Nearly a year later, I was preparing a presentation concerning these co-created portraits when I came across another image of Mama Z. This time, she was called by her full name: Zelda. The 2013 photograph was for the Australian wing of the UNHCR, and came in a set of images intended to share “The Suffering and Strength of Displaced Congolese Women.” Set next to three “donate” buttons, were fourteen photographs taken by Frédéric Noy for the UNHCR.³⁹ The page contextualizes her image with the following text:

During the ceaseless cycle of violence in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, it is the vulnerable that suffer the most, especially women and children. The issue of widespread sexual and gender-based violence is a major concern for

³⁹ I was unable to talk to anyone at UNHCR Australia who could provide permission to use Noy’s photograph in this dissertation. Please find a copy of the image at: <http://www.unrefugees.org.au/our-stories/photo-gallery/the-suffering-and-strength-of-displaced-congolese-women>

UNHCR, but it never goes away. The refugee agency has received dozens of reports of rape and assault of women during the latest wave of fighting between government forces and rebel troops as well as militia groups in North and South Kivu provinces. It is an area where rape is used as a weapon of war. The following images were taken recently in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda by Frédéric Noy. They depict Congolese women who have fled their homes, leaving almost everything behind, and sought shelter in a place they hope will be better than where they came from. In many ways, they have become inured to hardship, but so many of them continue to retain hope for themselves and their children. And that is an inspiration to those who help them.” (Noy / UNHCR 2013)

Noy is a talented photographer. Nevertheless, the difference between his photo and that which I created of Zelda warrants a brief exploration. Mama Z’s photograph stands out of the set. It is dramatic, framed by the usual heavy gray sky of the rainy season and the dark, nearly-black earth and rocks of the volcanic ground. In the UNHCR photograph, one can see Mama Z., her house, and a little bit of the context of the camp surrounding her. She is dressed in various patterns of bright *kikwembe* and a vibrant green head wrap, positioned just outside of her tarpaulin home; the cloth door to her house is tied so that one can see into the shadowy inside. Unlike the other photograph where she sits proudly at her machine, however, here she is positioned like an animal, kneeling on all fours with her hands in her bright pink plastic flip-flops to protect her hands from the sharp lava rock. From her position on the ground, she looks up slightly into the camera lens. To me, this image focused on hardship is a performative and purposeful photograph. It appears minimally different from the process that Marsiane performed when she wanted to show suffering for the camera and stripped away her headscarf and placed her hands on her cheeks. I can imagine translators saying, as in the case in Beni, “We want to show how things are hard here so that we can help bring in additional funding,” or a similar derivation. Noy is right in assuming that this picture shows Mama Z’s strength, though perhaps not how he expected. I’d argue that her strength arises less due to the obviously challenging landscape in which she suffers with a handicap. Rather, her strength is visible in her malleable ability to intentionally engage the humanitarian camera and thereby the humanitarian enterprise. In my photograph she performed

pride, happily claiming her machine; for Noy and UNHCR, she engaged a position of suffering and hardship – positioned on all fours. For reference, in the eastern DRC for individuals to touch, sit, or crawl on the ground was considered taboo - an extreme sign of deprivation. Such an action was linked to the description, “living like dogs.” In the eight months in Mugunga, I never encounter a handicapped individual crawling in the camp. While indeed this may happen, most residents who do not have use of their legs receive help from their family, or have been provided *kingas* (hand crank bikes) through one aid agency or another. The owners of these bikes (like Timoté in Figure 131) were often exceedingly proud of their mobility and possession, commonly requesting photographs featuring the machine. In Noy’s image, Mama Z.’s *kinga* that allows her to maneuver the camp’s rocky ground without having to crawl is hidden, is just barely visible in the shadows inside her home.

Nonetheless, while representing suffering, there is much in this photograph that draws on the performative and intentional aspects of local photography. Yet, despite her gaze, the pose, *mise-en-scène*, and likely, very interactive co-creation of Mama Z.’s UNHCR portrait, the caption ignores these efforts. Noy writes, “Zelda, aged 59, is a woman of immense resilience. She has been living with disability but still makes her way around Mugunga III in a wheelchair. She lives in the camp with her nieces and longs to go home to Rutshuru territory in North Kivu” (2013, 1). Highlighting her strength and suffering, his words nonetheless efface the image’s construction.⁴⁰ On her hands and knees – her hardship looks “found.” Noy’s desire to make the photograph into a form of witnessing overwrites Mama Z.’s voice and intention in crafting the image. It flattens and silences the very voice humanitarian photography is intended to “lift.”

⁴⁰ Moreover, some of his information – her age and location from which she fled - directly contradict my own. This is possibly due to confusion during UNHCR translation or simple conflation with others’ information after certainly interviewing and photographing a number of individuals in the camp.



[Figure 135 Justin and David in Mugunga III]

CONCLUSION

This chapter focused on Mugunga III IDP camp, displacement, and the politics of being a “beneficiary” in the eastern DRC. Situated within the overlapping space of the humanitarian and local visual fields, I showed how camp residents craft distinctive visual narratives in response to their understanding of the role of the photographer and the photograph. Having experienced 20 years of dense aid, residents of North Kivu have learned the power of the camera and the command of particular visual tropes. In front of a presumed humanitarian lens, the interactions and negotiated representations challenge the notion of passive suffering in aid photographs as camp residents craft visual statements of hardship and need. Conversely in front of a presumed local lens, they model depictions of pride, family, and prestige.

Using co-creative portraits, I opened space to examine the ways in which photographic subjects and photographers interact and bring beliefs, hopes, frustrations, and anticipations into

the photographic encounter. The process and the resulting images enabled me to not only see, but also to gain “fine grained” embodied knowledge of how photographs are engaged in local understandings of the region's social dynamics and the power and potential embodied within aid space. Particularly, by focusing on the production of photographs within the bounded mega project site of Mugunga III, I explored the meaning and power of the idea of being a “beneficiary.” This label – and the assumptions that it locally carries - has conditioned not only the discursive bids for access to aid space and benefit, but also the participatory performances before humanitarian cameras. Through the lens performance takes on heightened value and carries increased expectation due to the particular ability of the camera to visually communicate across the region’s local and humanitarian zones and give voice to strategies for survival and success.

Through subtle shifts and outright outbursts local Congolese photographic subjects bring their expectations of image making to spaces of aid. In so doing, they shape creolized photographs. On one hand, they draw aid paraphernalia into the *picha mzuri* and apply humanitarian objects and visibility to mark their prestige and status. On the other, Congolese photographic subjects enact local forms of pose, *mise-en-scène*, and norms of imaginative image making within the space opened by the humanitarian camera. The images that result are neither purely “local” nor fully “humanitarian,” but a meaningful *mélange* of the two fields operationalized to best suit the photographic subject. Such creolization provides yet another challenge to the notion that aid images are found and can bear witness. Moreover, in bounded humanitarian space like Mugunga III, these creolized visual productions show that despite unequal power dynamics, the populations with the least control are nonetheless not passive and powerless. Rather they have shown circumscribed agency through which they employ their anticipated position within the existing political system as a means to demand benefit and to gain influence through depictions of their disempowerment.

In the following chapter, I further explore the overlapping local and humanitarian visual fields of the photographic landscape. However, instead of focusing on sites of enormous humanitarian engagement, I explore the way in which visual creolization and expectation occur outside of places where being a beneficiary is an immediately useful identity. In so doing, I probe the politics of humanitarian photography in relation to both the pocketed nature of aid interventions and its dominant hierarchy.

CHAPTER SIX

BREAKING PROMISES AND UNDERMINING EXPECTATION: THE STRUGGLES OF THE NEGATIVE HUMANITARIAN IMAGINARY

“In Congo there has been rampant pauperization and humanitarianism has practically become the state,” argued Fidel, a local activist. He and I sat in his cramped third story balcony in a residential neighborhood on the outskirts of Goma in the company of a history teacher and an up-and-coming journalist. As everyone dug into plates of rice and beans and large bottles of Primus beer, the afternoon conversation flowed easily – that was Fidel’s goal. He was quite the provocateur, and humanitarian aid was an easy topic with which to rile everyone up. In response to Fidel’s aid-as-state comment, the journalist jumped in eager to impress. “Just look at the hundreds of signs around town, they (the NGOs) run everything, and they mark their claim to each project, ‘XYZ project funded by so and so NGO’” He sneered, “I could throw stones at the NGOs.” Fidel did not outright disagree, but he tempered the outburst by drawing the young man back to the issue of, what he called “pauperization” - the act of rendering one poor. He argued, “Look, right across the border in Rwanda the state controls what NGOs can and cannot do. Not in Congo, though – yes, humanitarian aid fuels the wars, legitimizes the rebel groups, and creates dependency. They provide a few jobs, but there is still nearly 94% unemployment in Goma. But and for many Congolese, *je suis car je suis servi* (I am / I exist because I am served).” This last point highlighted a palpable desire within the region: to be “served.” The connection between “existing” and “being served” was contingent upon one’s position within the hierarchical global power dynamics.

Being a beneficiary, or making claims for one's right or need to be served, enabled many Congolese to make themselves legible to the powers that be and thereby make rights-based claims to access. In many discussions of making populations or individuals visible, the state is seen as the actor who determines what "legible" means and employs their schemes for making people legible as a way to chart them and therefore control them. For instance, in his discussion of the use of cadastral maps to make rural and distant village areas knowable, and thereby controllable through the state, Scott writes that the maps brought "into focus certain limited aspects of an otherwise far more complex and unwieldy reality.... The center of the field of vision [was] more legible and hence more susceptible to careful measurement and calculation... [Thereby] an overall aggregate, synoptic view of a selective reality is achieved, making possible a high degree of schematic knowledge, control, and manipulation" (Scott 1998, 11). Maps, identity cards, and city planning endeavors worked to make the uncontrollable populations known, classified, and therefore controllable. The legibility serves the state and undermines the unwieldy aspects of "urbanisation sauvage" (Büscher and Vlassenroot 2010) and the once literally out-of-sight peripheral areas of a country. However, as the previous chapter showed, and as I will further explore here, legibility to not the dysfunctional state, but rather the humanitarian agencies and industry flowed from the bottom up, as well as from the top down. Photography became a critical, powerful means through which to become visible, to be counted, and perhaps to be served.

In the previous chapter, I addressed the mega project site of Mugunga III. In front of an assumed humanitarian camera, men, women, and children activated personal interpretations of the traditionally negative humanitarian visual tropes. These performances of suffering and hardship on one hand became a space for subjects to demand to be seen and acknowledged. On the other, they shaped bids for increasing inclusion within the nested humanitarian aid of the camp. Depictions of suffering and hardship joined other displacement survival strategies as camp residents *se sont débrouillé*. Through their actualization of creative bricolage, they strove to gain access to the enormous potential and opportunity poised within the region's fluid frontier zone.

This chapter steps outside of bordered aid space to further explore the overlapping local and humanitarian visual fields and the tensions produced therein. In the following pages, I explore the region more broadly and attend to the spaces where aid once was, the places where it has never been, and the bureaucratic places that determine what aid in Congo comes to look like. As I engage these spaces and the perspectives and performances engendered therein, I pay attention to the expectations and multiple forms and sites of agency that influence the humanitarian image and the power it contains. To do so, I directly address the humanitarian photograph as a contact zone - a place of grappling, navigation, and communication across the region's social zones. To adequately address the tensions and expectations embodied within the aid photograph, I have written this chapter from two distinct perspectives. In the first half, I explore the humanitarian image through the eyes and desires of the local Congolese population. By engaging a collective local belief in the correlation between "negative" representational content and effective humanitarian images, I probe the depths of what I call a "negative humanitarian imaginary." In so doing, I plumb the social and financial expectations this imaginary engenders. In the second half of the chapter, I return to look at humanitarian photographs through the eyes of the humanitarian communications managers and their agencies' policies. In that section, I examine the agency of the photograph-as-object and the implications crafted of the discord between humanitarian practice, local expectation, and aid policies.

PART 1: AID PHOTOS THROUGH LOCAL EYES

Across the scape of Goma *et environs*, Congolese actors carry the expectation that humanitarian photographs both should and do articulate "doom and gloom" tropes. "Aid photography always aims at the same *cible* (target)... misery, refugees, massacres and raped women," explained Bakenga, a human resources manager at a Goma university. He was certainly not alone in his perspective. In a biweekly English language class that I helped the university run, professors,

masters students, and unemployed graduates at Goma's *Université Libre de Pays des Grands Lacs* (ULPGL) argued that they too believed aid photographs often showed hardship and suffering. One by one they noted that humanitarian images are composed of distinctive pessimistic tropes. Patience, a master's student in pedagogy, insisted that humanitarian photographs "are so sad photos." Tacking onto his succinct description, David argued that humanitarian pictures show "that people can't stay here; there is no peace. Even if there is no problem, they (aid workers) can look for the negative photographs and take those." As the conversation rolled on, Raoul argued that humanitarian photographers know "it is not good to take a photograph with people smiling in it" as it would confuse the viewer into thinking things were OK and did not need donations.

