

# **The sourcing of amateur photographs in the professional news media**

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Submitted in fulfillment of the requirements  
of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

2015

## **Abstract**

The participation of amateurs in the production of news has been widely observed as a growing phenomenon. This thesis investigates the significance of amateur photographs for the professional news media by examining when, how and why amateur photographs are sourced and published in the news. The thesis frames the research in terms of the practice of sourcing, focusing on the decisions and attitudes of news media workers towards amateur photographs. The thesis asks: What impact does amateur photography have on the professional news media? Do professional ideas, structures and standards encourage or discourage the use of amateur photographs? Have news media adapted to embrace the ubiquity and accessibility of amateur photography?

The research was conducted using a grounded theory approach, starting from the routine decisions of news media workers. The main sources include interview evidence and observations collected as part of an in-depth study at the Australian Leader Community Newspaper chain, as well as interviews with news media workers from a further 14 media brands in Australia, Germany and the UK in 2010 and 2011. In addition, secondary sources were used to suggest general tendencies in the field, and as a basis for examining historical shifts.

The thesis locates the ways in which amateur photographs appear in the professional news media today, revealing diverse categories of amateur photography in the news and their value to the industry. I discuss the implications for sourcing practice, including the use of personal online archives in the newsgathering process; the value of the amateur aesthetic; the evidential purpose of, and public trust in, eyewitness photographs; the voluntary aspects of amateur photography; and the interactive appeal of amateur contributions. At the same time, the thesis demonstrates that news media workers are holding on to established news values, attitudes, practices and roles. Amateurs continue to be perceived as non-routine sources, and have a relatively small influence on the professional news media.

The thesis addresses a shift in photographic production, distribution and style that has been influenced by the wide-scale presence of amateur photography.

Theoretically, this phenomenon calls into question concepts such as amateurism and professionalism, the photojournalist's privileged claim to the visual representation of events, and what qualifies as history-making documentation within the public imaginary. The thesis contributes to debates on the future of the news media industry and the professional approach to visual news content-making in the context of today's changing media landscape.

## Acknowledgements

Thanks to my supervisors Ellie Rennie and Margaret Simons for their guidance throughout the research and for encouraging me to write this thesis in a second language. Special thanks also to Sandy Gifford, with whom I worked before this project, and who introduced me to Swinburne University, as well as to Klaus Neumann, who supported me with the application for the Australian Postgraduate Award. Without the APA scholarship and the additional support from the ARC Centre of Excellence for Creative Industries and Innovation, this project would not have been possible. Thanks also to those who made the atmosphere at the Swinburne Institute of Social Research friendly and welcoming, and for the kind support of colleagues and those co-workers who have made the PhD journey with me.

Thanks to all the people who shared their knowledge, passion and interest in photography and the media, including the research participants (see Part 2), as well as to those people whose information I did not use, but which still influenced the development of my project. They include: Ann Chesterman, Anya Trybala, Anthea Rafferty, Benj Binks, Beth Wildgoose, Bruce Cumming, Cath Dwyer, Carla Gottgens, Colleen Hughson, Diana Schmidt, Daniel Bickers, Eugene Hyland, Ingo Taubhorn, Jane Martin, Jacob Colliver, Jochen Schlevoigt, John Levy, Joice Evans, Jon Milligan, Julie Davies, Kim Lawler, Kate Gane, Larry Schwartz, Maya Haviland, Naomi Cass, Patrick Pount, Phoebe Adams, Serana Hunt, Susan van Wyk and Tanja Loewe. I also want to thank all the amateur photographers whose pictures I included in the Appendix, which, due to copyright reasons, will not be published in the online version of this thesis.

Thanks to Cornelius Pelzing, Mark Condina and especially Matt Holden, who proofread the following chapters, and helped me to improve my ability to express myself better in English. Many thanks also to Jillian Graham, who edited the final version of my thesis.

Last but not least, warmest thanks to my partner Matthias Pelzing, who got up during the night on many occasions to comfort our baby son Neo, born on 29

December 2012, during the time of this project. Thanks also to our three older children Cornelius, Caroline and Vivian for all their help, as well as to our extended family and friends, in particular to my parents Heidi and Gerald Schmieder, our au pair Joanna Jedrol who lived with us for three months in 2013, the staff members at the local child care centre and the Benjamin family (especially Indiana), who looked after little Neo so that I could work.

I started this project at a difficult time, as my brother sadly committed suicide. I am grateful for the support of Grace Couchman and everyone who encouraged me to accept this loss, to embrace the challenges and to believe in what I do. I dedicate this thesis to the memory of my brother Frank Schmieder and the people who accompanied me during the time of this project.

## Declaration

This thesis contains no material that has been accepted for the award to the candidate of any other degree or diploma. To the best of my knowledge it contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text of the examinable outcome.

The thesis has been copy-edited and proofread by Dr Jillian Graham (Articulate Writing Solutions), whose services are consistent with those outlined in Section D of the Australian Standards for Editing Practice (ASEP). Dr Graham's own fields of study encompass Musicology, Social History, Women's Studies and Psychoanalysis.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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## **Abbreviations**

ABC: Australian Broadcasting Service

AAP: Australian Associated Press

BBC: British Broadcasting Service

DPA: Deutsche Presse Agentur

NBC: National Broadcasting Company

UPI: United Press International

## Introduction

### ***The rise of the amateur***

In a highly-cited *Nature* paper published in 1972, the American physicist Philip Warren Anderson claims that “more is different” (Anderson 1972, p. 393), arguing that “scale change” can cause “fundamental change” (1972, p. 394). In 2008, Clay Shirky referred to Anderson’s argument in the context of online group organisation. The fact that large numbers of people can now directly interact with each other has had a radical impact on media, culture, economics and society (Shirky 2008). Several intellectuals have endorsed this euphoric vision of revolutionary change (Benkler 2006; Gillmor 2006; Gillmor 2004; Jenkins 2006a; 2006b; Rosen 2006). Other authors have critiqued the new “cult of the amateur” (Keen 2007, title), worrying that it would lead to the demise of quality standards and pose a threat to media professionals (Keen 2007). While the meaning of the presence of the amateur is still debatable, scholars commonly agree that we are witnessing a historical shift in *how* and *by whom* content is created, produced and distributed (Andén-Papadopoulos & Pantti 2011, pp. 14-15; see Chapter 1.3).

The rise of the amateur has frequently been illustrated by the symbol of the amateur photographer holding a camera above a crowd. The gesture symbolises the newsworthiness of the event, as well as the transformation of the bystander into witness and media participant (Becker 2013, p. 19). One of the first events to be identified as belonging to the new era of amateur participation was the coverage of the terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001 in New York City (Allan 2006; Becker 2011; Becker 2013; Pantti & Bakker 2009). Former *Newsweek* picture editor Cary Levy received around 35 visits from amateur photographers on 9/11 alone. Those numbers remained consistent for the entire first week, and she continued to receive pictures for two years after the event. Levy said: “I did not invite amateurs; they just came pouring in [...] People brought mostly 4x6 machine prints from the local photo-mat. Some sent images via email” (Levy 2010, email). Leigh Henningham, picture editor at the *The Age* newspaper, said: “The first time I remember was September 11 [...]. A lot of the good stuff was coming from amateurs. It was the beginning of it all” (Henningham

2010, interview). Online journalist Jon Burton was working at the news desk of the *The Age* website in Melbourne in September 2001. Burton remembers a high number of amateur photographs coming through news agencies (Burton 2010, interview).

Other events often cited as instances of amateur photography in the professional news media include the London Bombings in 2005, the devastation caused by the tsunami in South-East Asia in December 2004, Hurricane Katrina in the United States in August 2005, the Iranian elections in 2009 and the Arab uprising in 2011-2012 (Andén-Papadopoulos & Pantti 2011; Andén-Papadopoulos & Pantti 2013; Allan 2006; Allan 2007; Allan 2009; Hermida & Thurman 2008; Kristensen & Mortensen 2013; Lorenzo-Dus & Bryan 2011; Pantti 2012; Pantti & Bakker 2009; Reading 2011; Pantti 2013a; Pantti 2013b; see Chapter 1.3).

### ***Research questions***

Participation of amateurs in the news has been widely observed as a growing phenomenon ever since. An increasing number of scholars have studied amateur media, including independently-published online amateur content and the presence of amateur work within the professional news media context. Many of these studies focus on text, neglecting the prominence of visual content (Andén-Papadopoulos & Pantti 2011, p. 11). Although amateur photographs are frequently mentioned, illustrating the importance of the issue, they are comparatively under-represented in studies and are often not the main focus of academic research (see Chapter 1.3).

I set out to analyse the sourcing of amateur photographs in professional news media to understand the decision-making process of news media workers when dealing with amateur photographs, and formulated the following research questions that guided my enquiry:

- Why do news media workers accommodate amateur photographs?
- What causes them to be considered useful or not?
- Do professional ideas, structures and standards encourage or discourage the use of amateur photographs?

- Have news media adjusted to embrace the ubiquity and accessibility of amateur photography?

In asking these questions, I aimed to grasp whether the volume and accessibility of amateur photography has made a substantial impact on the news media industry (cf. Anderson 1972, p. 394). I also sought to understand whether and how the professional news media adapts to the sourcing of amateur photographs.

### ***The relevance of professional news media***

This project sits within the context of the crisis faced by professional news media—namely, the need to reposition traditional approaches to news content-making and to search for a new business model that will provide a level of security and revenue comparable to the model used in the 20th century (Andén-Papadopoulos & Pantti 2011, p. 11). It is part of a broader attempt to understand how the news media industry is changing, or should change, in order to remain relevant. What does the sourcing of amateur photographs, including related attitudes, decisions and opinions, say about the state of professional news media in a time of change? What does it say about the professional/amateur divide that has characterised the media since the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century? Is this divide still relevant in the context of photography in professional news media today? If journalism is indeed the fourth estate of democracy, such questions must be taken seriously.

The importance of the research field can also be justified by the sheer size of the industry dedicated to the practice of news production and “devoted to reaching very large popular audiences and readerships” (Hartley 2002, p. 142). Professional news media are also characterised by “historical longevity” (Singer et al. 2011, p. 3). Since the industry came into existence, professional news media have proven “their ability to adapt successfully to other monumental changes in communication technology” (Singer et al. 2011, p. 3). Furthermore, professional news media play a continuing role in terms of agenda setting, breaking the news, and framing content (Goode 2009, p. 1293). Some news brands, including the German news magazine *Der Spiegel*, the *British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC)*, or news agencies such as *Australian*

*Associated Press (AAP)* and *Deutsche Presse-Agentur (DPA)* (which I will discuss in this thesis) remain influential despite broader industry challenges and the impact of alternative publishing platforms. Some authors even question whether amateur content can retain its value without news media workers to edit, curate or moderate such material (Sjøvaag 2011; Hoskins 2006). They believe that “without the mass dissemination of amateur images by mainstream media organisations, such imagery can find little cultural significance” (Sjøvaag 2011, p. 93), or they find it “difficult to imagine, or to remember, historic events of the modern age outside of or separate from the media that ‘produced’ them” (Hoskins 2006, p. 458).