While each possessed their individual opinion and level of chagrin with the humanitarian photograph and broader industry, their collective perspective that humanitarian photographs were composed of predominantly negative content was shared across the city and wider province. Street children, market vendors, sports coaches, professors, dancers, *motards*, restaurant workers, studio photographers, and even some local NGO photographers echoed and embellished this collective understanding of aid imagery. An inventory of the descriptions of aid agency photographic content included (in no specific order): massacres, misery, raped women, hunger, workshops (trainings), victimized people, misery, dirty children, war, poverty, sad images, material distributions, violence, white people helping, burned houses, refugees, and dead bodies.

A NEGATIVE HUMANITARIAN IMAGINARY

Whether only imagined or actually created, these negative humanitarian images draw on both the long history of atrocity photographs in the DRC and of aid in Africa in general. Shaped by such wide-ranging histories and personal, specific experiences of photography within Goma *et environs* since 1994, this set of beliefs and perspectives is not benign; It is not merely a

contemplation of what a humanitarian photograph might be. Rather, this collective Congolese view that humanitarian images should represent “negative” content composes the foundation of a Congolese imaginary of negative humanitarian photography. For the sake of succinctness, from here on out I refer to this imaginary simply as the “negative humanitarian imaginary.”⁴¹

Such a concept draws directly from Appadurai’s (1996) definition of an imaginary. He contends that imaginaries do not only remain in one’s head as fantasy but rather shape representation and interaction across the global power structure while opening sites of agency. He writes:

The image, the imagined, the imaginary – these are all terms that direct us to something critical and new in global cultural processes: the imagination as a social practice. No longer mere fantasy (opium for the masses whose real work is somewhere else), no longer simple escape (from a world defined principally by more concrete purposes and structures), no longer elite pastime (thus not relevant to the lives of ordinary people), and no longer mere contemplation (irrelevant for new forms of desire and subjectivity), the imagination has become an organized field of social practices, a form of work (in the sense of both labor and culturally organized practice), and a form of negotiation between sites of agency (individuals) and globally defined fields of possibility. This unleashing of the imagination links the play of pastiche (in some settings) to the terror and coercion of states and their competitors. The imagination is now central to all forms of agency, is itself a social fact, and is the key component of the new global order. (ibid., 31)

Appadurai’s notion of imagination is premised upon personal subjectivity, global pressures and flows, as well as experiential and embodied knowledge. Concerning the Congolese imaginary of the humanitarian photograph, this notion speaks to the content of the image and the interaction that occurs across globally defined fields in the space of photographic creation. However, this

⁴¹ Indeed in the eastern DRC, there are many humanitarian imaginaries of their photography. Aid agencies have their imaginaries of the photography they create; their photographers have a slightly different version. Politicians, journalists, researchers all may draw their understanding of humanitarian photography and therefore their engagement with it through various “imaginary” based lenses. However, I have chosen to focus on the locally-based imaginary of humanitarian photography because by exploring its dynamics I can deeply engage the frictions situated at the overlapping areas of the photographic landscape set within and contributing to the region's socio-cultural dynamics and broader scape.

particular imaginary shapes more than just sites of agency. Additionally, it is recursively formed and reified by the collective and personal expectations implicit within the negative humanitarian photograph – expectations that inspire image content premised upon the action or response it is intended to motivate.

In the discussion with ULPGL members and affiliates above, Patience returned to say, “the photographs must show that they [the subjects] do not have *financement*.” This term, which translates to “funding” does not necessarily mean that they do not have money, but rather that the photographic subject has not been - or is not showing – funding from an NGO or agency.

Patience’s observation articulates a financial logic that underlies the expectation of this negative humanitarian imaginary. Within this particular imaginary, to show that one has *financement* was to foreclose the opportunity for further assistance. This, of course, is not an entirely new topic. As I established in Chapter 3, aid agencies rely upon positive humanitarian photographs as prime means to perpetuate existing funding and garner further donations. While I will address those positive photographs again in the second section of this chapter, here I focus on the local expectation carried by the belief in the negative humanitarian imaginary.

In Mugunga III IDP camp, for instance, photographic subjects made clear connections between negative image content and both humanitarian access and financial support. Camp residents regularly noted things like: “Humanitarians take photographs, and they show them to their people to get more money for here.” “When people see them [the photos] they will see we are hungry and send food.” “After photos there is money for aid projects, and we benefit.” Or most succinctly and frequently quipped, “The photos bring help.” Such expectations that the photographs will do this financial or aid-providing work arose time and again in conversations and the negative representations performed in front of the camera. Similarly, Sanna Nissinen found that in Bangladesh, “many subjects participated in filming in the hope that some form of assistance or benefit would result [...] their participation was based on evaluations of risks and

gains” (2015, 317). Photographic subjects weighed the likelihood of gaining benefit as they connected their desired (negative) depiction to their expectations of eventually being served.

From within a space beset by nested levels of aid and always-present potential of further assistance, it was not surprising that part of the power of photography in Mugunga III came through its imagined potential to draw access, funding, and further aid. As individuals posed, touching their body so as to indicate suffering, or choosing to backdrop themselves in front of a bedraggled home, they engaged step one of a photographic logic. This logic transformed photographs into a communicative vehicle through which to bring help and to eventually “be served.” The above statements about the work that the negative humanitarian photograph does follow a contingent set of reasoning:

- 1) The photograph shows suffering or hardship.
- 2) The aid agency sees this photograph and can understand the need shown.
- 3) Either the aid agency provides support or funding for further projects.
Or they show the photograph to “their people” - donors and to the world.
- 4) Donors provide funding for programs and aid.
- 5) Aid agencies support the individuals and address problems featured.

This loosely defined series of photographic movements and effects speaks to the aid image as situated at, and moving through the interface of humanitarian and local Congolese social zones. As the humanitarian and local visual fields overlap – as occurs during the creation and movement of humanitarian photographs - the image becomes a contact zone where, “cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power” (Pratt 1991, 584). Subtle clashes and grappling in front of the camera frequently occur as photographic subjects and photographers conflictively grasp to influence and control the content of the image and its immediately visible narrative. Congolese desires to produce negative images rub uncomfortably against humanitarian photographs’ positive-themed content. As Congolese subject and humanitarian photographers navigate the photographic act, they are respectively not only

working to control the depiction but also to shape the potential work that the image will later do – the work that they expect it will do.

EXPECTATION, AGENCY, COMMUNICATION

A central tenet of this imaginary is that the negative humanitarian photograph – its content and the connoted narrative – can communicate across the borders that separate aid from the rest and the eastern DRC from the wider world of donors and viewers. Insight from Sarah, a Congolese communications manager who worked for a large international humanitarian organization further engaged this communicative expectation of the negative humanitarian imaginary.

The other day I was in the camp, and I saw a *maman* with her child who was missing their fingers (due likely to a developmental birth defect). She had placed her child in a place of high traffic where our photographers could take pictures. No one thought of the future of the child. I explained to the *maman* that it's not good to do that – to expose your child like that. She picked up her child and left. This is not so rare. People will often want to show you such things – like that they sleep on the ground. They will try to get you to, “come see how poorly I am living.” They say, “Film that! Show how we are treated, show how we are tired.” Then they ask, “What are you going to do to help us? What will your organization do to change this?” (Interview Nov. 7, 2013)

I have spent much of this dissertation addressing photography through its encounters, intentions, and the actions of multiple, often dialectically positioned individuals like Sarah and the mother above. However, the negative humanitarian imaginary here opens space to explore a further complexity: expectation. To do so, I engage the power of the photograph as a physical object that communicates the question of “what will you /your organization do to help us” across intra and international borders, while those who created the image expect a response. The assumption of an audience is central to this imaginary. The audience provides for the expectation that the photograph will “do something”; it assumes a set of people for the image to affect. Ariella Azoulay highlights the role of the assumed audience, noting that the act of photographic creation is “a very complex fabric of relations. Within its weave, the photographed subject’s act of

addressing the spectator bears decisive weight” (2008, 18). In the eastern DRC, that weight hangs on one hand, in photography’s ability to provide an occasion to not only make contact and attempt to communicate a case, idea, or perspective during the act of photography. On the other, it also resides in the image's ability to leave a tangible representation of that moment and one’s need in the hands (or on the computer screens) of aid agency employees, decision makers, and donors. And once there, the photograph’s expected power lies in its ability to affect and catalyze change that will address the featured problem.

The multiple locations of verbal and embodied communication (in the space of photographic creation and of the communication from the object to an audience), necessitates an investigation of “expectation” as something more than just a hope that remains in one’s head. Rather I understand the expectation implicit within the negative humanitarian imaginary as built of multiple, separate sites of agency tied together through the visual traces that remain of the initial encounter - the act of photographic creation. First, there is the agency that occurs at the site of the photographic act. Agency in photographic creation functions more or less akin to Giddens’ definition of agency where he connects agency and power. Agency is not intention to act. Rather it is the ability of an individual to act. Agency exists until one is limited to a singular option - when the individual can no longer make a personal difference. Due to a lack of choices, they cease to have the power or agency to act (Giddens 1984). For photographic subjects positioning themselves to show suffering or hardship for the camera, or for the bystander who encourages subjects to affect certain negative performances, agency is clearly present within their actions, as it both stems from the broader social and political structures, while also being entangled in shifting and reifying them through such agency. However, while these initial photographic measures reflect the expectation underpinning the negative humanitarian imaginary, they are not enough to see it through.

Expectation requires a second site of communication and agency. This latter site is located at the point of photographic consumption – in other words, when the viewer (be it the

humanitarian communication manager or a donor) gazes upon the photograph – the material content of which was shaped by the original dialectic agencies of the photographic subject and photographer. This point of object-human interaction has been conceptualized in a number of ways. Igor Kopytoff (1986) crafted a notion of the social biography of objects that insisted that an object's meaning, and how it is understood, is contingent on the many ways through which it is engaged or consumed across space and time. Chris Pinney (1997) similarly applied this notion to photographs in India, seeing the different patterns of consumption and meaning as shaping the social life and various permutations, locations, and uses of the photograph. Elizabeth Edwards has gone on to argue that the meaning of the object is a “double helix of the simultaneous existence of objects that are both singular and multiple” (2012, 222) across space and time and is importantly shaped by its “placement” within text, archives, conversations, or museums.

While the social space in which the photograph is placed has the ability to mold its meaning, the photograph also possesses its own “novel form of agency” (Thomas et al 2009, 81). Instead of seeing the photographic object as solely shaped by and reflecting social realities and histories, theorists also conceptualize the photograph as having forms of agency to impact those realities. For instance, Robert Layton and Alfred Gell see the art object as shaping the meaning and politics of social life. Gell built upon Layton's arguments in the *Anthropology of Art* (1991). He sees art objects as especially poised to “advance[d] social relationships constructed through agency” (argued in Layton 2010, 4). Based on Gell's (1998) assessment, art is not a “self-sufficient agent” but rather a “secondary agent” that has effect only through its ability to initiate causal sequences and shape social and cultural relationships. He goes on to argue that the art object has power through its capacity to impress upon the mental state of its audience. Layton (2010) clarifies this further by explaining plainly that a painting does nothing if buried in the ground; it requires a viewership to be able to act (2010). While Gell focuses predominantly on hand-made art objects such as paintings, similar arguments about agency have been applied to photographs. J.L. Hevia argues that photographs have their own agency, “in which sets of

photographic relations and the complex purposes and practices that entangle the photographic image have the capacity to mobilize new realities” (Hevia 2009, 81 cited in Edwards 2012, 223). In the case of the negative humanitarian photograph then, the agency of the photograph-as-object arises in its ability to, like atrocity photographs, motivate compassion and financial and humanitarian action as it is viewed.

To recap: The photograph embodies the agency of the photographer and subject who initially shaped its content and narrative during production. The photograph-as-object then carries its own secondary agency - the ability to impact situations and people through its viewing. The meaning of the image object responds both to its social placement and its power to touch its viewers. However, these two sites of agency are not mutually exclusive. Rather, they are tied together through the expectations that shaped that first photographic encounter. The representational content of the photograph links these distinctive sites of the interpersonal and object-based agency. In its content traces of the original intention, agency, and dialectic interaction linger and contribute to shaping the viewer reactions. The expectation that inspires and reifies this negative humanitarian imaginary is therefore premised upon a tenuous chain of participants, agency, and events. The photographer: subject interaction is as vital to this expectation as the object: audience interaction. And thus, the initial photographic encounter between subject and photographer is shaped in part by the future whole of this anticipated set of communication and action. In the negative humanitarian imaginary, photographic subjects and bystanders expect that negative image content will fuel financial or humanitarian contribution. Such expectation is premised upon both their agency in shaping the negative image content and the belief that such representational content (traces) will favorably impact its viewers and lead to a set of actions that come full circle and solve the initially pictured problem.