It must be questioned which parts of the news industry are truly reaching large audiences today and what role professional news media will play in relation to future events. Nevertheless, understanding the role and impact of amateurs on established ways of news content-making is important, not in spite of, but because of the changes that are occurring.

### ***The practice of sourcing***

The study of amateur photography and professional news media is thus timely. Nevertheless, I chose to examine current practices with reference to historical trajectories. Many media scholars focus on the newness and emergent character of the phenomenon, an approach that risks overlooking its position with reference to long-term developments (see Part 1). Amateur research is also often directed towards philosophical considerations such as participation and democratisation (see Chapter 1.3). However, the use of amateur photographs in the professional news media is also part of the production of news media content, and thus part of the practice of sourcing materials. Before tendencies towards participation and democratisation can be considered, it is essential to look at why and how news media practices are occurring. This was the central task of my research. By focusing on the practice of sourcing, I aimed to understand the demand, need and value of amateur photographs for the news industry. Focusing only on philosophical concepts can overlook the practical challenges that determine professional news media outputs.

In 2009 American communications scholar Matt Carlson emphasised the need to revisit the issue of sourcing (2009a, p. 526). Research over several decades has consistently shown that news media workers traditionally favour a small number of routine sources, which strongly influence how society is represented in the news (Carlson 2009a, p. 529; see Chapter 3.1). Such outcomes have informed scholarly assumptions concerning power, authority, trust and the appropriateness of news (Carlson 2009a, p. 527). Carlson asks how current transformations in the media challenge such concepts, and suggests that scholars should pay attention to unofficial, non-routine sources (2009a, pp. 538-538). I followed Carlson's suggestion by choosing to frame the accommodation of amateur photographs in the professional news media in terms of sourcing. My thesis thus contributes to the body of research on sourcing practices in the production of news, including professional standards and norms, the everyday practices and routines, and notions of power, trust, value and authority (see Part 3).

Framing the issue as one of sourcing makes it possible to see the phenomenon of using amateur material in the professional news media in new ways. As this thesis demonstrates, amateur photographs are understood as raw material that is sourced according to the established sourcing patterns, biases, needs, values and standards of the professional news media. Eyewitness photographs of news events can therefore be understood as visual news tips or visual quotes that are framed, translated and contextualised in the professional news media context. While academic literature usually focuses on the presence of eyewitness accounts, my research also investigates the absence of amateur photographs, and finds the sourcing of them in other photographic domains, where the signature of the amateur is less visible or is not visible at all (such as in certain illustrative images). Additionally, the thesis shows that news media workers prefer to use routine sources such as news and picture agencies to access and use amateur work. Agencies provide a professionalised and cleaned-up version of amateur photographs and adjust them to the standards of the news industry. These findings suggest that in spite of the ubiquity and accessibility of amateur work online, news media workers still perceive amateurs largely as non-routine sources, and choose to remain authorities over their content. The way amateur photographs are accommodated in the professional news could therefore be seen as reaffirming established media power structures and social and economic

hierarchies (cf. Grabe, Zhou & Barnett 1999, p. 306; see Chapter 3.1). The thesis demonstrates the influence of amateur photography on professional news content-making. At the same time it challenges whether the volume and accessibility of amateur content means that it will have a substantial impact. Does “scale change” truly cause “fundamental change,” as Anderson claims (1972, p. 394)? My thesis shows that in the context of professional news media, this has not been the case to date.

### ***Approach***

Due to the emergent, complex and contemporary nature of the research, I chose a qualitative approach, following the principles of grounded theory (see Part 2). Over the course of the project I interviewed 42 editors, photo editors and photographers. While the majority of interviews took place in Australia, I also interviewed news media workers in Germany and the UK. My aim in doing so was to reflect upon and understand the practice of sourcing amateur photographs in the broader context of western professional news media to reveal the emerging practices, patterns, issues and trends that characterise the sourcing of amateur photographs in the professional news media today.

In addition, I spent time observing newsroom practices and included a number of other sources such as content published in the professional news media, textbooks on photography and contemporary and historical studies on sourcing practices. The latter were particularly important for understanding the extent to which the sourcing of amateur photographs in professional news media is a new phenomenon. The inclusion of a number of methods and a wide range of news media, together with the decision to investigate the issue without the development of a hypothesis before data collection produced important new insights into the use of amateur photographs in the professional news media.

### ***Chapter outline***

This thesis is divided into three main parts that include Part 1—the literature (Chapters 1.1–1.3), Part 2—the research design (Chapter 2) and Part 3—the results (Chapters 3.1–3.8). For the sake of clarity and readability, each key

aspect of the practice of sourcing amateur photographs that was identified (such as news value, quality or credibility) is dealt with individually. This leads to the presentation of the findings in eight chapters providing results.

The literature review is divided into three main sections. Chapter 1.1 reflects on the amateur/professional divide in photography. It highlights the historical importance of the amateur in the early days of photography and traces the changing notion of the concept in the following centuries. The chapter reveals the relevant characteristics of the amateur, including its strong link to leisure, its opposition to professionalism, and conflicting associations that range from love and devotion to a practice to incompetence and dilettantism. The chapter ends with a description of how the term 'amateur' is used in my research.

Academics and media representatives commonly use the term 'photojournalism' to discuss picture-related practices and processes in the professional news media. Chapter 1.2 asks what photojournalism is and whether the concept is useful for framing my research conducted at a time when anyone can publish. Although the concept did not serve as a framework for my project, a discussion of the historically-developed practice of picture production is important to understand the use of amateur photographs in the professional news media as a matter of sourcing and as part of long-term developments rather than as an emerging phenomenon only.

Chapter 1.3 gives an overview of the literature on the accommodation of amateur material in the professional news media since the beginning of the millennium. The chapter reveals the underrepresentation of amateur photography in the literature and explains how my study contributes to the field.

The methodological underpinnings and methods of the study are discussed in Part 2. The chapter identifies when, where, how and why data was collected, and reveals the strengths and limitations of the methods applied. Interviewees in this study provided insight into the practices of particular newsrooms, which are introduced in the appendices. They include western print and digital news media outlets as well as news and picture agencies. This inclusive approach was useful, as it helped to reveal the position of "wholesale" (Goode 2009, p. 1293) agencies

in the sourcing of amateur photographs, thus attempting to expand the typical focus on “retail news outlets” (Goode 2009, p. 1293), such as newspapers and magazines.

In Part 3 of this thesis, I describe and discuss the decisions and attitudes of news media workers concerning the sourcing of amateur photographs, according to the data from my research. Chapter 3.1 introduces the concept of amateur photographs as visual quotes. In contrast to the scholarly discourse on citizen or participatory journalism, news media workers in this project did not classify amateur photographs of news events as journalism itself, but rather as additional sources or as potential elements of news content-making, justified by the absence of a professional photographer or the lack of professional photographs. Such amateur photographs were valued and used as raw material, visual news tips and as tools for newsgathering. Additionally, it was noticeable that news media workers distanced themselves from amateur photographs and demonstrated their authority over amateur work by the way they talked about the issue. Taking into account such power relations, as well as the omnipresence of the camera in ones “media life” (Deuze 2012, title), this chapter finds that amateur photographs can be considered as quotes and thus as elements of professional news.

Chapter 3.2 reflects on the sourcing of amateur photographs with regard to news values. The chapter demonstrates that news media workers source amateur photographs according to news values such as unpredictability, amplitude, conflict, negativity and human interest. This reinforces that conventional values, professional needs and established practices dominate decisions concerning amateur photographs. The chapter also examines how amateur photographs can be found at “extreme ends of the news spectrum” (Northrup 2006, p. 37), meaning they are used for events that news media workers recognise as being of very high or very low news value. This suggests that the professional approach to photography is still part of the predictable, everyday business of news content-making.

Chapter 3.3 focuses on the sourcing of amateur photographs from personal online archives. These are sourced either due to the particularly high news value

of a certain event (see Chapter 3.2) due to the attempt to personalise news, the sudden relevance of unknown persons and other professional considerations such as financial or time-related pressures (see Chapter 3.8). News media workers in this study perceived such photographs—once hidden in shoeboxes and family albums, and now shared on picture sharing and social networking sites—as “non-routine sources” (Carlson 2009a, p. 539). Interviewees generally preferred to stick with established professional relationships such as working with picture and news agencies. The chapter reveals that news and picture agencies are particularly important in the distribution of amateur photographs. It could be argued that such agencies play a key role in the way amateur photographs are edited, distributed and professionalised, and thus have a major impact on how and whether amateur photographs reach a wider audience. Such findings illustrate that the sourcing of amateur photographs in professional news media must be studied across media that were once clearly separated (see Part 2).

A major challenge in sourcing amateur photographs is seen in the imperative of credibility. Chapter 3.4 investigates this issue, revealing that news media workers tend to distrust amateur photographs. This distrust is linked to characteristics of the medium of photography as well as to the anonymity and assumed non-professionalism of the amateur. The chapter explains which methods are used to check the credibility of amateur photographs, and reveals how news media workers adapt their methods to validate amateur photographs. The concept of the visual quote explains why some news media, in certain circumstances, publish amateur photographs that do not follow elaborate standards and processes.

Chapter 3.5 focuses on the issue of quality—a common rationale for rejecting amateur photographs. However, in the context of eye-witnessing, low quality has become a quality in itself as it denotes a certain reality effect and authenticity. Furthermore, mediocre photographs can be good enough to fill a gap in the back of a print publication or an online gallery (see Chapter 3.6). Thus it could be argued that the low quality of amateur photographs (depending on aspects such as purpose, content and exclusivity) is one of the more accessible elements of professional news. This does not mean that high-quality photographs lose their importance. Rather, it shows the value of certain types of amateur photographs and reveals that they are less of a substitute for professional photography than

an addition, and one that reinforces what is understood as professional. With the side-by-side existence of elaborate high-quality photographs and blurred snapshots, concepts of professional and amateur are no longer antagonistic, but can be understood as complementary.

Chapter 3.6 reveals the strong link between the sourcing of amateur photographs and the use of free online content in the professional news media context. The relevance of amateur photographs online can be attributed to certain characteristics of the internet such as speed, flexibility and capacity. Amateur photographs in this environment become part of a flexible approach to news content-making, characterised by a focus on ephemeral processes and practices rather than persistent news media content. Additionally, amateur photographs are often used online as a means of interacting with the audience. This can occur as a practice in the more traditional news environment as well as in particular spaces that are designed for amateur participation (see also Domingo 2011, pp. 85-87).

Chapter 3.7 explores the sourcing of amateur photographs in participatory spaces and platforms, in which amateur photographs are used under the umbrella of professional news media, and yet exist outside the traditional understanding of news media content. This reinforces the argument that amateur photographs can be perceived as additional elements, which in these spaces are tools to relate and interact with (potential) customers. As a result, photographs have a role beyond the conventional purposes of news. The chapter demonstrates that, in the context of such participatory spaces, the role of news media workers is changing, becoming a practice of moderating and curating, and involving looser forms of editing. In the more traditional news space, processes have adapted to the presence of amateur photographs (as described in earlier chapters), but are usually more controlled and have not fundamentally changed (Hermida 2011a, p. 186).

Chapter 3.8 outlines the issues concerning the sourcing of amateur photographs due to cost-saving strategies. On the one hand, amateur photographs were seen as an inexpensive alternative to professionally-produced photographs. On the other hand, findings in this study suggest that the overall financial value of

amateur photographs is limited. This is due in part to the increased workload involved in utilising amateur photographs according to professional procedures, and to the potential loss of high-quality standards. Cost considerations are also mirrored in the merging of professional roles, as news media workers without a pictorial background now search for photographs themselves (see Chapter 3.3), or even take pictures, thereby influencing attitudes towards the value and perceived usefulness of amateur photographs. The concept of amateurism can be understood not only as complementary, but has also become part of the professional approach to news content-making.

Many factors in this thesis indicate a greater openness to, and dependence on, amateur photographs on the part of the professional news media today. Such factors include the value of certain photographs such as eyewitness images, the accessibility and usability of pictures in personal online archives, the demand for larger numbers of photographs, the interactive value of photographs, and the changing business models of the professional news media. In addition, news media workers in this study recognised the increasing sourcing of amateur photographs since the turn of the century and acknowledged that in certain cases amateur photographs infiltrate the sphere of the professional news media despite reservations towards the amateur. Nevertheless, they frequently pointed out that amateur photographs are coincidental products, mainly useful in terms of witnessing highly-newsworthy, unforeseeable news events. This argument can be also found in the 20<sup>th</sup>-century literature on photojournalism (Rothstein 1969, p. 14). This is an important point, demonstrating that amateur involvement in the news media has occurred for some time. It also suggests that attitudes and perceptions towards the amateur have not changed fundamentally. This thesis demonstrates that the sourcing of amateur photographs draws largely on established news values, practices and standards in professional news media and is thus not as disruptive as some authors anticipated in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The findings suggest that professional news media practices persist, in some cases due to routine decisions and attitudes that may be well out of date, and at other times for good reason.

## **Part 1 Literature Review**

### **1.1 The amateur in photography – historical trajectories**

Amateur involvement in the professional news media has been happening for some time. Nevertheless, research on amateur content tends to focus on the newness of the phenomenon rather than seeing it as part of long-term cultural, technology- and market-driven development. To address this relationship, in the first part of this thesis I demonstrate the disconnection between the historical path of amateur photography (see Chapter 1.1), the production of pictures in the news (see Chapter 1.2) and how such themes have been framed in new media and journalism studies since the turn of the century (see Chapter 1.3). In this chapter I discuss the concept of the amateur in the domain of photography, and reflect on its historical importance before the medium attracted the attention of potential professionals, companies, educational institutions and the wider public (cf. Leadbeater & Miller 2004, p. 51). I also retrace the changing notion of the amateur, which is important for understanding the sourcing of amateur photographs in professional news media and for putting the scholarly discussion of amateur content in context. Photography evolved “without theories and without a continuous artistic tradition,” states Peter Galassi, once chief curator of the Department of Photography at The Museum of Modern Art in New York (cited in Kirby 2008). While photography must be discussed as part of the visual tradition whose pictorial roots existed well before photography was invented (Griffin 1991, p. 14; Newton 2009, p. 234; Toscani 1996, p. 54), Galassi’s statement emphasises the significance of amateurs and their cultural impact on the invention and development of photography.

#### ***The first amateurs in photography***

The term ‘amateur’ has its etymological origin in the Latin noun ‘amator’, which means ‘lover’, and the related verb ‘amāre’, which means ‘to love’ (Eitzen 1989, p. 95; Stebbins 1987, p. 23). Therefore the term ‘amateur’ traditionally describes a lover of something (Eitzen 1989, p. 95; Teil & Hennion 2004, p. 19), which is maybe why positive, ideal or even romantic emotions are associated with the

amateur (Eitzen 1989, p. 98). Exploring the concept in the context of amateur sport, Stanley Eitzen writes that the dimension of love means that amateurs enjoy an amateur activity in which they have freely chosen to participate. According to him, the reason for doing this activity relates to the “intrinsic rewards from the activity rather than the extrinsic rewards of money and fame.” Eitzen further claims that to the amateur, the process of doing the activity is as relevant as the outcome. He notes a love of the activity “for its own sake” and a moral obligation that is part of it (1989, p. 95).

An often-repeated characteristic of amateur work is that it is a leisure activity (Eitzen 1989, p. 96). This is certainly true for the representatives of the leisured bourgeoisie who were in the financial and social position of so-called gentlemen-scientists for whom photography was a fashionable pastime (Freund 1980, p. 23). Although the Frenchman Nicéphore Niepce, his colleague Lois Daguerre and the Englishman Fox Talbot are known as the *inventors* of photography, historian Jeff Batchen reveals that a number of enthusiasts in several countries spent their spare time exploring the photographic process (1999, p. 34). Batchen’s insight highlights the relevance of amateur work in the earlier stages of photography, as is the case for several professions (Stebbins 1979, p. 21) and innovations, “which are too young for there to be an organised and professional body of knowledge or too marginal to warrant the attention of companies or universities” (Leadbeater & Miller 2004, p. 51).

Shortly after the announcement of the invention of photography in 1839, portrait photography became a flourishing industry (Ward 1989, pp. 10-41). According to writer John Ward, a manufacturer of dental supplies named Alexander S. Wolcott opened the first photo studio in the USA in 1840. Coal merchant Richard Beard entered the trade, followed a short time later by the Frenchmen Antoine Claudet, who established the first daguerreotype portrait business in England in 1841. (Ward 1989, pp. 21-22) These first representatives of the portrait business were not “gentlemen scientists,” but nonetheless started as amateurs, namely as beginners or learners of photography (cf. Yin, Wang & Hsu 2005, p. 976; see also below). Working with improvised equipment, self-made cameras and material, they made photographs “somehow by trial and error” (Newhall 1957, p. 1). The commercial success of portrait photography led to studio openings all over the world (Ward 1989, pp. 21-22) and to more people practising photography to

make a living, informing the notion of professionalism in the context of photography. The practice of taking photographs is usually labelled as a craft or trade and has never been a profession such as law or medicine, as I discuss in the context of photojournalism in Chapter 1.2. Nevertheless, the attributes of professional ideology and identity can be useful for understanding the changing notion of amateur photography (see also Chapter 1.2; 2). According to Parson those attributes involve a high level of skills, training and control (1968, p. 545; see also Banning 1998-1999, p. 158). Other authors include theory, community sanction, authority, culture and ethical codes in their definitions of professionals (Greenwood 1957, p. 45; see also Banning 1998-1999, p. 158). The notion of professionalism also includes the expectation of special credentials and competencies (Merrill 1986, p. 57) as well as the need to satisfy customers (Eitzen 1989, p. 96). For example cartes-de-visite (small-format prints in the size of today's business cards) became extremely popular in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Allison 1989, p. 52). For the first time, they made it possible for less wealthy people to own photographs of friends and family members (Szarkowski 2007, p. 7).

Next to the fast professionalization of the portrait business, a growing number of privileged people practised photography, not for the purpose of making money, but rather as a hobby (Ward 1989, p. 31). Amateurism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century excluded poorer people, who, due to lack of resources and time, could not afford to be amateurs (Eitzen 1989, p. 101). "Consequently, to be a pure amateur required independent wealth [...]," Eitzen notes (1989, p. 97). The factor of leisure and financial independence also explains the notion of freedom (Leadbeater & Miller 2004, p. 21) as well as the belief that amateurs neither have the desire nor the need to make money with photography (Hamilton 2013, p. 179; see Chapter 3.8).

Amateurs have often been perceived in opposition to professionals in respect to income (Eitzen 1989). At the same time, it has been noted that an understanding of 'amateur' and 'professional' as counterparts is misleading and too simplistic (Lobato, Thomas & Hunter 2013; Hamilton 2013; Stebbins 1977; Zimmermann 1995), as professionals may volunteer their work or amateurs sometimes earn an income with the activity they love (Hamilton 2013, p. 179; see Chapter 3.8). The professional/amateur divide also implies that professional and amateur

photography could be seen as separate activities exercised either by professionals (=who earn their income with photography) or amateurs (=who practice photography as a leisure activity). However, the literature shows that this is not necessarily the case. For example, Baldwin, author of a textbook on photography published in 1903, notes that photography not only offers the opportunity to make photographs as part of a business OR recreation, but to combine work and leisure (Baldwin 1903, p. 5). Thus photography studied and practised during one's spare time can be for pleasure and profit (Baldwin 1903, p. 5).

Baldwin writes:

“The value in life of a useful application of leisure moments can never be too forcibly urgent, and some of the most notable instances of success are to be found among those who, while following distasteful occupations, gradually acquired a profession which enabled them to contribute to the sum of human happiness and enshrine their names in enduring honor and fame. Among these, a great French physician studied his profession under the hall lamp while serving as a waiter in a Parisian restaurant, and the remarkable life of the blacksmith astronomer is not very ancient history. But there is no profession which offers such opportunities as photography [...]” (Baldwin 1903, p. 5).

This statement demonstrates that the definition of the amateur can include not only people who perform an activity for leisure and accordingly do not get paid, but also those who get paid but are not formally educated (Clotfelter 1999, p. 2). According to common explanations in the literature, professionals earn at least 50 per cent of their income from the activity, while the money for amateurs is just a supplement (Stebbins 1977, p. 585).

### ***Informal and formal learning practices***

Following an increasing demand for photographic skills, the first schools for photography opened at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Lincoln 1888, p. 1).

Nonetheless, authors note that educational institutions such as universities embraced photography education “only slowly and reluctantly” and it “popped up

haphazardly” in academic disciplines and faculties (Burnett 2007, p. 216). In contrast to these rather slow developments, various types of informal education can be found throughout the history of photography, starting with presentations and exhibitions shortly after the official announcement of the invention of photography in 1839 (Burnett 2007, p. 216). Photographic workshops provided a form of photography education, which (in the modern sense) emerged in America in the 1930s as part of the progressive education movement (Burnett 2007, p. 216).

Tapley, author of an instruction book for amateur photographers in 1884, writes that the photographic process “has been regarded as a particularly occult and mysterious one, which requires a special gift and years of study under the instruction of a professional.” Referring to his own self-learning experience he questions this, concluding: “If I can succeed anyone can.” (Tapley 1884, p. 11) While it must be remembered that Tapley referred to the photographic process that in his time included developing, enlarging and fixing images, his statement about the accessibility of photography remains relevant 130 years later, in an era when photography has “reached an apex of effortlessness” (Jaeger 2007, p. 6).