CO-OPTING DEVELOPMENT DISCOURSE LOGIC

This expectation that the humanitarian image will both describe and prescribe parallels the role that development discourses plays within development projects. The anthropology of development has expended significant energy exploring the power of discourse concerning how specific words shape intervention. Beginning in the late 1980s, academics began to focus on the role of labels in shaping – and being shaped by – hegemonic power structures (Escobar 1984; Ferguson 1990, Malkki 1995, Escobar 1995; Pandolfi 2003; Li 2007). Importantly, these development discourse theorists examined the way in which NGO or development’s deployment of categories such as “under-developed,” “peasant economy,” “illiterate,” “refugee” molded and homogenized the description of the “problem.” By shaping the discursive lens through which Western actors encountered the local context, they also prescribed a “logical” solution. Escobar makes the connection plain: “Once a problem was incorporated into the discourse it had to be categorized and further specialized. Refined specifications did not seek so much to illuminate possible solutions as to give problems a visible reality amenable to particular treatments” (Escobar 1995, 384). As such, discourse reflected not only a simplification – which was often inaccurate to boot - but also the agency’s ready-made, tool-at-hand response (Ferguson 1990). Such labels foreclosed and silenced more sophisticated, culturally-aware alternative explanations, potential engagements, and knowledge while directing specific, often technical solutions to the featured problem.

Such discursive labels also take visual shape. Stacey Pigg (1993) for instance, explored a related situation in Nepal where she showed that drawings contained the similar power to discourse. The region’s NGOs employed regularized sketches of “village” and “villager” in such a way that their version of both beneficiary and place-of-development became visually recognizable. This shaped the way in which Nepalese citizens understood their now polarized rural and urban populations, and moreover, how they viewed their nation concerning its position within global politics. She explains, “For Nepal, development – rather than the residues and scars of imperialism – is the overt link between it and the west... Nepal now identifies itself as an

underdeveloped country in relation to the developed world” (1993, 497). The drawings reified the NGO-stated goal of modernization by identifying what “unmodernized” looked like: the village, and what a beneficiary looks like: a peasant-dressed villager.

Nonetheless, neither discourse nor drawings are totalitarian determinants of practice. Individuals both within and outside aid agencies shape how such discourses and visuals are embodied and employed. Often, as has been amply explored, this top-down discourse is co-opted (Pigg 1993; Bornstein 2003; Baaz 2005, Mosse 2005). “Buzzwords” (Cornwall and Brock 2005; Cornwall 2007; Jad 2007) are repurposed, localized, and fed back to aid agencies. For instance, based on research of South African NGOs Lisa Bornstein explains, “Directors stated that they packaged their projects and wrote their logframes in ways that matched donor funding priorities; as a director told us, ‘if you want funding... include sustainable livelihoods’” (2003, 398). The appropriation of the power-laden terms allowed beneficiaries, local partner agencies, and a random myriad of others to speak the aid language and thereby gain legibility. Moreover, this legibility provides them the potential to gain funding or access to programs.

Humanitarian photography functions similarly to development drawings and discourse. As photographs’ content describes a situation, the representations prescribe the need to do something about a clearly defined problem. Photographs make “visual statements,” which “Despite the singularity of each and every statement and the incontestable particularity of the historical, political and cultural circumstances from which it is manufactured, each has global characteristics that derive from the means of its production, distribution and the systems of exchange in which it circulates” (Azoulay 2008, 204). In other words, despite the specificity and context that shaped the original photograph, it can be expected to nonetheless communicate with any audience and catalyze reactions across borders. Humanitarians regularly employ their photographs for exactly this purpose. And in the space of Goma *et environs*, where humanitarian aid has existed in an astonishing density for more than two decades and creative bricolage and flexible identities have long turned into survival strategies, it is no surprise the Congolese have

learned to capitalize on the humanitarian camera as a space of not only communication but of specific opportunity.

THE HUMANITARIAN IMAGINARY, ALIVE AND WELL OUTSIDE OF AID SPACES

Within spaces like Mugunga III, which are laden with aid, there exists an understanding of the power of the negative humanitarian photograph to communicate and catalyze action. The previous chapter showed how the visual versions of *mythico-histories* enunciated issues of suffering and vulnerability for a humanitarian camera. However, the expectation bound up within the negative humanitarian imaginary is not limited to the space of the camp. In contrast to Liisa Malkki's findings in Burundi, where the refugee camp's edge mapped a finite border around a particular narrative of refugee plight, my research exposes how such narratives, visual and otherwise, in fact, are activated both inside and outside aid spaces.⁴²

Early in my research, I was drawn into a set of interactions that in retrospect, exemplified the politics of expectation found within this humanitarian imaginary. In the ebb of the M23 conflict in late September 2013, I travelled to Kanyaruchinya – a town just northwest of Goma and 6km from the conflict's frontline - to photograph the return of the town's once-displaced residents. This early assignment became part of my direct photography method, where I worked with humanitarian agencies to try my hand at successfully creating their version of "good images." Unlike shadowing photography, direct photography situated me as the sole photographer for an event. There, I had to rely on my knowledge of the visual field to produce images that would successfully satisfy their needs. Also as the assigned photographer, I gained the experiential knowledge that came from working both with the agency employees and the

⁴² Kratz (1997) provides a succinct critique of the limits of the shortcomings of Malkki's research. Kratz argues that Malkki's research techniques (not talking to women, a lack of comprehensive language skills) limited her understanding of more complex or multiple narratives both within the camp and town.

photographic subjects. The oversights, negotiations, and subtle performances all contributed to my understanding of the situation, social dynamics, and regional politics. Moreover, like other humanitarian photographers I had to develop a means of personally navigating the project site and creating images that would appear found while simultaneously evidencing the positive nature of the work and the well-used donor money.

In this case, Benoît was out of town on R&R, and the UNDP needed someone to fill in as a photographer to cover one of their projects just outside of Goma along the slopes of the volcano. Their mission was relatively clear: I was asked to photograph the agency's activity - a set of informational skits on human rights abuse prevention performed by a local comedy group. I was told that the event used their good-governance project to address the prevention of sexual violence. Importantly, they added, this project was possible only through their close collaboration with the army, local police force, and the region's "big man" – the Nyiragongo customary chief. In fact, D. the coordinator enthusiastically reiterated that the traditional chief, the FARDC press secretary Amouli, and the police chief would all be in attendance. However, behind the project and VIP attendees existed a tense situation that the UNDP nonetheless seemed less keen on photographing: the challenge of a population returning to their land after nearly a year of displacement in both the camps and the city.

"We'd like you to go to Kanyaruchinya, but only if you would like to," D. a UNDP coordinator had told me the day before, "but you'll have to find a way up there. I have kids and don't do any assignments near the front line." It was a Sunday, and like most of her colleagues, she was not intent on covering the event. The comedy troop was to arrive independently in the afternoon, and with no official UNDP support staff traveling that day, I chose to hop a ride to Kanyaruchinya with the police chief. Along the way, he punctuated his crooning to Lingala love songs with a background of the current conflict situation. We drove past decommissioned tanks and the Munigi FARDC station where soldiers smoked and played checkers with their friends, temporarily safe behind the front line. Despite the on-going conflict just over the hills, since the

FARDC had secured the territory around Kanyaruchinya, nearly a third of the residents had come back.

Unlike many of the sites of displacement from whence many residents had returned, Kanyaruchinya was not official aid space. Unlike Mugunga III, which hosted a range of regular humanitarian actors, Kanyaruchinya at that time was a proverbial aid desert that rubbed shoulders with an active conflict. No semi-permanent borders traced lines across the town to delineate the social dynamics of access to humanitarian goods and services. Rather, the town was aid-less until the skit arrived in the afternoon and string was unraveled to cordon off a large 50-meter circle in the town's schoolyard. A number of residents, however, pointed to the faded white placards that delineated had-been aid spaces. They resolutely argued that aid needed to return. Mercy Corps, UNICEF, and others had once supported the town, however as residents explained, since the M23's affront on Goma in 2012 their town had become an active conflict zone and its citizens had fled to the camps and city. Humanitarian aid had followed on the heels of their exit but not on their return.

Once we arrived, I was on my own until the comedy troop showed up and I was to begin my direct photography (which I'll discuss more below) four hours later. With my camera on my hip, I wandered the thinly populated street-side market consisting of a range of old and young women selling oil, flour, and tomatoes. Geraldine, a 60-year-old recent returnee, approached me. She asked what I was doing and when I explained my dual research - photographer role and that I was waiting for the skit to start so I could photograph for UNDP, she lit up and gained determination. "Come see these things," she said, "Come see how it is here now that we are returning." Taking me briefly by the hand, she walked me away from the market and into the huddled rows of houses that composed the northern side of the town. Along the way she paused and pointed, indicating for me to photograph particular things. "See that?" she said, pointing to a pile of crumbled rusted sheets of roofing metal (Figures 137 and 138). "That was a house before the bombing. That one too. Now we have to rebuild, but what do we have?" I photographed

obediently, curious of the intention that I was experiencing. This was not the direct photography that I had expected; correspondingly, I would find out later that this was not the set of images that the UNDP would use. As we wove towards her house, Geraldine pointed out the small makeshift home that looked like a transplant from of the poorer areas of Mugunga III (Figure 139). Her neighbor, whose home had been destroyed in the attacks, had come home to nothing. He temporarily reconstructed his IDP home while he worked to rebuild the region's standard wood and corrugated iron structure. Inside her own small house Geraldine, in an early rendition of co-creative portraits, requested an image of herself next to what she pointed out were shoddy walls, hastily rebuilt, where the cold and the rain came in (Figure 136).



[Figure 136]



[Figure 137 (above); Figure 138 (below)]





[Figure 139 (above); Figure 140 (below)]





[Figure 141 (above); Figure 142 (below)]



Later, when I entered the schoolyard the school's principal Aimable hunted me down and demanded that I follow him. As we walked through the school's various classrooms, he explained that many of his students had returned and that the school was functioning despite its recent impact by bombs, shrapnel, and the general looting that had removed the majority of the furniture. However, he pointed my camera regularly to the destruction. He escorted me around, pointing out the blown-out back wall of a classroom (Figures 140 and 141), the shrapnel holes in the roofing, and the destroyed cistern (Figure 142). "Aid used to be here," he noted, pointing to a white fading placard outside the schoolyard, "We need them [the agencies] to come back." Despite gains – a returning market and functioning school (albeit with difficulty), he, like Geraldine, used my camera to make clear statements about the challenges and hardships they faced. Like the residents of Mugunga III at the beginning of my research there, the population of the non-aid space of Kanyaruchinya imagined further opportunities and the possibility of aid by directing my camera's lens to view the negative.

This act and the expectation it initiated are akin to the notion of a photographic contract. Azoulay, speaking of photographic events that documented abuses within Palestine, describes a similar intention on the part of the photographic subject as they make these claims. She argues:

This (civil) contract of photography binds together photographers, photographed persons, and spectators. Each of them fulfills her role – persons are being taken in photos, photographers take pictures, spectators look, and all of them know what is expected of them and what to expect from the others. This shared set of expectations is a civil knowledge that amounts to more than just a technical skill. It is an assembly of civil skills that are not subject to nationality, but rather to borderless citizenship, to the modern citizenship of individuals who know, even when they are subject to boundless rule ... that the actual rule to which they are subject, in its concrete configuration is always limited, always temporary, never final, even when there seems to be no exit from it. (2008, 26)

Azoulay's civil contract is riddled with the expectations of subject, photographer, and audience as they each engage from their particularly globally-situated perspectives. Her notion of a photographic contract moreover offers a contact point, a way-through-the-camera to decry wrong

and strive for change. She writes, “The photographed subjects of numerous photographs participate actively in the photographic act and view both this act and the photographer facing them as a framework that offers an alternative – weak though it may be – to the institutional structures that have abandoned and injured them, that continue to shirk responsibility toward these subjects and refuse to compensate them for damages” (2008, 18). Weak indeed though their claims may be, presentations of hardship even outside of aid space in the DRC are shaped by an expectation that the photograph will ferry its representational traces to a willing audience and catalyze compassion, then donation, and then assistance. The photograph becomes perhaps *the* contact zone for the marginalized Congolese citizens to communicate with the current ruling entity – the industry of humanitarian aid - and to demand to be both legible and served.

Within the eastern DRC however, humanitarian photographs sit at the very intersection of the region’s divisive social dynamics. For the photographic subject and the photographer, their expectations of the visual contract are commonly asymmetrical. Unlike Azoulay's contract, here roles are guessed at, bargained for, and often at odds with the very policy that structures them. Yet, in the photographic act, there exist sets of civic skills that shape a political realm, where both subjects and photographers jockey to support their own – their person, their family, their situation, their job or their agency - by tapping into the power structure. Each maneuvers for a depiction that in part, they imagine, might help them to be served – to have access to the aid they see elsewhere, or which they knew before.