Interviewees in my study also said that one would not be likely to become a professional photographer if one did not learn independently, taking photographs beyond assignments and formal education degrees (French 2010, interview; Steward 2010, interview) and “from a sense of excitement” (Leadbeater & Miller 2004, p. 16) for photography (see Chapter 1.2).<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless amateurs are commonly perceived as dabblers, dilettantes or players (Stebbins 1977, p. 583). They are believed to spend less time with a particular activity, and are understood to be less educated, less experienced, less skilled and less committed compared with their professional counterparts. Their work is often referred to as nonprofessional, and used synonymously with the term ‘amateurish’ (Stebbins 1977, p. 585), which stands in stark contrast to the notion of devotion

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<sup>1</sup> Some of the most famous photographers began their careers as amateur photographers. Well-known Brazilian photojournalist Sebastião Salgado, for example, was working as an economist in London when he first started to take photographs in 1971. Two years later he gave up economics to become a professional photographer (Biography: Sebastião Salgado 2004).

closely associated with the understanding of the amateur as a lover of photography (Hamilton 2013, p. 179).

The distinction between formal and informal learning practices also supports the position of Lobato, Thomas and Hunter, who perceive 'amateur' not necessarily as opposed to 'professional', but acknowledge that both concepts "are artifacts of analysis rather than clearly defined spheres of activity" (2013, p. 10). While the authors make this statement with reference to professional media and user-generated content (see Chapter 1.3), the same can be said about photography. Lobato, Thomas and Hunter describe a diversity of media activities as either more or less regulated (2013, pp. 3-17).

Using the example of family photography, authors such as Chalfen (1998) and Hirsch (1981; 1997) show how the activity moved in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century towards formalisation, reflected by the advent of copyright regulations and the opening of portrait studios (see also Lobato, Thomas & Hunter 2013, p. 9). Since then, family photography has largely become an informal practice (Lobato, Thomas & Hunter 2013, p. 9), which may be the reason why family photography (and hence amateur photography more generally) gained little scholarly attention throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. While the discourse on formal and informal practices is certainly a simplified depiction of photographic history, it helps to understand that 'professional' and 'amateur' are not necessarily counterparts, as is demonstrated throughout this thesis, and have more in common than the distinction implies at first glance (Lobato, Thomas & Hunter 2013, p. 10).

### ***Towards everyone***

As described above, at the beginning of photography, the amateur was the pioneering enthusiast and wealthy hobbyist. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, due to social and economic changes, cheaper camera systems, accessible technology and an increasing interest in photography as a leisure activity, the concept of amateur started to shift towards the general population. One representative who greatly influenced photography in this way was George Eastman, an American banker and photo enthusiast who founded the Kodak enterprise in 1884 (Garner 2007, p. 188). Eastman understood that

people not only wanted to own photographs, but that they would also want to make photographs themselves. In 1888 Kodak released the Kodak 1, a simple box camera including a roll of film (Coe 1989, p. 60), comparable to a single-use camera, though reusable multiple times. Then in 1900 Kodak introduced an even cheaper camera, the Brownie, which sold for \$1.15 and came with a roll of six images (Orvell 2003, p. 144). According to the literature, 100,000 Brownies were sold within the first year (Coe 1989, p. 65). For the first time in human history large numbers of people, without being wealthy or especially skilled, were able to take photographs. This shift in photographic production was perceived as revolutionary for both the social role of photography and for the photographic industry, and has been discussed in several publications (Burgess 2007; De Vinney 2000; Jenkins 1975; Munir & Phillips 2005; Olivier 2007; Sarvas & Froehlich 2011; West 2000).

To promote popular photography Eastman invested heavily in advertising campaigns. His main target group was women, as from Eastman's point of view they were most likely to record family life (Garner 2007, p. 188).<sup>2</sup> Kodak's famous marketing slogan, "You push the button, we do the rest" (Garner 2007, p. 188) indicates the accessibility of photography regardless of knowledge about chemicals and technical skills. However, the slogan also implies the dependency between the one who pushes the button and becomes a customer and the Kodak technician who is able to make the pictures visible and fix them on paper. Furthermore, the slogan suggests a difference between the professional or professional amateur, who are independent of this industrial process, and those representatives of the wider public who rely on it. These different dependencies of professionals, professional amateurs and the wider public dominated photography until digitalisation at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (see below).

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<sup>2</sup> "Save your happy memories with a Kodak" was, for instance, a slogan on an advertisement poster showing a woman in a blue-and-white striped dress with three children and a picnic basket on a beach (Kodak illustration in Ford 1989, p. 37). This Kodak girl, created by poster artist John Hassell, was for decades the recurring element of Kodak's campaigns (Coe 1989, p. 68), foreseeing the increasing impact of those amateurs who, with a great interest in their individual subjects rather than in the function of a camera and the photographic process, started to influence the development of photography.

### ***Professionals, amateurs, snappers***

Author Nancy Martha West claims that the photo enthusiast George Eastman “turned the empire of photography into a republic” (West, cited in Kirby 2008; see also West 2000). However, her statement only partly describes the dynamics at the time, as increasing popular participation in photography from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century also prompted serious photographers, including professionals, artists and serious amateurs, to carve out their own territory. For example, the term ‘snapshot’ first referred to photographs that were taken of moving objects, but soon came to mean photographs that were carelessly taken by ordinary people (Zakia 2007, p. 347).

Richard Zakia writes:

“In the early 1900s, snapshots and those who took them began to be looked down upon by professional photographers and those who aspired to be art photographers because the composition and technical quality were, in their view, lacking” (Zakia 2007, p. 347).

The establishment of photo clubs and comparable organisations, as well as the influence of photographic manufacturers and associations, helped to distinguish different notions of professional and amateur photography and counteracted the perception that photography can be easy and accessible (Schwartz 1986, p. 165). The institutionalisation of photography also shaped and reinforced codes of beauty and fine art, which function as “symbolic mechanisms of social differentiation” (Schwartz 1986, p. 165; see also Griffin 1987). As I will demonstrate in Chapter 3.5, the idea of good photographs is also used in the news industry to defend and protect the otherness and position of professional news content-making.

Henry G. Abbot, author of a handbook on amateur photography published in 1899, distinguishes between two kinds of amateur photographers, “one that presses the button and allows the professional to do the rest, and the other the earnest student who has ambition to become [...] a photographer” (1899, p. 1). According to Abbot, the amateur is the one who learns to create photographs—a beginner who is in the process of making photographs—rather than a casual snapper who rarely makes any progress (1899, p. 1). Similarly, John Szarkowski,

curator, critic and writer on photography, distinguishes between professionals, serious amateurs, and casual snapshotters (2007, p. 6). Snappers “take their pictures for a variety of reasons, all of which boil down to the desire to capture an image in order to recall it later,” while an amateur photographer has “technical and artistic ambitions in his or her use of the medium” (Ebner, Reimer & Reinartz 2008, p. 482).

Based on this three-part division, sociologist Robert Stebbins developed the professional-amateur-public system to distinguish the serious amateur from the professional and from the wider public (2004, p. 229). This divide is largely based on the understanding that some amateurs are “guided by professional standards and share the same spirit of satisfaction.” According to Stebbins “they are neither dabblers who approach the activity with little commitment or seriousness, nor professionals who make a living off that activity [...]” (1977, p. 598). He further distinguishes between pre-professionals, pure amateurs and post-professionals (Stebbins 1977, p. 595). Leadbeater and Miller call such devotees (Stebbins 1977, p. 594) “pro-ams” or professional amateurs, and in 2004 described them as “a new breed of amateurs” (Leadbeater & Miller 2004, cover). Likewise, Stebbins spoke in 1977 about modern amateurism as a new phenomenon (1977, p. 582). However, the aforementioned textbook (Abbot 1899) suggests that, at least in photography, the division can be traced back to the availability of cheap, simple camera equipment since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (cf. Zimmermann 1995, p. xi). Thus technique became another way to distinguish between professional and amateur (Zimmermann 1995, p. 2; see Chapter 3.5).

Looking at these different kinds of camera users, a modernist scale of values becomes visible, with the professional employed by an institution as the most valuable, and the indefinable snapper who randomly takes photographs as the least valuable. The relatively small amount of academic research on amateur photography throughout the 20th century also indicates the low valuation of the amateur. Academic Richard Chalfen notes this lack on the subject of snapshot photography, which since the end of the 19th century has been ubiquitous, but has rarely been the subject of serious academic research (1981, p. 106). Additionally, in the body of 20th-century literature, amateur photography is often discussed with reference to the personal or private (see Chapter 3.3), whereas

the professional is associated with the politics and economics of the public sphere (Zimmermann 1995, p. 1) and is discussed in reference to the public service function of accepted professions such as law or medicine (Osiel 1986, p. 164). As I explained above, the practice of taking pictures has never been a profession in that sense (see also Chapter 1.2). Yet photographers who earn their money with photography have the tendency to use the attributes of professionalization to stand out from the crowd and to increase their reputation, influence and wealth (cf. Osiel 1986, p. 163). The label 'professional' seems highly overused as a result (Merrill 1986, p. 56; see also Chapter 1.2). In 20<sup>th</sup> century society (when professionalism was well regarded, Osiel 1986 p. 163), the development towards and rhetoric of professionalization in certain photographic spheres had the effect of downgrading the reputation of amateur photographers.

Leadbeater and Miller write:

“As professionalism grew, [...] so amateurs came to be seen as second-rate. Amateurism came to be a term of derision. Professionalism was a mark of seriousness and high standards” (2004, p. 12).

In spite of its marginal status, amateur photography in the 20<sup>th</sup> century has enjoyed great popularity and has become an ever-growing industry (Chalfen 1981, p. 106; Zakia 2007, p. 347). In the USA, 3.9 billion photographs were taken in 1967, whereas 8.9 billion were taken ten years later in 1977 (Wolfman Report, cited in Chalfen 1981, p. 106). While these numbers capture the popularity of photography among the wider public, they also demonstrate the value of the amateur and the associated potential profitability for the industry (Eitzen 1989, p. 98; Hamilton 2013, p. 180).

### ***The amateur within the professional domain***

Several other disciplines, including art history, television and film studies, provide further material to explore the concept of the amateur. In the context of art, for example, authors note that the “strange and unexpected visual charm” (Fineman 2004) of snapshot photographs was imitated by a number of artists in terms of techniques, styles and content (Orvell 2003, pp. 141-161). Among the most famous of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is American photographer Walker Evans, who used

the amateur aesthetic as well as the application of simple amateur techniques such as Polaroid (Bonanos 2012, p. 101; Zakia 2007, p. 348). The wealthy Frenchman Jacques Henri Lartigue, who according to Stebbins' system is a "pure amateur" (Stebbins 1977, p. 595), is celebrated as a "forerunner of the art-documentary style of the 1960s" (Moore, cited in Kirby 2008; see also Zakia 2007, p. 348). Furthermore, artists of the 1990s, such as Wolfgang Tillmans, were also influenced or inspired by the amateur (Tillmans, Kolbitz & Martelli 2008), contradicting "the unidimensional thinking, that pits the amateur against the professional" (Stebbins 1977, p. 601).