Interestingly, this use of the camera to ferry one’s objectives to others and to work to be seen and addressed, in part, articulates the *moi* so implicit within local photography. The goal of the photograph returns to its original sense of serving the subject featured therein. Fidel argued, “It’s a practical system. With how little employment we have here, it is necessary to talk about one’s personal misery – it is necessary to make the tears flow. This *moi*, it’s the ego that rises, that then asks to be served.” Fidel’s criticism is not incorrect. The photograph constructed a personal bargaining chip through which individuals could communicate their need and strive to

delineate a way forward – a way to demand that such a need be addressed. The photograph, within the expectations of the negative humanitarian imaginary, became not only a descriptive device but also a prescriptive one.

BROKEN PHOTOGRAPHIC PROMISES AND BROKEN 4X4S

Despite the charged potential of using the photograph to make claims to the dominant power structure, in the eastern DRC such communication is neither naïve nor to be romanticized. “In North Kivu, I have seen lots of people exaggerate their suffering for aid,” explained Armond, a young humanitarian photographer. He further noted, “In North Kivu, people are so used to aid – they expect the camera. I have seen lots of people try to exaggerate their suffering when a camera is around. It is not like that in Katanga, for instance. Aid is really just starting to arrive there. I was there a few months ago.... Instead of showing suffering, people there are still very excited about the camera. They want portraits; even adults run enthusiastically at the camera. Here, it is not like that anymore. Here photography is complicated.” Armond was one of a small cadre of youth who attended UNICEF’s Young Journalists Programs and later managed to turn his training into a career. Together with his equally talented friends he now runs a program that consults with international agencies about how to best engage the community around them. In North Kivu Armond and his colleagues commonly encourage international organizations to use sketches and drawings as opposed to photographs to illustrate their work. This push for drawings sidesteps the “intended real” aspects of photography. It avoids encoding individual’s faces and bodies to describe a problem that the subject may then expect to be addressed. In so doing, he and his contracting agencies strive to avoid the politics and volatility now implicated within the expectation of the negative humanitarian photograph.

Like the conflict, aid operates in pocketed spaces. It addresses specific people at specific times, and not everyone holds the same potential for access. As individuals in the eastern DRC

weigh their risks and benefits of being in front of the humanitarian camera's lens, the response is not always to step forward. Rather, photographic subjects recognize that in certain scenarios there is no way aid from that particular agency will reach them. Their refusal to be photographed exposes not only resistance to the global power dynamics at play but also the financial expectation tied to the humanitarian image. Their refusal also reifies the negative humanitarian imaginary. An example from the cattle-training center in Kisumu clearly articulates the situation:

“Stop now!” exclaimed a young man near the road at Kisumu. Benoît momentarily pulled his eyes from his viewfinder. His camera remained trained on a young woman and her baby who sat under a white placard that claimed productive project space for “cattle training” just down the road. “She’s not part of your program” the man hissed, stepping in front of Benoît’s camera – blocking the shot, “You have no right to take her picture.” The woman protested lightly, saying she didn’t mind her picture being taken. But the man stepped closer and made it clear, Benoît’s camera was not welcome. No potential benefit, no picture. With no ability to expect access or gain, the camera became voyeuristic. It no longer was a place of contractual argument and expectation; it became merely a tool of the hegemonic power used to further their income, their jobs, and their businesses. Returning to the conversation with Fidel, he commented on this point noting, “Aid photographs are a business for the agencies. They say, ‘find me a photo *qui frappe*’ (a photo that hits). Aid photos are for bringing in the money. Every agency here does it.”

This sentiment is far from unique. Ndiaga, in a pithy statement, noted, “Especially in the cities, where the projects don’t often work, people simply don’t want to be captured [in the picture] like beasts in the forest. They have a right to complain and not to want the photographs. The urban area, in particular, is *chaud* (hot – volatile); in the urban zone, people think you are going to sell their photograph. Their reaction is understandably aggressive. And we sometimes have a problem with visitors; we have to tell them not just to snap pictures from the vehicles in town. We tell them to wait until we’re in the project sites, or until they have verbal permission for the photograph.” The anticipation of anger at the photograph connects to the negative

humanitarian imaginary and the expectation of aid, access to aid, or financial benefit. If there's no hope of "being served" in the eastern DRC, allowing someone to take your photograph easily adds up to someone else's gain.

Today, framing someone in a humanitarian photograph is known to be risky business and indeed accounts for relegating photography to well-controlled project sites. In 2011 for instance, a photographer for an internationally-funded local aid agency took an image of a breastfeeding woman alongside a road somewhere outside of Beni. She was not within the agency's walls. She was never a beneficiary; she was never even a potential beneficiary, and she was never apparently asked for permission to use her photograph. Two years later, when her husband found the image – it had been published as a photo within a locally distributed calendar – he was both furious and opportunistic. He brought a legal case against the agency for damages of 100,000 US dollars, claiming that because his wife was not a beneficiary and did not benefit from their programs, it was not the agency's right to use her image to promote their cause. The case is still pending, but the impact was clearly visible. In 2013 – 2014 this NGO implemented a rule that no public images - and especially no calendar images - were to show anyone's face, even if the person was indeed a beneficiary. The legal fees and social denunciation were things that they could not risk. As a result, their 2014 calendar shows overly dark images where each individual's face had been "burned" in Photoshop - darkened so that the defining features were no longer distinguishable.

As humanitarian workers strive to gain the proper orderly, triple-evidentiary image, subjects make bids for inclusion or exclusion, premised on similar notions of the photograph's affective and financial potential. By imagining, evoking, and engaging the humanitarian image, individuals grapple for benefit and control within the region's scape. Informed by experience, history, politics, and their access to both humanitarian aid and the various visual fields of the humanitarian landscape, individuals shape their respective interaction with the humanitarian camera. Some co-opt the assumed humanitarian narratives, while others opt out of the system altogether, threatening lawsuits or violence.

PART 2: HUMANITARIAN (POLICY) EXPECTATIONS OF THE IMAGE

Despite the potential to co-opt the presumed, poignant visual statements, the expectation contained within the negative humanitarian imaginary is problematic. It presumes that the photograph will catalyze a narrative and follow a linear trajectory from the photographer to the agency, and then potentially to western viewers. Along the way, it is assumed that the photograph will speak – carrying the intended message to its audience. And moreover, such a successful visual trajectory expects that the image’s content will catalyze the appropriate response from both agencies and the broader viewing public. This contingent set of actions is not only terribly difficult to fulfill, but it is also simply at odds with the region’s power dynamics, especially considering how humanitarian images are created and circulated. One significant friction resides in the fact that simply put, the imaginary relies on mostly-negative portrayals, but humanitarian policy seeks positive-themed photographs.

This friction becomes ever more apparent in the case of direct photography in Kanyaruchinya: Later that afternoon after a number of Congolese individuals who desired humanitarian assistance had turned my camera upon their need, local partner agencies that work with the UNDP cordoned off an aid space within Amiable's school soccer pitch. Within the freshly-drawn border, photography took on an entirely different tenor. Knowing that I was expected to photograph the successful execution of the comedy skit and the interaction of the VIPs, I turned my camera away from the burned and crumpled infrastructure, away from the locally desired “lack” and “need” and tried to focus on what I had been told was desired (Figures 143 – 147). Nonetheless, as I circled the site of the comedy sketch, I photographed the presidential guard soldiers who arrived to support the event. One of them hissed at me, “*Mzungu – toka!*” (White person, get out of here / leave). I walked closer and asked why if I had been asked to photograph the event that I could not also photograph his group. Irritated with my

presence he glared at me and pointed to the circle of aid space. “That’s where you can take pictures. You can’t sell mine.” I thanked him for his explanation and headed back into the throng that eagerly watched the comedy sketch. I knew I had to ensure that I had sufficient “good” pictures of the orderly, successful activity.

Ultimately, I submitted all of the photographs from that day to the UNDP. The photographs of returnee need mingled with the sanitized, positive images of the event. The response clearly delineated the differential imaginaries between the humanitarian agency and the region’s population. D. from the UNDP replied. “We like your photographs of the skit! [she ignored the earlier images of need and hardship] They’re lovely. But please, where are more images that show the logo? Do you have more pictures of the activity with our banner in the background – we only see one? More images of the traditional chief, and the police major together?”

The images that D. and the UNDP desired were positive ones. All of the negative images that showed need and hardship from the morning were neither desired nor published within their reports. Realizing that the more intimate images of hardship were never going to see the light of day with UNDP, I released them to IRIN (the UN Humanitarian News) along with an article about the challenges of the return for the people of Kanyaruchinya (IRIN 2013b). However, the problem was clear. Despite all the built up expectation and agency that goes into the negative humanitarian agency, such a depiction faces a significant uphill climb to reach publication.



[Figure 143 (above); Figure 144 (below)]





[Figure 145 (above); Figure 146 (below)]





[Figure 147]

Such photographs founder exactly at the sites of agency that are supposed to engender their expectation and power. First, this occurs at the point of photographic creation where the photographer may refuse to take such images, or like the photographers in Chapter 4, stridently work to create photographs that avoid the negative and show instead the tidy, sanitized success of a project. Secondly, the imaginary may also break down at the point when, in the hands of project or communication managers, the image encounters a re-application of humanitarian policy. Humanitarian photographic policy in the eastern DRC, as shown in Chapter 3, establishes visual expectations, which hinge on notions of “dignity” and encourage agencies to use photographs whose content is positive. Both the in-the-field practice and the re-application of policy in the hands of agency functionaries rely on this widely accepted humanitarian visual policy.

While references to “dignity” arise commonly in discussions about aid photography, what actually it is supposed to mean for the photographer and subjects remains unclear. Within their policy guidelines “dignity” is often described by what it is not. For instance, an international agency’s policy, which is reasonably representative of most in the region notes, “We gather and use images which reflect the dignity, self-worth, and resourcefulness of the subject.” However, they do not define what such photos might entail, describing instead what they should not show. “We do not use images which are erotic, pornographic or obscene. We do not as a rule use images of dead or naked bodies. [...] We do not make gratuitous use of images of overt suffering.” If one is to follow this policy, it is only partially clear that one probably should not be creating images that share overt visual commonalities with the cliché negative images from the previous decades. Importantly, the notion of dignity is ascribed to the content of what the image “shows” and therefore to the message that the image carries. It does not necessarily reflect the sentiment of the photographic subject. As discussed earlier, subjects may feel entirely dignified in portraying suffering, despite the fact that agencies may “recode” the image as too negative, undignified, and thereby “unusable.”

PHOTOGRAPHIC PRACTICE AND HALF-MADE PROMISES

Despite the policy, humanitarian photographers, both Congolese and expat, indeed continue to create negative-themed images in the field. They may not “hunt” these images in the same way they pursue the orderly success photographs, but often they create them nonetheless. Sometimes photographers create the negative images because it’s more polite to create them than not to create them. As photographic subjects portray need and ask to be seen and photographed, for many photographers, it becomes difficult to turn them down. Sometimes, Armond explained, “it is easier just to take the picture and not use it than to get into an argument with people over why you don’t want to photograph them.” Additionally, as in the case of TRY international and GROW (from the Introduction and Chapter 3) negative images are created to be used as models to describe the “before” problem. And finally, the negative photographs are indeed sometimes captured with the intent to show what grievous needs the photographer believes needs to be addressed by the agencies. Leon (who I mentioned briefly in Chapter Three), an employee for a local partner NGO, explained how flummoxed he was about the expectations of humanitarian image content. “You know,” he had said, “I’m always confused at what the head office wants for photos ... When I went off to Walikale [a territory of North Kivu to the west of Goma] I had a camera, and there were kids there with arms that had been machete-ed off - You know cut off at the elbow. I took pictures, thinking that’s exactly what head office needs to show to our donors. There is a real humanitarian need.” Perhaps unaware of how his agency intended to use the photographs, Leon expected that he should use the camera to witness and prescribe what ought to be addressed by capturing the negative.

No matter how such negative images are created, when they indeed are photographed, they fuel the negative humanitarian imaginary. Hope rises that the photographic subject will be seen, addressed, made legible, and that maybe aid financial or otherwise will arrive. No matter the reason the negative images are created, humanitarian practice and policy collide, clash, and

carry consequences.

However, the creation of such images is commonly not a fully naïve act by the photographer or a black and white refusal. Rather, from the photographer's perspective, managing negative images requires careful navigation of the photographic encounter. Let me briefly return to the example from Chapter 4, where I travelled with AW to Beni. During the second day of the shoot with Jason (the Canadian comms person) and Cheryl (the regional HQ's photographer), we encountered a situation that drew the contrast between policy and practice into clear view. We drove further out of the city into "the bush" at the request of AW's employee who had already talked to a woman whose family had once received AW aid. In a well-swept clearing, a thin mother - her bird-like ribs visible through her ragged clothing - spoke about how grateful she was that the agency had once provided a pig, materials to build a structure, and a few sacks of food during a hard time. Jason turned to me and said, "let's just take a few pictures to make them happy and get out of here - we're wasting our time. This is like our agency's work in the 1980s and the sponsorship / handouts era. Our donors don't want to see this." The tension between policy and practice was palpable. Nonetheless, faced with an expectant subject, Jason, myself, and his staff took a few hasty photographs, ostensibly only to please the woman and the onlookers. Following up later, Jason made it clear that unlike the "success" images of their activities, these "too negative" photos were never sent to the agency headquarters for use (Figures 148-150).⁴³

Jason's navigation of his organization's visual policy shaped his practice, even if, in taking the images he knowingly undermined it. Knowledge of the visual guidelines not only minimized the time he spent with photographic subjects who were "too negative" and the number

⁴³ By shadowing Jason and Cheryl, I became complicit in the process of taking humanitarian photographs and opening hope for potential aid. Realizing this complicity only far later, I have published the images here as a means to ensure that indeed they do see some form of global reproduction. Additionally, before leaving Beni I printed and returned the images to AW to return to their beneficiaries. I sincerely hope they made it back into the hands of those featured in them.

and type of photographs he created, but it also shaped what he edited and sent to headquarters for publication. Knowing the discord they would produce, he clipped their potential short and enabled the photographs only to collect proverbial dust at the bottom of a never-edited computer folder of images.

Certainly this policy-practice division is not new. In the past two decades, the anthropology of development has provided substantial ethnographic examples and theory surrounding the lack of correspondence between an agency's discursive policy and the practice that takes place on the ground (Ferguson 1990; Pigg 1993; Bornstein 2003; Mosse 2005; Lewis and Mosse 2006; Feldman 2007; Li 2007). As Mosse notes, "Policy models do not and cannot shape actual practice in the ways that they claim. They are ignored, resisted, 'consumed' or tactically used in ways that make them irrelevant in the face of more urgent relational demands" (2005, 16). This study of photographic policy-practice divisions complements these studies, showing how despite the visual policy demanding "dignity" and minimizing images of suffering, in practice photographers sometimes create the very images they are supposed to avoid.

[Figure 148]





[Figure 149 (above); Figure 150 (below)]



The catch however, is that because practice produces images redolent with the traces of that interaction, the visual policy can be applied post-practice. This re-application of policy neuters the humanitarian imaginary; the negative images are cached, left to rot away from the necessary eyes of the influential audience. Unpublished through either internal or external tracks, their trajectory ends in the hands of the individual who determines them to be not “positive” enough. Leon, who took the modern-day atrocity photographs above, noted this exact situation as he explained what happened to his negative images within his agency’s headquarters. “But when I sent the photos to head office, they rejected them all. They said they wanted instead more photos of the agency’s projects.” Leon, unaware of his agency’s policy simply took unusable photographs that could not be shown to donors. The images did not carry the necessary level of balance between witnessing, accounting, and advertising. In creating the later-unusable photographs Leon, Jason, and I for that matter, encouraged the expectation that images showing need might indeed see publication and motivate the appropriate aid-based action. Communication traversed the social zones of the region and built an image that would carry traces of the agency of the subject and photographer to the aid agency. And for the subject, the potential of the photograph to fuel assistance becomes a possibility. Hope, however fragile, was bolstered.

PRACTICING POLICY AND SHAPING PHOTOGRAPHIC LIFE AND DEATH

As aid agency visual policy defines the project narratives that staff will show off to their donors and potentially a wider public, they shape a retrospective idea of what their “practice” looked like. By carefully assembling photographs and text they provide an image of the aid that was given and the success it gained. Such pictures plaster the glossy agency magazine pages or splash brightly across websites declaring the agency's good work. Such sunny re-contextualization of the project and its success is not new. For discursive elements like reports and interviews, practice that does not comply with the agency’s mission and policy is simply recast. Managers shape

reports and fix wording, often peppering pages with relevant buzzwords to make success and compliance seem real (Bornstein 2003). David Mosse's (2005) work *Cultivating Development* is an ethnography filled with examples of such creative re-casting. When NGO practice deviated from policy, he showed time and again how creative re-contextualization helped to make it appear that indeed such deviance never existed. For instance, in a discussion of grain banks during a severe drought in India, he writes:

Many were not sustainable, and even as a relief measure the grain "bank" made a small contribution, perhaps feeding a family for one month or so. In reality, the scale of the drought problem was well beyond the reach of the project... but in this as in other areas of their work, the project staff was unable to negotiate. They felt under intense pressure to comply with donor demands (policy). And compliance pays dividends: condemned in December (2000) for failing to "respond to the urgent needs of communities severely affected by the drought," seven months later the project was being held as a model of "drought proofing" to be documented, presented in seminars, filmed, sung about in villages, and held up to government. How fickle are the interpretations of development! (2005, 190)

Photographs often help to "prove" similarly fickle re-castings of the situation, especially when the negative representation is shuffled quietly out of view. Importantly, though, while reports can be recast in different discursive lights and contrary phrases or anecdotes told in the field can be simply left out or conveniently forgotten, photographs carry a visible trace of the interaction that shaped them. Policy has two chances to control the image: Written policy may require optimistic, dignified images and act as a guideline for practice in the field. However, I have shown that policy only has a loose hold over field engagements. Additionally, the photographic practice may follow or deviate from this policy, but the material reality of photographs makes it difficult to merely re-contextualize the project visually, as one does with words. Unlike conversation, accounts, or narratives, which can be ignored, silenced, or forgotten, the photograph's object-ness requires that every single image is addressed and measured against policy.

Before deciding an image's fate, both positive and negative photographs are measured against the agency's visual guidelines. Both “undesirable” and “desirable” aid images must pass through bottlenecks.

As Rowen (Merlin’s project manager) once explained, “basically anything that comes through Merlin has to be twice approved, once at our regional office in Kinshasa and then again at the office in London.” At these multiple points, many images are culled; others head into internal circulation, and the few remarkable ones make it into external-facing publications. Photographic bottlenecks and the subsequent visual separation occur as photographers select which to submit to headquarters; they occur as headquarters employees choose which images are to be used in their internal publications and reports, and they also happen at the level of the *siège* where images are selected for potential public presentation. In this space, the images that represent their notion of dignity are chosen and sent along towards publication, while those whose content falls on the “too-negative” side of the equation are left to decay, forgotten in folders, hard drives, and file cabinets.

For instance, a high-ranking official in the Goma OCHA office expressed her frustration at the *siège*’s rejection of her photographs from Kitchanga. In September 2013, she arrived near the front lines of the war just after the M23 had burned the town. Her photos show the destruction in a clear, unapologetic way. Burned palm trees and smoldering homes line the deserted streets. Thinking her images could be useful she sent the images directly to the New York HQ. They rejected them all. “Head office wanted me to have more positive images, so they didn’t publish what I took. I still think that sometimes it is crucial to see the negative reality of what is going on!” The frustration produced in this example is a product of the tension between practice and the re-application of policy.

While the Kitchanga images were deemed unquestionably too negative for OCHA to publish, commonly the gatekeepers must make more tenuous decisions about photographic acceptability. Whether a photograph fits the policy become a matter of subtle arithmetic,

weighing which side of the positive-negative scale the image falls upon. In 2013, Ndiaga of UNICEF explained that their head office representative had recently reprimanded a colleague who took and shared images showing dirty children sitting on the ground and dogs eating out of a family's cooking pots. The reprimand came in the form of a terse "reply-all" email to all headquarters' staff. It read, "Don't take such photos. We can't use them. Moreover, they're inappropriate." The unfriendly email represents the general dignity, positive image content trend; according to that organization's policy, negative images should only be used if they show a way towards a better situation. Education programs, for example, needed to show children going to school to encourage more school funding. Ndiaga further explained, "We want smiling children, we don't want to see clothes that are too ripped or too dirty, even if the situation is hard – it needs to look like there is a clear way forward." Ndiaga then went on to show photographs that displayed his taxonomy of what types of rips and dirt might be acceptable, overridden as they could be by the positive "look" of the eager children. An undefined line hovered in that conversation as he struggled to determine the positive or negative categorization of an image. As he sifted through photographs, deciding which fit the policy and which did not, "dignity" in the end became the sum of a personal calculation, balancing the size of the holes and the power of the children's smiles.

This re-application of policy to photographs within the bureaucracy of aid has a number of implications. On one hand, for photographers this reapplication of policy to the material they turn in eventually travels full circle to shape their photographic practice in the field. It pushes them towards creating compliant, orderly, positive images so that their work can see publication. This equally encourages the creative photographic tactics of auto-censoring, *mise-en-scène*, or shooting from a distance that enable photographers to avoid producing the undesirable images. On the other hand, the re-application of photographic policy means that negative images and the expectation they ferry within their representational traces are neutered. Their movement -their social trajectory - and ability to enact secondary agency upon a viewer is nixed before they ever

reach publication. This visual silencing of the negative depiction of hardship and suffering ironically silences a powerfully communicative moment – where individuals assert their desire to be seen and made legible to the ruling power as they give voice to their expectation and hope for aid-based assistance.

PHOTOGRAPHIC IMPLICATIONS IN THE REGION THEY DEPICT

For much of the eastern Congolese population, the humanitarian imaginary establishes a powerful expectation concerning the power of the negative aid photograph. As this hopeful expectation collides with re-application of visual policy, regional power dynamics take center stage. In the overlapping fields of local and humanitarian photography, humanitarian photographers created images of Congolese photographic subjects. In that space, subjects drew on their knowledge of photographic interaction and pose as well as their hope for what the aid photograph might be able to do. Conversely, the humanitarian camera confirmed the potential of their expectation.

Photographers made visual promises that, with the re-application of policy, they had little hope of being able to keep.

Moreover, in front of the humanitarian camera a liminal space appears open. The usual hard, well-defined borders of aid and its clear hierarchy of who determines the agency's actions soften. As photographers require cooperation and permission of photographic subjects, the Congolese gain a say in their own aid. Through the camera, they can communicate across the usual aid-space borders, and directly speak (through visual statements) to those high up on the aid chain - people to whom they have no access otherwise. This fleeting encounter destabilizes the rigid socially segregated hierarchy. For a brief moment Congolese individuals within and outside of aid spaces can communicate across the humanitarian borders and craft a message they hope might reach the decision makers who traditionally reside far out of their grasp – separated as they are by high walls, locked doors, and geographic distance. In this softened, betwixt and between

space, the Congolese have a fleeting moment in which to employ the negative humanitarian imaginary and shape an expectation that as the photograph moves forward they will become legible. In the borderland of the eastern DRC, where the humanitarian industry has been the longest lasting exogenous force that controls the area and its social services, the photograph provides a chance to be seen and to be served. In Fidel's equation, "*je suis car je suis servi*," the humanitarian image provides the crucial potential to very simply "be" - to exist.

Unsurprisingly this contingent logic (photograph → publication → affecting compassion → donation and → to being served) is hard to fulfill even on the best of days and even when policy and practice align with image content. However, because the photograph is often *the* way that individuals communicate across the region's barriers, it nonetheless presents an opportunity that for many Congolese is worth taking. That the promises made in photographing negative humanitarian images are rarely kept, however, is not benign or without impact within the region. While the last two decades of humanitarian aid have seen few notable improvements, the resulting lack of a humanitarian response to address the photographically featured problems fuels an already simmering discontent. The broken promises of the humanitarian imaginary contribute to Congolese frustration with what many see as regional humanitarian failure.

Angry refusals to be photographed and increased legal action are just some symptoms of Congolese frustration with aid. As disappointment continues to mount, individuals in front of and around the humanitarian lens increasingly ask, "Whom do these images really serve?" This question queries not just the photo, but also the role of the agency itself. In many cases, the presumed answer is the pockets of those working in the organization. Much of the population is irritated. They are angry at the "business" of aid that seems to only benefit expatriate workers or those Congolese who are lucky enough to find a job inside humanitarian structures. They can see the wealth - the cars, the beautiful houses, the fancy foods. But they are excluded. "What are they here for anyway?" people in the city frequently ask each other. "*Wanakula pesa*" (They eat money). "They line their pockets," others respond.