TV formats that illustrate the presence of the amateur in the context of the professional media include funny home movie shows of the 1990s (Fore 1993), reality television programs such as Big Brother, as well as casting shows such as X Factor or Masterchef (Andrejevic 2002; Holmes & Jermyn 2004; Seale 2012). The way the amateur is presented in such TV formats mirrors traditional power and control mechanisms (Hamilton 2013, p. 184), arguably to protect the professional/amateur system. My thesis demonstrates similar attitudes, as amateur photographs in professional news media are mainly used in the context of existing power structures and therefore serve the system into which they are incorporated (see Part 3).

TV studies and art history accept that amateur content and/or talent has become an integral part of professional media. Furthermore, these disciplines suggest that amateurish-looking images might, but do not necessarily, represent the work of amateurs, as amateurism has become "a style in and of itself" (Faust 2007, p. 32). Professionals adopt "the pose of the amateur" even inside the professional domain (Hamilton 2013, p. 182). Thus the meaning of the terms amateur and professional can be slippery, not just with the professional performance and behaviour of some amateurs (Stebbins 1977, p. 583), but also with the masking of the professional and the symbolic application of the amateur concept (Hamilton 2013, pp. 181-182), for example in the form of aesthetics (see Chapter 3.5).

### ***Digital photography and the rise of the amateur***

The importance of the amateur has been widely discussed with reference to the internet, in which amateurs play a relevant role in many instances of software development as well as in the promotion of particular online platforms and the online environment more generally (Hamilton 2013, 183; see Chapter 1.3). Further, the shift from analogue to digital technology has informed new ideas about what is believed to be amateur or professional.

Digital techniques developed from the 1980s onwards were primarily targeted at professional photography (see Chapter 1.2). Attempts to develop a camera for the amateur market followed at the beginning of the 1990s. In 1994, for example, Apple introduced the first colour digital camera connectable to a home computer. The Quick Take 100 was sold to the mass-market for less than \$1000 (Carter 2007, p. 19; Zeegen 2010, p. 107). In the following year Casio's QV-10, the first consumer digital camera with a liquid crystal display, also known as the LCD screen (Carter 2007, p. 20), reached high sales numbers (Kawamura 1998, p. 14). According to Kawamura these two marketed cameras were "the beginning of a new era" in the consumer use of digital still cameras (Kawamura 1998, p. 14). Altogether more than 35 new digital camera models were introduced in 1995. In 1998 the number of new camera models climbed to more than 160 (Carter 2007, p. 20). This increase shows that photography, once again, had experienced a major change, which affected not only professional processes (see Chapter 1.2), but also its accessibility to the wider public (Ebner, Reimer & Reinartz 2008, p. 492) and hence changes in what constitutes amateur and professional.

The ability to take as many photographs as necessary, to view and delete unsatisfactory photographs, and to process them without the external support of a laboratory, has led to a situation in which people not only have access, but also more control over the outcome (Long & Currie 2006, p. 177). In contrast stands the shrinking control of professional photographers, which was formerly exercised through work in the darkroom (Ebner, Reimer & Reinartz 2008, p. 492). Furthermore, the disappearance of the industrial structures that most people required to develop film has increased the speed of processing and enabled amateurs to be as fast as professionals. Whereas the first people who relied on the industrial process had to wait several months to be able to see their

photographs (Coe 1989, p. 63), the LCD screen of the camera, as well as the digital distribution of photographs via the internet, allows for the viewing and sharing of photographs instantly, which has had a major impact on the more recent debate regarding the categories of 'professional' and 'amateur', in particular in terms of promptness and immediacy (Hamilton 2013, p. 181; see Chapter 3.6).<sup>3</sup>

Mobile phone photography has been understood as another "major trend driving the future of imaging" (Henning 2009, p. 2). Unlike other forms of photography, as Koskinen notes, mobile phone photographs are taken, stored and delivered in a technical context in which the devices that take photographs "follow [but also] connect people perpetually" (2004, p. 18). This presence and connectivity makes the camera phone a powerful and socially-significant device (Reading 2011, p. 300). Consequently, it has been claimed that "the best camera" is not necessarily the one with the best optical lens, the largest sensor size or the lowest ISO settings, but "the one that's with you," as American photographer Chase Jarvis phrases (2010, book title).<sup>4</sup>

Talk of technological developments has at times descended to a simplistic cause-and-effect relationship between the technology and the changing notion of the amateur, as pointed out in the literature (Allan 2009, p. 19). Nevertheless, it

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<sup>3</sup> Amateur photography changed "from primarily being a print-oriented to a transmission-oriented, screen-based experience" (Rubinstein & Sluis 2008, p. 09). Once photography theorists dealt with material artefacts such as family albums or prints in boxes or picture frames; today's scholars write about pixel or image data in the context of social networks and online photo sharing (Rubinstein & Sluis 2008, p. 16). The same can be said about researchers who, in order to analyse news media content, turned the pages of papers and magazines, while many have shifted their interest to digital media (see Chapter 1.3).

<sup>4</sup> The development of cameras since the introduction of photography at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century reflects a shift from bulky, large cameras that needed much attention to capture photographs towards small, light devices that fit into a pocket and do not need much care to use them at all. The Kodak revolution was driven by the production of simple, accessible cameras, which influenced areas such as photojournalism, where small cameras such as the Leica, introduced in the 1920s, allowed photographers to be more flexible (Pasi 2012). Therefore amateur photography could be understood as the "first mobile medium proper" (Huhtamo, cited in Gye 2007, p. 279) and as a forerunner of photojournalism as practised throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century (see Chapter 1.1), as well as a precursor of today's mobile phone photography.

cannot be denied that the ubiquity of cameras and the speed with which mobile devices and the internet allow the sharing of photographs and other content online can be understood as important innovations both for professional photography and for the amateur. These innovations have increased the visibility of the amateur due to the move from the private into the public arena, have affected all stages of picture production and contributed to a life in which media have become commonplace (Deuze 2012; see Chapter 3.1). Even though technology has always been an important element of photography (Peres & Barnett 2007, p. 297), cameras today must be seen as tools that support visual communication (Harker 1989, p. 90), as I argue in Chapter 3.1.

The “digital-do-it-yourselfism” of amateurs is largely discussed in positive terms with reference to the democratising of the media landscape (Hamilton 2013, p. 178; see Chapter 1.3). Hamilton writes, “the amateur, once positioned on the fringes of our culture, now occupies a role much closer to the centre” (2013, p. 179), arguing “something has fundamentally shifted in social expectations around amateurs and the kinds of work they do” (2013, p. 181). In contrast, my research on the sourcing of amateur photographs shows strong reservations and conservative thinking about the amateur/professional dualism in the professional news arena. News media workers praise amateur work when it promises to be useful, or strongly criticise it when defending the professional system (see Part 3). Thus this thesis questions the rise of the amateur, at least in the context of professional news media. The belief that photography is little more than a push of a button also obscures the fact that photographers use knowledge and skills in their work with the aim of creating photographs that stand out from the crowd. While certain lucky shots disprove such claims, knowledge and skills were often cited during interviews for my research as a way to distinguish amateur work from professional photography (see Chapter 3.5).

### ***The category ‘amateur’ in this study***

According to Stebbins’ system, the amateur needs to be explicitly distinguished from the wider public. At the same time, the popular use of the term ‘amateur’ has remained closely connected with it. Virtually everyone in the Western world can now participate in photography as a leisure activity, whereas few can be

employed as professional photographers (cf. Shirky 2005a). Hence, I have chosen not to use the term to represent a distinction between professionals and the public, as suggested by Stebbins (see above), but as a distinction from 'professional' in the sense of being employed or paid as a professional photographer. This diversion from Stebbins' system can be justified by the "vague position" (Kohlstedt 1976, p. 173) of the amateur between professionals and the public (Stebbins 2004, p. 229). Additionally, the interest in the process and technique of photography is not the only motivation to use a camera as an enthusiast. The love and passion for photography can also derive from a subject, a theme or an activity that one wants to capture with a camera. Thus snapshot photographers can also be understood as amateurs, defined by love and passion for their subject or the act of documenting, communicating and sharing, rather than for photography itself.

Furthermore, it must be noted that the amateur "is not a singular type" (Cook 2009) of camera user, nor is he or she a singular type of non-professional. Especially when using the term amateur for members of the public, we commonly talk about multiple users, not only with different skills, but also with several purposes and interests in photography. Therefore the category of 'amateur' in this thesis includes the spectrum between snapshot photographers and professional amateurs. While this is a rather open definition of the concept, it is useful in the context of this research, as I aim to understand the sourcing of photographs made by individuals "that originate from outside the professional media [...]" (Andén-Papadopoulos & Pantti 2011, p. 9).

### ***Conclusion***

The brief history of amateur photography presented in this chapter shows that there is ongoing change in the concept of the amateur, both in meaning and in value over time. Whereas the amateur at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was a wealthy enthusiast interested in the physical and chemical process of photography, the term became a way to distinguish the amateur from the professional (who earns his money with taking photographs) as well as from the mass of snapshot photographers. Thus the 'amateur' concept was used to exclude most people as well as to reinforce the relevance of professionalism.

Today, the concept involves the largely positive notion of inclusion used both to describe the work of professional amateurs and the public in general. In addition, it incorporates rather conflicting ideas of devotion and enthusiasm as well as shallowness and dilettantism (Hamilton 2013, p. 179; Stebbins 1977, p. 583). The category of 'amateur' could therefore be recognised as continuous or fluid (cf. Law 2004, p. i), reflecting a "restlessness of transformation, deformation and reformation" (Cooper 1998, p. 108). Cooper determined that "our institutional skills favour the fixed and static, the separate and self-contained" (Cooper 1998, p. 108).

In this thesis I attempt to accept the category of 'amateur' as a "heteromorphic 'organism'" (Cooper 1998, p. 108) that partly changes over time, but also includes diverse types of amateur photographers such as snappers and professional amateurs. In Chapter 3.8 I will also discuss the amateur in relation to people inside the professional news media. Rather than looking at amateurism in opposition to professionalism, the data of this research demonstrate that today these concepts exist next to each other and can also overlap (see Part 3).

## 1.2 Picture production in the professional news media

In Chapter 1.1 I investigated the amateur in the context of the historical evolution of photography. I will now discuss the production of pictures in the news, of which the sourcing of amateur photographs in professional news media is a part. In the literature this practice is commonly referred to as 'photojournalism'. Is photojournalism a useful framework for investigating amateur photographs in the news? To answer this question I examine what photojournalism is, consider the multiple functions of photographs in the news, identify the collaborative practice of picture publishing and highlight the possible distinction between the intentions of a photographer and the context in which pictures are accommodated. The latter is particularly relevant for understanding the decisions and attitudes on amateur photographs in the news in comparison with the professional approach of assigning photographers. The chapter also explains some of the historical trajectories of photojournalism, and asks whether and how the use of amateur photographs relates to the histories and legends of photojournalists who travelled the world and risked their lives taking photographs for the news (Becker 1998, p. 85). I argue that the sourcing of amateur photographs can only partly be understood through the lens of photojournalism. Recognising this was very important for my project and resulted in framing the research topic as an investigation into sourcing.