Nonetheless, civilians of Goma *et environs* still hold onto a fragile hope that all of that money, all of the NGOs, the UN, and their workers are there on the most basic level to protect the population. And when at its very basest, this protection fails, when UN soldiers rape women in the city, or when the town is bombed because the international community fails to protect it, frustration boils over into anger. In such cases, city residents stone humanitarian and United Nations vehicles. Expat workers are quarantined for protection. When in 2013 the M23 bombs destroyed a home in Ndosho and killed a young girl, a *manifestation* formed. Hundreds, perhaps thousands of individuals walked what was left of her – literally bits of scalp and brains, her broken, disjointed skin and bones – to the gates of the UN MONUSCO operation. The crowd grew ever angrier, demanding a response for why they were not protected and eventually shots were fired (it was never determined who fired them – maybe the UN, maybe the police) into the crowd. *Radio troitoir* conveyed that the bullets killed three protesters while injuring others. During significantly calm periods, as aid 4x4s roll through rural areas some children run towards the cars their hands outstretched in excitement and expectation of a handout; other children hang back and look directly at the cars, as they pick rocks from the road, only sometimes brave enough to throw them. Frustration with the security, provision, and general situation was not hard to communicate.

“We live in aid country,” Fidel had proclaimed during that afternoon conversation on his balcony. “Here in Congo, it is never the government that controls anything, it is aid. But look – there’s war! Humanitarians take the photographs that show their projects. But there is nothing. It is all nothing. Nothing. You see, look at Rutshuru or Masisi, where it is both war and aid non-stop. And what change do you see? Nothing. Absolutely nothing has improved. The children are still going to school, but they’re sitting on rocks. The schools are made of tarps, but despite that one can chart all the various projects that are going on left and right –really, though, there is nothing.” His sentiment is far from inaccurate. Billions of dollars of aid later, aid in the eastern DRC has undoubtedly saved enormous numbers of lives, and provided innumerable beds for the

night (Reiff 2003), but wide-reaching sustainable change is hard to find. In 2013-2014, the DRC sat at the utter bottom of the Development Index – ranking 186 out of 187 countries (UNDP 2013). Conflict continues in cycles; insecurity has not lessened, and poverty is widespread.

In some ways, humanitarian aid is just one more global actor to control the services and opportunities available to the Congolese population. However, in this space historically defined by its periphery, individuals have learned that ruling parties, governments, industries, and rebel groups will come and go. Survival is premised upon skillful bricolage and continual opportunism. Fending for oneself and one's own has become socialized. *Se débrouiller* the region was told under Mobutu, as they dealt with his corrupt practices that perpetuated the lack of services and control established under colonialism. Now, in front of the humanitarian camera's lens, the Congolese make their bids, shape their expected opportunity and articulate the *moi* and their personal need, their right to aid. They desire legibility and the extra financial or material boost with which they will craft a better life around the edges of the region's walls and pockets of violent conflict and humanitarian access.



[Figure 151: Graffiti inside Muzenze prison, Goma]

CONCLUSION

In the eastern DRC the histories of aid and conflict combine with the region's peripheral location to shape a space where, even outside of bordered project sites, humanitarian intervention offers distinctive opportunities for aid and financial benefit. Within the 20 years of intense humanitarianism, the region's population has constructed a well-worn negative humanitarian imaginary, which situates the humanitarian photograph as central to contingent sets of agency and expectation. Relying on well-worn opportunistic strategies for survival and success, many Congolese now engage the humanitarian camera as a space to make themselves legible to the most powerful regional actors. Often, they make these bids for aid and inclusion by pointing the lens to hardship and visual narratives of need.

In the region, this negative humanitarian imaginary engages the way in which photography can communicate powerful, affective statements across the wider world unencumbered by the challenges of language. In the eastern DRC, the ability to communicate across humanitarian borders and to those high up within the hierarchical structure of aid is rare. The humanitarian photograph thereby, when coupled with the catalytic power that the photographic object is assumed to hold, makes the moment of creating the photograph into a critical political space. From the on-the-ground perspective, the power of the negative-themed photograph appears endless – capable of being seen and addressed by foreign donors, who could respond with financial or humanitarian assistance.

However, the practical realities of aid cripple the imaginary. The contrast between policy and practice, the visual bottlenecks, and the roles of photographic gatekeepers stymie the progress of images from creation to the hands (and screens) of donors. In direct contrast to the photographic practice that enabled the production of the negative-themed images in the first place, policy asks the photographic gatekeepers to select and publish only the photographs that

are positive enough to embody their policy. The negative visual statements that ferry Congolese hope for aid are commonly weeded out from the selection of images that will move up the aid chain towards humanitarian decision makers and their donors. As such, this re-application of policy neuters the ability of the photograph to continue along its imagined, purposed trajectory. The result? The promises made through the photographic encounter are left unfulfilled. Frustration builds as images constructed at the intersection of local and humanitarian visual fields, and personal subjectivities are mapped back into the top-down power structure; their transformative potential is squelched. Institutional needs to comply with global visual guidelines and gratify donors trump the ability of many Congolese actors to be seen, to be served, and therefore simply “to be.”

CONCLUSION

Photography and humanitarianism have been intimately intertwined in the eastern DRC since the beginning of the 20th century. In Goma *et environs*, photography is far from merely a two-dimensional byproduct of humanitarian action or local portraiture. Today, in the space of opportunity, aid and conflict, local and global power dynamics and social zones clash, separate, and merge. Inextricably intertwined with the subjectivities of the region's actors and the structures that shape opportunity, photography has become more important than ever. For aid agencies, photography is both an act and an object that witnesses, accounts, and advertises. Photographs open space through which to communicate the desired visual humanitarian narratives and silence all others. Simultaneously, the eastern Congo hosts a history of studio photography that is so prominent that the common portrait styles are intimately known to an overwhelming majority of citizens across the province and to nearly all who reside in Goma *et environs*. These local photographs have shaped the fundamentally interactive and imaginative norms of camera engagement and constructed a realm of images that consistently draw on both creative and real elements to praise the subject featured therein.

Looking out from the Kivus' borderland region of opportunity, conflict, and exogenous control, I have shown how the photograph is both an object and event through which to represent, reinforce and equally challenge the role and power of not only the ruling humanitarian enterprise

but also of other dominant regional actors (the UN, the army, journalists, etc.). In Goma *et environs*, photography captures the nuanced interactions between the humanitarian industry, the markets, UN, the universities, internally displaced peoples camps, international press, and local photo studios. Critically, the photograph's communicative prowess provides space and representational content through which individuals engage and challenge the dynamics of the diverse politics, agents, and structures of Goma *et environs*. Whether communicating success, desire, need, or play, it is the photograph's powerful ability to "speak" within and across the region's divided social zones that make it so compelling. By tracing the nuanced contours of these interactions, photography in the eastern DRC has become a means to see the expectations and norms surrounding culturally relevant image production, while also making visible the often unseen and silent social dynamics of conflict and humanitarian rule in the region.

Moreover, photography, and the encounters that it reflects and engenders, is more than just the subject of this project's research. Photography also shaped the base of an analytical framework and a set of knowledge-producing methodologies. The construction of the eastern DRC as a photographic landscape, composed of intersecting visual fields, engages the region's fluidity and power dynamics comprised of the layering, intersectionality, and distinctiveness of its actors, institutions, and histories. My analysis of predominantly humanitarian and local visual fields (and to a much lesser degree the journalistic and governmental fields), has shown the region to be composed of a diverse set of visual economies each with their own norms, values, and means of circulation and consumption. The hopes, desires, tensions, and frictions produced as the visual fields overlap provide insight into the politics of representation and the malleable subjectivities of the actors involved. By conceptualizing the photographic landscape as situated within Appadurai's theoretical concept of *scape*, this research has made the entangled social contours of the eastern DRC's frontier zone visible. I have drawn an array of histories, individuals, institutions, and stakeholders into discussions of representation and power through my in-depth examination of visual episodes. Through these layered frameworks, I have engaged

the duality of structure (Giddens 1984), where social structures and the local-global dynamics that they produce are both the inspiration for and the outcome of agents' actions. However, across the fractured, opportunity-filled yet volatile social space of the eastern DRC, I have conceptualized the nuanced entanglement and movement of local photographic subjects and humanitarian photographers as also altering the shape of their visual fields and the broader scape through their photographic interactions, desires, expectations, and exchanges.

Through the camera's lens, I have shown how the eastern DRC is a space that, while imbued with histories born of its peripheral location and state neglect, now has become the epicenter of the region's global politics. Humanitarianism has indelibly altered the constitution of the place. Aid and conflict ebb and flow in the region, though neither entity ever drops below anything but impressive numbers. As humanitarians treat the myriad sores of conflict, and strive to better the futures of the Congolese, they bring with them dollars, handouts, skills, and a strict social hierarchy. However, aid, like the region's conflict, is a pocketed enterprise; the economic and social benefits and perils they have brought to the region have not evenly impacted the local population. While humanitarian intervention indeed saves lives and may even provide useful skills, goods, training, and activities in its project sites (often situated outside of Goma), it has cultivated social barriers and frustration within the city itself. Aid has in many ways replaced the state. However, access to the goods and services it provides is neither guaranteed nor accessible for all. Rather, the hierarchy of aid, where international donors sit at the very top and Congolese beneficiaries receive the pre-determined assistance at the bottom, reinforces the divisive power dynamics and selective engagement across the region. The hierarchy shapes interaction such that international humanitarian aid organizations and their employees respond to donors and actively strive to alter the region.

Based on this hierarchy, Congolese beneficiaries are expected to participate, but they are otherwise not in control of the quality, type, or location of the aid they receive. However, as I have argued throughout the chapters, the interaction around the photograph shows that this

hierarchy is not entirely fixed. Rather, the diverse population of the eastern Congo relies on their well-honed, historically cultivated ability to *se débrouillez* (to get by) to challenge their position in the aid chain. Whether rejecting the camera and the power dynamics outright or harnessing the tropes of suffering to empower access, the Congolese employ the photograph to communicate across social barriers and thereby to approach, maneuver, and even manipulate the present structures and power dynamics. In the previous chapters, I have shown how the Congolese can slide between the visual fields of the region. They both move across various popular or humanitarian-photography themed representations of self and employ local notions of pose and visual narrative to creolize photography. Often these performances shape visual bids for access, to legitimacy, and to aid. Even in portrayals of suffering the Congolese are not passive victims. Rather, they engage forms of bricolage and draw on their flexible identities to make themselves legible to the humanitarian industry and to access further social and financial opportunities therein.

In the act of photographic creation, the rigid humanitarian hierarchy and social separation softens; communication and hope become possible. However, as Azoulay (2008) noted concerning her discussion of photographic contracts, the visual claims are weak – tenuous at best. In the eastern DRC, the image is powerful, yet it remains out of control of both photographic subject and photographer. As aid agencies determine to publish or bury photographs based on how well the image's narrative will serve their donors, they shore up the structures of the humanitarian hierarchy, effacing any contrary visual statements and practices. While an examination of the photographic act provides a different picture, their published images paint a perfect, albeit terribly narrow image – a fantasy of what aid is and does. This visual myth, where carefully constructed images appear “found,” is bolstered by meticulously choreographed, sanitized representations that efface the chaos, mess, and alternative narratives of the eastern DRC.

ANALYTIC CONCLUSIONS

By tracing the contours of the photographic landscape and thereby probing the underlying social and political dynamics of the eastern DRC, this research makes contributions and interventions across a diversity of anthropological fields. Specifically, I address the anthropology of development and humanitarianism, visual anthropology, and the anthropology of the Great Lakes Region.

Looking directly at aid, one of the region's most powerful players, I make a number of interconnected arguments that contribute to existing theories of humanitarianism and development. By introducing a critical engagement with the humanitarian industry's photography, I first expose the way in which the boundaries between life-saving humanitarian relief and development's poverty reduction and good governance have blurred in the eastern DRC. Today agencies offer both humanitarian relief and development simultaneously. Despite the range of programs offered, their desired photographic narratives remain largely the same. They are geared to witness, account to donors, and advertise. Photographers seek orderly, positive photographs, using the occasional negative image only to provide an idea of what "before" looked like. Through an analysis of how photographs function between what they are expected to show and how they are created, I provide a renewed examination of the tension between agency and structure within the eastern DRC's humanitarian industry. By situating material photographs and photographic practice within the context of humanitarian structure and ideals, I show how the agency (as exposed through their visual practice) of humanitarian photographers, program managers, and staff creates a tension between depicting found, documentary representations, and satisfying the policy and mission of the agency.

Moreover, while exploring the photographic dynamics of the industry and its relationship to the region's Congolese residents, I expand a number of arguments originally focused on

development discourse and the relationships between policy and practice. First, I engage both the examinations of development categories and drawings as a means to situate photography within the theory of development discourse. I engage the literature of how discursive statements both contribute to the shape of international intervention and how they are co-opted by partner agencies and beneficiaries in order to motivate particular humanitarian engagements. Humanitarian photographs too carry this expectation for both the agencies and the photographic subjects involved. By seeing the still image as an object that articulates particular visual statements, I engage the aid photograph as a place where buzzwords and hot-topic identities are expressed and displayed. Humanitarian photographers behind the camera and the Congolese subjects in front of the lens both strive to craft statements that they respectively expect will best “*parole*” (speak) within the organization. These visual statements articulate everything from need, action, and participation, to the identities of “survivor,” “vulnerable,” “victim,” and “displaced.” However, as I have shown, the belief in the communicative power of the photograph often pits Congolese subjects’ expectations of the image against the expectations and policy of the humanitarian agency. Thus, I show how photographic statements arise from negotiated encounters that hold the possibility of accord, co-optation, and manipulation all the while ferrying diverse forms of hope and expectation for subjects, photographers, and the humanitarian agencies they support.