### ***Visual reporting***

The very first-known news photographs are the daguerreotypes of the Hamburg Fire in 1840, the pictures of the Crimean War in 1850 and the images of the American Civil War in 1860 (Evans 1978, p. 1). They were presented in photo albums and exhibitions before the media industry recognised the value of photography, and improvements in the printing process allowed the integration of photographs into magazines and newspapers (Evans 1978, p. 1). The term photojournalism has been attributed to Frank Luther Mott, who was Dean of the Missouri School of Journalism from 1942 to 1951 (The University of Iowa, School

of Journalism & Mass Communication 2013).<sup>5</sup> In 1924 Mott described photojournalism as “the visual reporting of news for publication in newspapers and magazines” (McDougall, cited in Cartwright 2007, p. 339). Author Julianne Newton builds on this early description, calling photojournalism “reporting visual information via various media” (Newton 2001, p. 5), as newspapers and magazines are only part of a diverse media landscape in which photographs are used today.<sup>6</sup>

The recurring key word in all these definitions is ‘reporting’, which is the basis of traditional news content-making (Newton 2001, p. 6). News media workers gather and select information considered of public interest, check the facts and convey news content packaged into stories (Compton & Benedetti 2010, p. 487) and published in particular news media outlets. Newsgathering can include several methods such as observation, interviewing or taking photographs (Newton 2001, p. 6). Where writers use words to report information, photographers work with the camera as a communication tool (Borchard, Mullen & Bates 2013, p. 68). Accordingly, the photojournalist or press photographer has been described as a “writer with light” (Cartwright 2007, p. 339). While this suggests that photojournalism has been understood as an equivalent journalistic activity, “news images have always taken a back seat to words” (Zelizer 2004, p. 118) and visual communication has been never truly an integral part of journalism studies (Griffin 1991, p. 10). The ongoing rivalry between images and words has been traced back to the protestant reformation (Hartley & Rennie 2004, p. 460) and the use of photographs in sensational journalism (Cagle 2013, p. 4). The rivalry is also demonstrated by the marginal status of photographers in the professional news media and by the absence of a larger number of studies on photography (Prosser 1998, p. 97; Cagle 2013, p. 4; see Chapter 1.3).

Contrary to what the notion of “visual reporting” implies, the publication of photographs combines words and photographs in a complementary rather than

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<sup>5</sup> The Missouri School of Journalism was the first school of journalism in the US and the world, founded in 1908 (Mizzou, University of Missouri, 2013).

<sup>6</sup> Additionally, terms such as ‘news photography’ or ‘press photography’ are sometimes separated from ‘photojournalism’ (Creative Skillset 2011), and at other times are used synonymously (Occupational Outlook Handbook 2011).

competitive way (Evans 1978, p. 255). As Thompson writes, “The visual is not an isolated sensory dimension but is usually accompanied by the spoken or written word [...]” (2005, p. 36). In news media captions, headlines and articles accompany photographs and influence how they are perceived and read as part of the content (cf. Thompson 2005, p. 36). While people may just scan pictures without reading, experiments have shown that when photographs catch a viewer’s attention, the viewer turns to the accompanying texts (Rössler et al. 2011, p. 422). In fact, it is believed that photographs need textual explanation, as one of the characteristics of photography is its ambiguity (Rössler et al. 2011, p. 421; see Chapter 3.4). Thus one of the problems with understanding the use of amateur photographs as photojournalism is that the concept insufficiently captures the idea that photographs are only elements of the news and parts of the publication of a story that includes pictures and texts, as well as the design of news media outlets.<sup>7</sup>

### ***The principles of (photo)journalism***

Texts on photography often claim that people can “directly experience” what has happened through photographs, Griffin notes (2010, p. 35). This assumption refers to the technology, photography’s supposed ability to capture reality, and to the journalistic commitment to truth, which is one of the core values and norms of professional news media practice (Kovach & Rosenstiel 2007 pp. 5-6). The idea of journalism is “to provide people with the information they need to be free and self-governing” (Kovach & Rosenstiel 2007 p. 5). To achieve this task professional news media follow certain principles, which include, for example, the obligation to be truthful and the attempt to remain independent (Kovach & Rosenstiel 2007 p. 5). While some of the principles are achieved by the selection and editing process, others refer to the skills of a professional photographer who may implement artistic elements that make an image better to look at or lead to more dramatic eye-catching pictures (see Chapter 3.5).

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<sup>7</sup> Dan Mich, former editor at the picture magazine *Look*, characterised photojournalism as a form of storytelling achieved by the arrangement of related photographs that are accompanied by subservient words (Mich cited in Panzer & Caujolle 2005, p. 9). Another historical understanding of photojournalism therefore refers to essays, reportages and series of photographs published in picture magazines, which were particularly relevant before the introduction of TV in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

While Kovach and Rosenstiel suggest that the principles of journalistic practice have remained stable over decades (2007 p. 5), some techniques for fulfilling them have changed over the years. For example, according to former photography director at Look Arthur Rothstein, to create a truthful picture, the “good photojournalist” was expected to have “the ability to feel emotion yet remain objective” (cited in Weinberg 1986, p. 27.) Likewise, Wilson Hicks, once picture editor of Life Magazine, claimed that a picture can remain truthful by not implying “the photographer’s individual belief or opinion with regard to the subject” (1952, p. 14), suggesting that photographers can and should be “simultaneously involved and removed from their subjects” (Weinberg 1986, p. 27).

The philosophy of New Journalism in the mid-1960s liberated photographers from expectations such as detachment and impersonality (Weinberg 1986, p. 27). Nevertheless, the problematic relationship between photography as a medium of evidence, “artistic expression” (Griffin 2012, p. 167) and subjective communication has remained.<sup>8</sup> This relationship is inherent in photography and news content-making, which is partly why the practice of verification is crucial, and understood as “the beating heart of credible journalism in the public interest” (Kovach & Rosenstiel 2007, p. 80; see Chapter 3.4).

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the concept of objectivity in the professional news media appeared as an attempt “to develop a consistent method of testing information” (Kovach & Rosenstiel 2007 pp. 81-82) to strengthen the credibility and authority of newspapers (Baradell & Stack 2008, pp. 10-11; Howarth 2012, p. 210). The rise of objectivity can be seen as one component of the effort to professionalize journalism, which started in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (see below). The process of professionalization was strongly influenced by the foundation of journalism schools and professional associations as well as by the introduction of codes of ethics (Banning 1998-1999, p. 159), of which objectivity became a part

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<sup>8</sup> The dualism between the attempt to tell the truth and the limitations that come with it is also a major point of debate in photojournalism literature on ethics, reality, and objectivity, as well as in studies on news content-making more generally (for example Lester 1991; Roberts & Webber 1999; Mitchell 2000; Jolyon 2000; Gross, Katz & Ruby 2003; Bowers 2008; Tomlinson 1992; Carlson 2009b; Taylor 2000; Schwartz 1992; Bissell 2000; Åker 2012). The ability to capture reality has been frequently questioned, particularly since photography became digital (for example Tomlinson 1992; see also below; see Chapter 3.4).

(Schudson 2001). Schudson calls objectivity the “chief occupational value of American journalism” (Schudson 2001, p. 149) and describes it as “a moral ideal, a set of reporting and editing practices, and an observable pattern of news writing” (Schudson 2001, p. 149).

In photojournalism the concept of objectivity is often discussed in relation to the subjective view of a photographer. However, the original meaning of objectivity in the professional news media was not to make the claim that news media workers were unbiased, but to acknowledge that subjectivity does exist, which is why news media workers attempted to implement a method that they believed could be objective (Kovach & Rosenstiel 2007, pp. 81-82).

The inaccuracy of applying the terminology of objectivity has led to heated discussions in media and journalism research (for example Howarth 2012; Rusciano 2010) and to a misconception of what objectivity is in the professional news media. Kovach and Rosenstiel attribute this misconception to the tendency to overlook historical trajectories and the difference between thinking of objectivity in terms of purpose rather than method (Kovach & Rosenstiel 2007, p. 83). Other authors highlight the “gap between objectivity-as-value and objectivity-as-practice” and point out the impossibility of absolute objectivity (Carpentier 2010, p. 311). The understanding of objectivity in terms of “neutral science and a mechanistic world” (Newton 2009, p. 237) is indeed “outdated and ill-equipped” (Howarth 2012, p. 210). However, understood in terms of responsible newsgathering and the ambition to present “both sides of the story” (Deuze 2005a, p. 456) objectivity is still alive and refers to relevant elements of professionalism in the news such as truthfulness, accuracy, balance and impartiality (Andén-Papadopoulos & Pantti 2013, p. 962; see also Enli 2007; Kovach & Rosenstiel 2007; Soloski 1989).

The concept of objectivity is also discussed in regard to the evidential status of sources, why sources in professional news media matter and how news media workers use sources as quotes to create the notion of objective journalism (Carlson 2009, p. 527). I will discuss this in Chapter 3.1 in relation to the visual quote concept. McLeod and Hertog link the news media’s preference for official sources and the attempt to affirm “the illusion of objectivity” (1998, p. 314; see

Chapter 3.4). The latter is important to this research, as news media tend to use news and picture agencies to source amateur photographs (see Chapters 1.3; 3.3). Thus objectivity is still a relevant principle for professional news media practice (Enli 2007, p. 48; Singer 2005, p. 178), of which the topic of this thesis—the accommodation of amateur photographs—is a part. The principles of professional news media practice apply to photojournalism, but are not specific to it. In fact, they are usually discussed in relation to text-based content or in relation to the news more generally, which is why I found it helpful to frame an investigation into the accommodation of amateur photographs as part of the wider context in which they are used.

### ***Multiple purposes***

In the section above I introduced the concept of photojournalism in terms of “truth”, “proof” and “record”, which scholars in media and journalism studies often focus on when analysing photographs in the news (Caple 2013, p. 7). Yet photographs in professional news media are not only a medium to report what has happened, to tell stories or to show evidence. Mostly they are “news illustrations” (Griffin 2012, p. 164) or “simple symbolic markers” (Griffin 2012, 177) depicting “recognizable concepts in familiar pictorial forms” (Griffin 2012, p. 164). They are also used to create the visual outlook of the publication, to catch the eye, or simply to structure a page in a news media outlet. Furthermore, photographs constitute one of the strategies used to sell magazines, and are also used for branding purposes (Machin & Niblock 2008). Arguably, in today’s everyday news production, debates about the truth-value of photography are replaced “by the widespread acceptance of photographs as, above all, ritualized and emblematic” (Griffin 2012, p. 167).

The American George Gallup’s approach of surveying readers was an important milestone in the use of photographs in print news. First tested on the readers of the De Moines Register and Tribune in the 1920s, the polling technique showed “that pictures ranked high in readers’ interest and that related pictures [like in a picture story] ranked even higher” (Rothstein 1969, p. 101). These first insights were followed by further experiments with photo stories and written stories combining photographs and text, mostly conducted in the Sunday edition of the

Register, a newspaper in the US state of Iowa. Even though the experiments were greeted with scepticism, critics were soon convinced when the circulation of the Sunday Register increased by 50 per cent (Rothstein 1969, p. 101). The convincing evidence that pictures helped sell newspapers led to plans for what were to become the two most famous American picture magazines of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Register and Tribune staff worked for several years on the concept and layout of the picture magazine Look, first published in January 1937. A short time before, in November 1936, the first edition of the magazine Life had appeared on the newsstands. These two outlets not only had an enormous readership (Rothstein 1969, p. 102), but also a great influence on the use of photographs in print media. The so-called golden age of photojournalism refers to the period between 1925 and 1965 (Kennedy 2008, p. 281), and is clearly attached to the appearance of these and other comparable picture magazines<sup>9</sup> and the ways in which they published photographs as part of the news. Photography had become a marketing tool for the news industry and works in the service of the institutional news media environment in which it is incorporated. Photographs in professional news media outlets therefore have multiple purposes and are guided more “by cultural convention, marketing expediency, and shifts in news organization practice than a desire to provide information-rich illustrations” (Griffin 2012, p. 177). Any concept that describes the production of photographs in the news without considering this complexity inevitably remains limited, as all these factors are important. The nomination of one of them as the sole purpose, such as the above-mentioned attempt to understand photojournalism as visual reporting, leads to a misconception about the accommodation of photographs in the news, and consequently limits our understanding of the use of amateur photographs.

### ***The focus on wars, pictures and photographers***

Literature on photojournalism focuses strongly on war photography (Andersen 1989; Barfield 2006; Below 2011; Fahmy & Kim 2008; Flamiano 2010; Gervais 2010; Griffin 1999, Griffin 2004; Griffin 2010; Griffin & Jongsoo 1995; Leith 2006; Mieszkowski 2012; Perlmutter 2005; Taylor 1998; see Chapter 3.2) and on selected photographs that are used to depict the idealised purpose and power of

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<sup>9</sup> Other magazines are, for example, Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung, Picture Post and Paris Match (Griffin 2012, p. 163).

photographs in the news. Famous pictures such as the girl running away from napalm firebombs or the execution of a Viet Cong suspect are often used to illustrate the concept of photojournalism and its importance (Griffin 2010, p. 7; p. 16; see also Mitchell, 1994, p. 401; Perlmutter 2004, p. 114). Although researchers have demonstrated that professional news media mainly used routine sources to report on the Vietnam War, the less-scholarly narrative claims that photographs such as the above examples are characteristic of the coverage and form one of the main reasons for political change in the Vietnam War era (Griffin 2010, pp. 20-21). Aspects of witnessing (see Chapter 3.1), truth (see above) and ethics (see Chapter 3.4) involved in the production of pictures in the news have been widely discussed. Additionally, practitioners including editors and photographers, tend to write about the technical, aesthetic and practical aspects of photography, teaching others to produce better images (Evans 1978; Kobre 2008).

Another body of literature focuses on photographers who travel the world and risk their lives taking photographs (Becker 1998, p. 85, for example Cojocariu 2011; Cookman 1998; Rudner 1981). War photographers such as Robert Capa or recently-killed photojournalists such as Tim Hetherington and Anja Niedringhaus have an almost heroic status in articles that recognise and honour their life's work. In the public eye, the status of celebrated photographers and the focus on award-winning images that captured war, conflict or risk has shaped the idea of photojournalism and arguably obscured what the production of pictures in the professional news media entails. Photography in the news involves a wide variety of themes, of which war and conflict photographs are only one component, as demonstrated in Chapter 3.2 and 3.3.

It is not my intention to deny the significance of war photography or the role of the photographer. Neither is it my objective to negate the importance of studying images, especially as the picture-selling industry focuses largely on photographs as commercial products, and editors usually apply the picture search to their need to find particular photographs (Levy 2010, email).<sup>10</sup> My aim is rather to shed

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<sup>10</sup> Although photographed subjects and the viewers of images are also part of this collaboration process, they are not the focus of this research.

light on the reasons why amateur photographs are used in the professional news media. As such I have chosen to pay particular attention to the decision-making of those news media workers who are involved in the practices of gathering, selecting, judging and processing photographs (for example Langton 2009). Although there exists a large body of literature on text-related news production, it is a comparably under-developed area of photojournalism research. Thus the production of pictures in the news implies not only content or the work of photographers, but also the cooperation between editors and photographers (Panzer & Caujolle 2005, p. 374). It therefore reflects the “traditional divisions of cultural labor” (Ault 2009, p. 15) common in the traditional processes of news production. This collaborative work has been partly replaced by depictions of “cross-departmentalization” (Deuze 2005a, p. 451) and merging professional roles (Huang et al. 2006; see Chapter 3.3; 3.8). Yet for many parts of news content-making, such as the accommodation of amateur photographs, the division is still relevant. It includes the effort of amateurs to capture and share photographs as well as the routine work of news media workers. It also includes the collaboration with news and picture agencies that play a relevant role in the sourcing of photographs in the professional news media (Caple 2013, p. 9; Langton 2009, p. 104 and are particular relevant for the accommodation of amateur material (see chapter 3.3).

### ***The professionals’ approach***

Photojournalism has been closely identified with assignment photography, which a number of interviewees in my project mentioned in order to distinguish the professional approach from the use of amateur photographs in the news. In the case of an assignment, an editor briefs a photographer to deliver high-quality pictures according to a specific story or theme. Such assignments are the domain of photographers who are able to deliver photographs on a regular basis according to the demands of the news industry (Mortensen & Keshelashvili 2013, p. 152). News media workers generally agree that assignment photography requires a unique skill set, which stands in contrast to the common ability to capture an image, and is one of the characteristics of being professional (Mortensen & Keshelashvili 2013, p. 144; see also Abbott 1988; Becker & Vlad 2011).

The process of the professionalization of journalism began in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Banning 1998-1999). It was strengthened with the introduction of codes of ethics as well as with the opening of journalism schools and professional associations, as mentioned above. Several authors discuss journalism as a profession (Areal 2010; Donsbach 2014; Houchin Winfield 2008) and debate the professional aspects of the occupation (Henningham 1979; 1995; 1996). Yet many also argue that photojournalism, like journalism itself, has never been a profession in a strict sense (Baradell & Stack 2008, p. 2; Meyers et al. 2012, pp. 192-193), as journalism is lacking certain characteristics of a 'real' professions such as the crucial need for formal education. In Chapter 1.1 I discussed the relevance of informal training for the practice of taking photographs, which also applies to photojournalism. Several interviewees pointed out that photographers who work for the news gain knowledge at work rather than in school. Many also mentioned qualities that can't be learned but that are present within the personality and character of a gifted writer or photographer (cf. Osiel 1986, p. 168).

Government licensing, characterized as "the legal control of entry into the practice of the occupation" (Osiel 1986, p. 165), is an aspect of many professions, but not of journalism. Even then journalists are not licensed, the companies for which they work are. For example, broadcasting has been subject to licensing for many years (Osiel 1986, p. 166). In contrast, print journalism has been traditionally discussed in close relation to the freedom of speech, enshrined in the constitutions of western democracies (Osiel 1986, p. 165). Some believe that a stronger regulation of the press would pose a risk to pluralism and press freedom (Finkelstein 2012; Merrill 1986). Others argue "the professionalization of journalism has strengthened the inclination and capacity of reporters to fulfil the function of critical 'watchdog'" (Osiel 1986, p. 174). In this thesis, I suggest that professionalization does not need to be seen opposed to the freedom of speech. Quite the contrary, standards of professional practice now need to be defined with the multifaceted voices of the participating public in mind (Merrill 1986, p. 58; see conclusion). The call for more professionalism also suggests that the social role of journalism remains a relevant building block of western societies (Donsbach 2014, pp. 673-674).

Another characteristic of a profession is full-time employment, which is not always a given in journalism. For example, photographers in professional news media are not necessarily employed by media companies and do not always earn their entire income from assignment photography. They might sell pictures to agencies, work as freelancers in more than one area of photography, or even in more than one field of expertise. Nevertheless, the concept of journalism as well as photojournalism has been widely identified as the “*professionals’* approach” (Kobre 2008, title; see also Merrill 1986, p. 56). One reason for this is that photojournalism is practised in the domain of the “highly institutionalized” (Merrill 1986, p. 56) professional news media that, until the rise of the internet, had an economic monopoly and exclusive access to distribution channels and information sources (Meyers et al. 2012, p. 192). The professionalization of journalism is widely perceived as an “ideological development” (Deuze 2005a, p. 444), a belief system that “served to continuously refine and reproduce a consensus about who was a ‘real’ [photo] journalist, and what (parts of) news media at any time would be considered examples of ‘real’ journalism” (Deuze 2005a, p. 444). Part of this belief system is that (photo) journalists are expected “to act professionally” (Meyers et al. 2012, p. 193), which means that their work “must conform to certain evidentiary and expressive standards,” and their practice “must accord to certain values” (Meyers et al. 2012, p. 194). These values include objectivity (which I outlined above) as well as the immediacy of news, the autonomy of media workers, their ethical behaviour and the public service function of journalism (Deuze 2005a, p. 447).

Although the “journalists’ professional ideology” (Zelizer, cited in Deuze 2005a, p. 444) was shaped throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century and shifted subtly over the years (Deuze 2005a, p. 444), my thesis demonstrates its enduring robustness, as professional ideology plays a major role in how news workers perceive amateur photographs that enter the professional news media and why and how such images get incorporated in the news (see Part 3).

Just as with journalists, the idea of the photojournalist as a professional “has always contended with two others: as artist and as social critic” (1986, p. 169). Nevertheless, the processes and practices of the professional news content making and the identity and ideology of those who work for the industry have

strongly defined the work of photographers who cover the news in order to meet the information needs of people (cf. Henningham 1996, p. 210). Amateurs (who for example witness an incident) do not work on behalf of the professional news media, nor do they have to follow the story ideas of an editor or work according to professional principles. Amateurs do not gather additional information and generally do not aim to verify what they have seen (Niekamp 2010, p. 94). In addition, amateurs usually choose what to photograph while “the photographer never chooses the subject matter and struggles to be allowed, at least, to decide how to go about his task” (Valbuena 2007, p. 6). Such discrepancies show the differences between the assignment of a photographer and the collaboration between news media workers and amateurs. Thus the use of amateur photographs must be understood in parallel with, rather than simply opposed to or as part of, the professional approach of taking photographs that make it into the news (see Part 3; see also Mortensen & Keshelashvili 2013, p. 155).

### ***Context versus purpose***

No matter in which context photographs are produced, they can “migrate from one context to another” (Orvell 2003, p. 16). Newspapers, advertising, television, as well as books, galleries and museums can present a copy of the same photograph, which differs (apart from the size and reproduction technique) mainly in the context in which it is published (cf. Becker 1998). Becker explores the importance of context for photography with reference to the meanings of various concepts such as visual sociology and documentary photography, as well as photojournalism (1998).

Becker states:

“We can learn what people have been able to do using documentary photography or photojournalism as a cover, but we can’t find out what the terms really mean. Their meaning arises in the organizations they are used in, out of the joint action of all the people involved in those organizations, and so varies from time to time and place to place. Just as paintings get their meaning in a world of painters, collectors, critics and curators, so photographs get their meaning from the way the people

involved with them understand them, use them and thereby attribute meaning to them” (1998, p. 84).