Moreover, I expand the debates concerning the discord between development policy and practice by incorporating photography. Building from David Mosse’s (2005) actor-centered view of the divide between policy and practice, I have detailed how this division holds steady in relation to humanitarian photography. I addressed the agency policies that are intended to guide image production, and placed those directives in conversation with the actual photographic practice that happens in the field. Unsurprisingly policy does not determine practice. Particularly, I show this schism by engaging the policy expectations that demand humanitarian photographs to be both “found” and “positive.” The standard humanitarian practice of preparing the photographic

field and striving to carefully construct the resulting photographs undermines the demands for documentarily found photographs. Equally, despite the mandate for positive images, with the help of photographic subjects, photographers nonetheless continue to create negative-themed images in the field.

Each of these divisions between policy and practice carries implications for the agency and the region. The practice-driven action of choreographing the photograph, as opposed to simply “finding it” undermines the agency’s honest ability to rely on the truthfulness of the photograph as evidence - as a form of *témoignage*. Additionally, the production of negative images, despite the demand for more positive representations, perpetuates local frustration with aid while also exposing another powerful aspect of the policy-practice divide. I argue that the ability to re-apply policy to humanitarian photography simultaneously furthers and undermines the negative humanitarian imaginary – the collective Congolese expectation that aid images should show suffering and need and can catalyze financial contribution and further humanitarian action. Moreover, the fact that the photograph captures traces of the very practice that produced it means that policy can be, and often is, re-applied to the image as it enters circulation within the agencies. This secondary application of policy then means that often the communication carried out during the photographic encounter is silenced if it appears to have run counter to the agency’s original visual guidelines and mission. This creates then a policy and practice division, where the structure of policy trumps the agency of the actors and their practice. However, unlike the images that are erased from memory cards and file folders, the encounters around the construction of the photograph have left indelible marks on the population and their expectations about the role of aid. As policy silences the hope constructed during photographic practice, local frustration with the humanitarian industry continues to mount.

Further, through my ethnographic examination of humanitarianism, I provide accounts of how aid draws both hard and soft borders onto the map of the eastern DRC. Their walls, razor wire, locked doors, and even signposts shape the power dynamics of the interior space. Inside the

project sites and in spaces where aid might be a possibility, the identity of “beneficiary” becomes powerful and articulates a right to aid and access. Moreover, by focusing on photography I have shown how the ability to make visual statements as a means to claim the right to aid is both powerful and flexible in relation to the perceived borders and potential to receive assistance. Ultimately, the incorporation of photographs into the theory and ethnography on humanitarian aid and development exposes the way in which the agency of the various actors remains in tension with the policy, the structure of the industries and their ideals, as they create new borders which provide simultaneous exclusion and opportunity.

A second set of important contributions of the dissertation arises within the field of visual anthropology in both conceptual and methodological terms. On one hand, I contribute the construction of a photographic landscape as an analytic framework complete with its simultaneously independent and interdependent visual fields and their particular visual economies. Using this framework to chart the different actors and perspectives surrounding photography, I show how an analysis of still images can simultaneously probe the politics of image production and the broader social dynamics of the region. Through this overlapping set of lenses, I contribute examples and analysis centered on the genres, norms, and expectations of images within local and humanitarian photography. In both fields, I draw upon histories of visual constructions and expectations as I examine the agency of the actors behind and in front of the camera. By examining the spaces where these fields intersect, I use the photographic landscape to show the flexibility of the actors’ subjectivities and their conscious navigation of the encompassed institutions and structures as they both reify and challenge them. Moreover, in these overlapping spaces I show how actors craft creolized representations. On one hand, individuals draw the opulence and prestige symbolized by the humanitarian industry into studio-like portraits. On the other, humanitarians and the Congolese photographic subjects alike engage forms of pose, props, and *mise-en-scène* from the local visual field to choreograph “good” aid images.

Moreover, by extending the visual analysis to encompass the dialectic act of photography, I show how the still image opens numerous moments of communication, even within strictly hierarchical spaces of humanitarian engagement. By understanding still photographs as collaborative constructions, I contend that the engagement between humanitarian management and workers, the photographer, subject, and bystanders (among others) builds a space in which each actor strives to control the photograph. However, in front of the humanitarian camera local photographic subjects, who do not usually have power to influence or communicate with the broader aid industry, are provided a fleeting moment in which to form an intentional visual statement made specifically to be seen by humanitarians and their donors. This communicative space loosens the rigid social and organizational structures as it provides increased room for maneuver for all actors involved. The photographic event constructs an opening where discursive and embodied negotiations have the power to challenge the hierarchies, borders, and power dynamics of humanitarian aid.

In prioritizing the transformative, interactive nature of photography, I persist in my argument that the still photograph produces valuable anthropological knowledge, not only in its often-studied material form, but also methodologically. Throughout this dissertation I have explored the methodological power of the camera in its ability to document and its capacity to interrogate the fine-grained experience of photography and its encompassing social politics in the eastern DRC. Through my range of photographic methods, including direct, shadowing, and co-creative portraits, I employed my camera to learn to see, to probe the existing social dynamics of a space, and produce ethnographic knowledge. By literally photographing photography, I gained access to the often silent, nuanced interactions, navigations, and decisions of the subject, bystanders, and the photographer, all of who draw on complex networks of personal and regional histories, politics, and expectations. My use of photography as method and as analysis, contributes to the re-valorization of still photography within cultural anthropology. Here I have worked to show the importance of the still image in practice – not just as a material object of

analysis or field data. Rather, I have shown the still photograph as capable of producing sensory and visual knowledge in the field. Without the camera to implicate me personally in the region's politics, and to inculcate my ability to see through the different local and humanitarian lenses, this project would not have been possible.

Moreover, with the images I have created and employed here, I have asked viewers to question their own way of seeing. The photographic essays and textual entanglements encourage re-evaluations both of the three-dimensional interaction that produced the image, as well as the two-dimensional "proof" one encounters on the surface of the photograph. As the dissertation's reader views the more than 100 images entangled with this text, the images may continue to act as evidence for what was written. However, they may also articulate their secondary agency to educate, provoke questions, or create sensory responses. In the gaze of others and the entanglement with text and other images, these photographs produce new meanings. Such ambiguity is powerful. Through the various photographic ethnographic episodes, my hope is that the images will have produced knowledge about the region's scape, the photographic landscape and humanitarianism on the most personal, sensory levels. Ultimately, this work contributes to visual anthropology by focusing on photography as a topic of study, as a method, and a means of conveying knowledge.

Third, this study contributes to the ethnography of the eastern DRC. At present there exist few anthropological works on the diverse, global and locally implicated urban and peri-urban populations settled in the Congo's peripheral borderlands. This dissertation contributes directly to the ethnography of this region by engaging the interaction between humanitarians and the local population both inside and outside of aid-space. I show how the humanitarian industry, like the dysfunctional state that came before it, has articulated with the population's skills in bricolage and ability to *se débrouiller*.

I also have provided an in depth account of two different ways that the Congolese are visualized. On one hand I have engaged the various genres, interactions, and ways that the diverse

Congolese population of this borderland makes sense of their selves as they interrogate notions of play, modernity, and prestige through the Congolese camera. On the other, I have explored the way in which the western, donor-oriented humanitarian camera seeks to use the Congolese to fill the frame as they craft examples of orderly, successful programs. I address the multiple, entangled histories at play, including: the histories of local photographic arrival, content, and expected photographer-subject interaction; the histories of humanitarian photography both globally and specifically within the DRC; the histories of conflict, displacement, periphery and humanitarian action in the region. By drawing these histories into conversation with the current hierarchical social structure and the myriad actors and institutions of the scape, I show how photographs are built of and expose the region's pastiche and bricolage as they alternately confirm and challenge the social dynamics of the region.

To the existing discussion of the region's porous borders and frontier zone economies, I contribute an analysis that shows how the humanitarian industry maps on top of historic divisions within the region, while simultaneously reinforcing its physical and social borders. The ethnographic details engage not only the dual histories of local and humanitarian photography in the region, but also the interactions between major groups of actors including the UN, humanitarian institutions, the Congolese and rebel armies, the displaced, and the working and middle class populations of Goma. By situating my analysis within the dynamic particularities of the region – its peripheral position from the state, the borders, the conflicts, the rampant humanitarianism - I show how the diverse population of the eastern DRC relies on a particularly flexible ability to maneuver identity and subjectivity in order to both capitalize on the region's fleeting opportunity and to survive the risks involved in its cyclical violence. In the following section, I detail the 6 chapters of the dissertation, all of which contribute to the ethnography of the eastern DRC.

A RE-VIEWING

Across the six chapters I have made a number of ethnographic arguments that contribute to an understanding of the region's photographic landscape and to the eastern DRC's social dynamics. Initially I engaged the region's scape through Simone's journalistic image. By way of her photographic example, I emphasized how a singular image can expose networks and power dynamics of a region. While this chapter does not directly address the humanitarian influences in the eastern DRC (but rather shows how when conflict arises, aid flees) it provides a striking example of the power of photography and the anxiety it causes within the volatile conflict setting of Goma. Due to the image's ability to speak and to function simultaneously within the Goma scape as evidence and as a subjective creation, I show how the UN, Congolese Army, the region's residents, researchers, and journalists all jockey to understand, shape, and control the interpretation of a particular image. By examining how particular actors engage either "truth" claims or accusations of "play" for the camera, I show how the photograph is harnessed to sometimes-dangerous existing beliefs, perspectives, and ways of seeing. Moreover, this ethnographic episode draws out the way in which actors across the region exist in tension with one another, speaking at once to the region's volatility exposed by the overlapping of visual fields and the broader dynamics of the what Nordstrom (1997) calls a "warscape."

Moving forward from Simone's singular photograph, I worked to detail the local visual field through its history and a how-to guidebook. I began by exploring the history of photography in the eastern DRC, contextualizing the space of Goma *et environs* as situated in the periphery of two powerful, highly photographed states: that of Congo (in the West) and that of Rwanda (in the East). By tracing photography through colonialism and independence, I show how the photograph opened a space to play with identity, and to engage the artifacts and identities of modernity. Moreover, I explored the tenacity of the studio-derived representational content and subject-photographer interaction. I have shown how local photography has been shaped by the dominant

presence of the photo studio, and how despite the recent movement away from the physical studio space, the visual norms established there have continued to inspire the form of the popular photograph. In particular, the studio has emphasized the photographic act as one premised upon an ongoing interaction between the photographer and subject. The goal of the photographic act, however, is exclusively to praise the photographic subject and thereby fulfill the economic relationship that strings photographer, subject, and the picture together. Through the act of creating images, both actors endeavor to shape the representation to show a positively imagined, often exaggerated version of the subject's self – *le moi*. Moreover, the studio interaction shows the normalization of the careful choreography - of on-hand props, specific poses, and backgrounds within the photographic frame. The photograph within this local visual field, is oppositional to the candid image. Rather local photography opens a space of imagination and carefully crafted statement making. Inside the frame, what one touches and where one stands is intended to collaboratively speak to the hopes and pride of the individual(s) featured.

At the opposite end of the photographic landscape, humanitarian photography operates through quite different ideals and interactions. In Chapters 3 and 4, I showed how humanitarian photography, like the industry's bureaucratic structures and partnerships with local NGOs, has responded to the history of shifts in pressures of how aid is expected to function and gain funding. By engaging both the history of aid photography more generally and the recent history of the overwhelming humanitarian industry that has come to reside in Goma, I used Chapter 3 to contextualize the region's humanitarian dynamics through a photographic, programmatic, and social lens. Importantly, I showed how the ever-rising role of donors and the inter-agency competition within NGO hot-spots like the eastern DRC are reflected and perpetuated within the newly positive photographic policy and the carefully controlled photographs aid photographers produce and publish. Within this space, agency program officers expect that humanitarian photographers will produce images that do three things. 1) They will witness the situation, and show the documentary (found) truth of what their agency is addressing; 2) they will account by

showing the program in action, the image also is expected to prove to existing donors and management that the agency's work is being effectively and orderly accomplished; 3) they will advertise. Through the photographic inclusion of humanitarian "visibility," the images will connect the depicted successful action with a particular agency. This triple evidentiary role of the humanitarian image crafts, in part, the structures within which humanitarian photographers operate.

Moving to the perspective of those individuals who actually create and control the production of humanitarian images, in Chapter 4, I engaged the processes, subjectivity and agency of how humanitarian photographers create their images. Through the methods of shadowing photography, participant observation, and interviewing, I explored the differing tactics through which aid photographers strive to craft carefully controlled images that will satisfy their particular agency's mission and photographic guidelines. Tactics such as auto-censoring, hunting the image from afar, and *mise-en-scène* contribute to the production of effective aid images that are sanitized of excess, chaos, and negativity. Moreover, this chapter showed the range of individuals who are involved in creating and preparing a proper aid image. Some prepare the scene ahead of time, and some shape the interaction between the subject and photographer as the image is produced. As such, the photographer, project manager, translator, national staff, partner agency staff and more are all compelled to shape the "right" aid image so as to justify their roles and do / keep their job. Ultimately, I showed that the humanitarian photograph is a tightly controlled entity that sits at the nucleus of the subjective desires of a large number of individual actors. While the image must appear "found," my analysis shows that most aid images are in fact very careful constructions that effectively portray Barthe's photographic myth (1982) – where despite all the construction and connotation, the image is flattened to simply appear "real." In correspondence with Lidchi (2015), humanitarian images become a "technical truth" – something that could be, but not necessarily what is.

As I have argued throughout, due to the history and now contemporary omnipresence of the humanitarian industry in the region, these local and humanitarian visual fields do not operate exclusive of one another. Rather, they collide and create a contact zone where actors from both local and humanitarian zones grapple with each other, grapple with the regional power dynamics, and strive for control of the photographic narrative – the statement that the image is intended to make to a presumed audience. In chapter 5, I explored the ways in which the visual fields shape local subjectivity within the setting of Mugunga III IDP camp. Displacement, I argued, is a now-normalized feature of the eastern DRC and residents knowingly employ certain survival and success tactics in relation to humanitarian aid. The camp, I noted, is not a single site of aid, but rather a place of nested and multiple aid opportunities. Through my accidentally reflexive articulation with exactly what I was intending to study – humanitarian photography and the politics of aid – I found that subjects intentionally deploy local photographic logic to shape what they believe to be humanitarian photographs. Moreover, I also showed how these images shaped a version of visual *mythico-histories* (Malkki 1995) – a set of well known visual tropes that exposed hardship and suffering. By repeatedly visiting the camp and creating images for eight months, I saw how, despite real hardship, individual visual narratives were not cemented within the negative depictions of need. Rather camp residents were both capable and eager to show their pride and capacity to not just survive but also to succeed. Through the co-creative portraits, I explored how photography is creolized in the space where the local and humanitarian visual fields overlap. On one hand within the local visual field, the humanitarian industry has become associated with the prestige often drawn into the popular images. On the other hand, the local visual norms of highly interactive, imaginative photography and the intentional pose, props, and locations have come to infiltrate the production of the humanitarian images as individuals craft negative-themed depictions to shape salient humanitarian identities. Moreover, my particular photographic methodology helped to show how anthropological knowledge is produced across the dialectic space of the camera.

In contrast to the one-sided, voyeuristic communication ferried within a candid photograph, the local participation within humanitarian photographic space has opened dialectic communication with one of the region's most powerful actors who hold the keys to economic opportunity and aid. What's more, the flexibility of how the Congolese present themselves for the camera – tacking between local norms of *mzuri* and humanitarian scenes of need and benefit – shows the malleability of subjectivity in the eastern DRC. Due to the inherent instability of the photograph and its innate ambiguity, try as one may, neither subject nor photographer can ever fully lock down the photograph's meaning. But that doesn't mean that they don't try.

In Chapter 6, I focused on the “negative” humanitarian image from two perspectives – from that of the Congolese actors and photographic subjects, and from the perspective of the humanitarian communications and program officers who control what images their aid agencies publish. Focusing specifically on humanitarian photography, I argue that the photograph is understood both locally and in humanitarian circles as a way to not only provide evidence of a “problem” or “success,” but also to influence funding and draw tangible outcomes. On the humanitarian side this leads to the importance of the positive themed triple evidentiary photograph. On the Congolese side, however, expectation revolves around the potential of the negative-themed image to catalyze publication, donation, and action. I argued that this anticipation which shapes the *negative humanitarian imaginary* inspires hope and impacts the agency and performance of Congolese photographic subjects as they make “bids” for potential humanitarian inclusion or exclusion.

As I showed how Congolese subjects direct the camera to the negative, I explored the contingent sites of agency that make this *negative humanitarian imaginary* so powerful. I showed how, due to the communicative nature of the photograph, Congolese actors engage their (albeit circumscribed) agency to record traces of hardship within the negative aid image. The statements that the photograph is then expected to make ferries those traces to a projected audience of agency employees and donors. However, the secondary site of agency – located within the

humanitarian offices and out of the control of the Congolese featured in the image— has the ability to neuter the potential of the photograph. While photographic practice in the field leads to the production of negative images, I showed how communication officers' personal arithmetic reapplies the positive image policy.

Contextualized by the region's longstanding promise and opportunity poised in a space of periphery and borders, this study of the humanitarian landscape has shown how gaining access to the humanitarian system represents a key opportunity for displaced, working class, and middle-class Congolese residents in the area of Goma *et environs*. Drawing on the flexible deployment of identities and the tacking back and forth between different levels of identification, individuals capitalize on the act of photography to bypass some of the newest borders in town that separate the humanitarian industry and its projects from the population. However, this study does not end on an idealistic note. Rather, by examining the social life of the photographs as they move through the humanitarian system in the DRC, I show how the structure of aid and its visual policies often halt the flow of certain photographs whose visual content emphasizes need and suffering. While these often negative themed images ferry enormous expectation and hope for the Congolese individuals in them, they contradict the aid agencies' policies and structure of hierarchy. Consequently, for the population of Goma *et environs* who expect to have figured out how to capitalize on the opportunity of aid, the hopes that they have pinned on the affective power of the humanitarian photograph are often difficult to realize. The broken promises and unrealized economic opportunity of humanitarian aid photography both reflect and perpetuate the understanding of the region as one where wealth and power are held by dominant stakeholders – the armies, the aid industry, and the elite. However, around the margins and across the semi-porous borders of the city, country, and the humanitarian industry, Congolese individuals craft a life for themselves, hoping for more and capitalizing on that which they can access.

EPILOGUE

Since I returned from my yearlong fieldwork in August 2014, I have traveled back to the DRC twice. These short, respectively three and six-week trips have provided me with a different title: consultant. Working with a variety of humanitarian agencies, I photographed and wrote success stories about maternal health, basketball, cacao farming, drone-assisted mapping, and women's radio among other topics. Having studied humanitarian photography for years and carried out a number of direct photography projects while in the DRC, I was enthusiastic to harness my findings and frustrations about humanitarian photography and attempt to do it better. I wanted to see if it was possible to push away from the sterilized orderly photograph to create more complex, honest depictions that engage both the social and humanitarian realities of the subjects. Certainly, these images still had to be able to advertise for the agency and please the donors. Nonetheless, I had high hopes that through a few different techniques and time, I might be able to do something different through humanitarian photography.

However, when I flew to Goma for the express purposes of creating images and writing stories, I encountered unexpected components that came to challenge this hope. Time and Western attention span became particularly problematic. As a consultant, time is not on your side. Agencies strive to minimize the amount of time it takes you to do your work to economize; as someone attempting to shift photography from the triple evidentiary image to something more contextualized and thickly described, time and attention span were exactly what I needed.

Nonetheless, I was lucky to have been contracted by an agency I respect and whose communications manager was not just competent, but downright good at his job. Let's call him Jacques. Jacques and I had worked out some significantly exciting visual plans. I had plainly expressed my desire to try to change humanitarian photography – to shift what it could look like from the inside. He was enthusiastic about his agency being at the forefront of this revolution. Drawing on my knowledge of the region, ability to work independently as a photographer, language skills, and my existing independent mode of transportation (I still had my motorcycle

there), I expected that I could thwart many of the systems that came to shape aid images to all look quite similar – sanitized, perfunctory, thin, success and logo driven. Jacques and I decided that I would engage six of their projects and produce both short stories of around 500 words and a slew of photographs (they asked for 10, I provided around 100) for each. Additionally, I asked to be able to create six long-format stories that would entangle text and images in a creative format. Jacques imagined that we could publish them creatively on their website or in magazines.

In the end, however, things did not turn out as hoped. For each project, I was allotted approximately one and a half working days to gather enough data to write and photograph a quality set of stories. This was considered generous. Simultaneously, the short Western attention span took its toll. Despite Jacques and my protests, the agency's board ultimately vetoed the long-format stories and requested that later short-format ones only include one photograph and be reduced from 500 to 350 words. Citing Western attention spans and concern that their donors would question how they were spending money, they pushed for pithy single-image stories that transparently attached the photographic subject to the clearly positive work they conducted. It was as if I were back in Beni and the land of NGO *mise-en-scène*. However, this time, I was not a researcher capturing the questionable practices, I was the individual with the camera who was expected to photograph the constructions and *mise-en-scènes* for decontextualized stories. For decision makers at the *siège*, the difference between a stellar, meaningful set of images and the average single photograph was minimal. It wasn't worth their time or money to pursue more complex representations – they believed the images would not change their donor perception. The longer format photo stories fell through the cracks, and my photographic agency proved to be as circumscribed as the populations I had studied.

All the same, while I ran around North and South Kivu capturing the stories and images, I wasn't quite ready to give up on the ability to change the system. The time and word limits and lack of a platform for more creative photography pushed me towards complacency and the perpetuation of a usual top-down power relationship between humanitarian photographer and

subject. Nonetheless, I still wanted to be able to break the mold. In between NGO appointments, meet-and-greets and follow-up visits with agencies, I forged rapport; showed up for breakfasts; walked to school with students; rode motorcycles home with subjects in the torrential rain. In the end, despite the agency's lack of desire to publish the more complex entanglements of photo and text, I had three stories that turned out so-so, and three that were pretty innovative. The good ones remained solidly marketing material but gave humanitarian images a more thickly-described, human edge. And moreover, I wanted images that together allowed space for the tension between the desires of the subject and photographer to interact. Both individuals' subjective desires should have a chance to speak.

As I hustled around the region and made the most of the little time I had, I tried to apply the "do it better" recommendations I would have otherwise written here. I attempted to:

- Break away from the aid agency staff who strove to choreograph the photographic process, and who had "prepared the scene" ahead of time.
- Take the time to know the subject and their actual connection to the agency and then train the camera on those associations.
- Engage their broader social space and try to understand their more extensive network. Feature that.
- Ask the subject how they want to be depicted for the audience. Take and publish those photographs.
- Use more than one image to represent a situation.
- Keep the frame open - Controlled order is not as engaging as the excess that speaks to the actual situation and the subject's and agency position therein.
- Communicate with all of the INGO and LNGO staff as well as the subjects about the goals and purposes of the photography so that information was transparent. I did not say "this will help you directly" or even, "these photos will help people like you" - that is just misleading.

By striving to take better aid images that accounted for the interface between humanitarianism and the photographic subject's actual life, I worked to create photographic "thick description" (Geertz 1973). I tried to both create and exhibit photographs that forge connections and visually describe how aid is important to the photographic subject. Moreover, I hoped to do this by moving beyond the idea of image-as-evidence and fully embrace the idea of image(s) as performative narratives. To close, I leave you, the reader, with an experiment – my attempt at a

more poetic version of humanitarian photography. Below, you will find the concept plan and a selection of images from one of my favorite aid photo-stories from the eastern DRC. This photo-story of Ghiselle and ETN (the NGO she participated in) never saw publication beyond a singular photograph and a short blog post. Enjoy the alternative rendition (Figures 152-163):

GHISELLE AND THE ROAD – GOING THE DISTANCE

This piece will use still photographs and very little text to convey the motion that Ghiselle, a female car mechanic, embodies as she moves between spaces of work and home. Ghiselle lives nearly a 2-hour walk from ETN. Despite the distance, she is up at 4 am and at ETN before 7 am every day in order to study, and begin her mechanic and driving lessons. In so doing, between the long walks and short drives, we will gain a sense of how she moves through the world around her. These movement images and text will be punctuated with still “in place” photographs, showing the actions that she engages in once she has arrived – at ETN and at her family’s home in Ngangi III particularly. The combination and rhythm of movement and in-place-action will provide a novel way of thinking about the placement of a program in someone’s life, and I believe, this will draw out the importance of the ETN as a grounding space in her world. (Dec. 17, 2014).

[Figure 152 Ghiselle, “it is not just men’s work”]





[Figure 153 (above), Figure 154 (below) Drivers Ed]





[Figure 155 (above) “Take my portrait with the tires”; Figure 156 (below) “I want to run my own auto-body when I finish at ETN”]





[Figure 157 (above) and Figure 158 (below): The long walk home]





[Figure 159 (above) and 160 (below) More than two hours on the road]





[Figure 161 (above) and Figure 162 (below) Finally home]





[Figure 163: On the road, yet again]

That's all, folks. Thanks for reading.

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