Alongside postmodernist photography authors including Tagg, Sekula and Burgin, Becker claims that, “it is (almost) all a matter of context” (1998, p. 84). He scrutinises the relevance of purpose in photojournalism, arguing that photographers understand their practice in the specific circumstances of which their practice is a part—“in the combination of organisations, audiences and peers that surrounds them [...]” (Becker 1998, p. 94). I acknowledge the relevance of context, which is essential to an examination of sourcing practice (see Chapter 3.1).

My thesis also shows that news media workers strongly identify with the purpose that is attributed to the approach of (photo) journalism practice. Purpose, as in the deliberate intention to capture a moment for its news value, is part of the photojournalist’s practice. The motivations of amateur photographers can be entirely different from those who produce photographs for professional goals or who source them for the use in the news media context (Griffin 2012, p. 174). It can be questioned what relevance this has for an audience. Nevertheless, purpose is important for the process of news content-making, as will be seen from the interviewees in this research, who used the concept of photojournalism and the notion of purpose to distinguish between amateur and professional photography and to create a distance between the professional news media system and amateur work (see Chapters 3.1; 3.2).

### ***A changing practice***

The processes of picture production in the news (and beyond) are constantly in a state of flux and have been intensely affected by technological developments.<sup>11</sup> The digitalisation of photography was perceived as especially radical, partly

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<sup>11</sup> This changing character of the practice of producing pictures as part of the news may be the reason why the historical approach to analysing photojournalism is widespread (for example Nilsson 2004; Gervais 2010; Flamiano 2010; Borchard, Mullen & Bates 2013).

because it removed photography's physicality.<sup>12</sup> As early as the 1980s wire services began using electronic picture desks and a small number of pioneers at newspapers started digitising photographs (Russial & Wanta 1998, p. 593). Most news media organisations had adopted digital technology by the 1990s (Russial & Wanta 1998, p. 593). In addition to changes at the picture desks, the work of photographers shifted from the physical work of a tradesperson handling heavy equipment and toxic chemicals to a digital camera specialist and expert in image editing. Though established photographers tried to hold on to the craft of making photographs with film, professional news photography was quickly taken over by digital technology. By 2000 most photographs produced by the news agency Reuters, for example, were taken with digital cameras (Tirohl 2000, p. 337).

Researchers examined the change in the work practices of photojournalism as a consequence of the introduction of computers (Tirohl 2000, p. 336), which transformed "picture desks into electronic environments for image control" (Tirohl 2000, p. 335). Undertaking a national survey in the US, scholars studied the relevance that photo editors attached to digital and analogue photography to understand the implications for education and the hiring of journalists (Russial & Wanta 1998, p. 593). Another survey was conducted to analyse the impact that "dual publishing has on the workflow of visual journalists" (Zavoina & Reichert 2000, p. 145). Nowadays, analogue photography has largely disappeared from professional news media. As a consequence of such technological developments, the effort, time and cost of distributing and storing images has shrunk significantly (Hartley 2002, p. 165). Additionally, it helped to "decentralize and perhaps, diversify, the selection of images" (Langton 2009, p. 110) and made "issues of photo sourcing, authenticity and contextualization" more complicated (Griffin 2012, p. 173). For this reason, technological factors have often been used to explain the rise of amateur work (see Chapter 1.1), as well as the crisis<sup>13</sup> and demise of professional photojournalism.

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<sup>12</sup> Several studies have examined the shift of photography in journalism brought about by digital technology (for example Becker 1991; Zavoina & Reichert 2000; Tirohl 2000; Russial & Wanta 1998; Dunleavy 2004).

<sup>13</sup> The concept of crisis describes "a time when a difficult or important decision must be made." Thus, a crisis can also be understood as a "the turning point [...] when an important change takes place" (Oxford Dictionaries, search term: crisis 2013). The concept also implies the notion of

Cartwright writes:

“I’ve been a photographer since the 1960s. I have seen one or both of these headlines at least once every decade: “Is Photojournalism Dead?” or “Photojournalism is Dead!”” (2007, p. 339).

In “Burning with desire”, historian Geoffrey Batchen notes that since its invention, photography has been closely associated with the notion of death (1999, p. 216). He identified two reasons for the repeated claims at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: first technological changes, which reinforced the doubts around photography’s ability to truly convey objective truth (as discussed above), and second the epistemological changes that are part of broader shifts in the way knowledge is produced (Batchen 1999, p. 207). Accordingly, the ongoing scholarly discussions about photojournalism partly reflect what Bianchi calls “a turning point in the perception and expression of reality through photography” (2008, p. 18) and show an ongoing uncertainty in the understanding of photography as a medium to create, interpret and capture a part of reality (see chapter 3.4). Photographers have also considered the term and the traditional concept of photojournalism critically (Leibovitz 2006; Tanner 2010, interview; Voninski 2010, interview). Some perceive categorisations as limitations (Ghomeshi & Anderson 2008). Others complain that photographers in some news media organisations are encouraged to manipulate a scene (Voninski 2010, interview), which arguably contradicts the ideal of journalistic truth that photojournalism aspires to.

The uncertainties regarding photojournalism must also be discussed with reference to the crisis of the professional news media and the impact of the internet as one cause of this crisis. This crisis is often attributed to the obsolete business model and the difficulties of adapting professional news content-making to a quickly- and radically-changing media landscape (Siles & Boczkowski 2012).<sup>14</sup> Print advertising revenues in the news media industry have fallen

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uncertainty and distraction (Siles & Boczkowski 2012, p. 1376) that is undeniably captured by the debate on photojournalism.

<sup>14</sup> Research that analyses the crisis in the professional news media focuses on three main areas: the withdrawal of advertising from print media, the adjustment of traditional professional practices and values, and the changes in the consumption of the news (Siles & Boczkowski 2012, p. 1378; see also Chapter 3.3).

continually over several years (Picard 2008). At the same time, online newspapers are showing only a slow increase in revenue, which is inadequate to cover the loss of advertising revenue from printed news media (State of the News Media 2013). While some authors argue that this heralds the end of journalism, others believe that “it does not have to be as long as a ‘new network journalism’ adapted itself to changing social and technological realities” (Deuze 2007, p. 141).

One consequence of the challenges faced by the professional news media is the reduction of assignment time and photographic personnel (Griffin 2012, p. 177), and the increased accommodation of inexpensive material, including amateur photographs (see Chapter 3.8). Photographers perceive the accommodation of amateur photographs as a threat (Mortensen & Keshelashvili 2013, p. 144), adding to the notion of crisis and the demise of photojournalism. Further reasons for this notion of crisis and demise can be found in the migration of photographic essays, reportages and series that have largely disappeared in printed news media (Ebner, Reimer & Reinartz 2008, p. 493; Griffin 2010, p. 36) and moved into the realm of art and independent publishing (Caujolle 2009; Cramerotti 2009). Online news media have responded to traditional storytelling methods and introduced presentation forms such as picture galleries that again can be understood as a continuation of photojournalism in the professional news media context (see Chapter 3.6). Moreover, the hybridisation of technology, in that many digital cameras can now record not only photographs but also video and sound, is blurring the boundaries between moving pictures and stills (Ebner, Reimer & Reinartz 2008, p. 499). Using elements and techniques beyond texts and words, a story can now be told through the combination of several types of content such as photographs, videos and audio (Wright 2008, p. 23; Kennedy 2003). As a consequence of such merging practices and technologies, photojournalism in recent years has been classified under the overall term of visual journalism (Kennedy 2003; Newton 2009; Zavoina & Reichert 2000).

Taking into account the demand for and presence of amateur video, and the tendency towards using umbrella terms when it comes to images, it is reasonable to ask why I focus on photographs in my thesis. Photographs, and one of their characteristics, stillness, remain important. Every photograph is “a privileged moment,” which one “can keep and look at again,” as photography critique Susan

Sontag writes (1977, p. 18). About the Vietnam war photograph depicting the shooting of the Viet Cong suspect by Eddie Adams, author and editor Harold Evans states: “It was precisely its ‘stillness’—the sense of the moment frozen in time—that made its impact” (Evans 1978, p. 5). Evans argues that as part of a series of moving pictures the image would have been lost, as only with the still photograph did the Vietnam War become truly visible; it “was seen” (1978, p. 5).

Photography writer and curator John Szarkowski explains that the viewer can learn from photographs that “the appearance of the world is richer and less simple than the mind would have guessed” (2007, p. 126), or as another author writes, there is nothing so minor that it is not worth looking at closely (Erdmann Ziegler 1994, preface). While it is debateable how closely we really look at the large number of ephemeral photographs that are part of the news (see Chapter 3.6), history shows that to date the presence of moving images has influenced but not replaced photographs.

### ***Conclusion***

In Chapter 1.2 I have explained the concept of photojournalism and asked if photojournalism is a useful framework for understanding the accommodation of amateur photographs in the professional news media. Existing attempts to describe photojournalism expose diverse notions concerning practice and demonstrate the complexity of the picture production process. However, literature on photojournalism does not sufficiently reflect on the decision-making in the newsroom and the picture production beyond the assignment of professional photographers. The concept of photojournalism is also challenged, because the terminology seems too closely linked to the ideas of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century. In times of media convergence, depictions of “cross-departmentalization” (Deuze 2005a, p. 451) and merging professional roles (Huang et al. 2006), the delimitation of a clearly-defined area such as photojournalism is increasingly outdated. Nevertheless, photographs in professional news media continue to play a role. “We are entering the era of visual journalism,” a news media representative stated in 2008 (Stanaway, cited in Este et al. 2008, p. 17).

I suggest that photography will remain a relevant element of news production in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, as with photographs “we are able to see at a scale and speed what the eye can never see” (Evans 1978, p. 18). Yet photography has a rather marginal status in journalism and media studies. Photography is also underrepresented in the research on amateur content inside and outside the professional news media, as I will demonstrate in the following chapter.

### **1.3 The emergence of online amateur content**

In the first two chapters of this thesis I concentrated on the history of amateur photography and the production of pictures in the professional news media. The adoption of digital technology has been perceived as having a major impact on the amateur/professional divide in photography as well as on the newsrooms of the professional news media. Moreover, the rise of the internet has led to changes in the way news media content is distributed and shared. Scholarly interest in amateur work in both journalism and media research has increased and scholars have developed new tools for gathering large amounts of data to grasp emerging practices and phenomena. In this chapter, I give an overview of the research examining the accommodation of amateur material in the professional news media and present the under-researched domains to which my project attempts to contribute. In addition, I discuss the use of terminologies such as 'citizen journalism', 'user-generated content' and 'participatory journalism'. I explore the underlying assumptions and suggest revisiting the concept of the amateur, as it remains relevant and useful in understanding current developments.

#### ***Emergence and independence***

An important component of the impact of the internet on the professional news media is the advent of citizen journalism and/or user-generated content, illustrated in media and journalism with high-impact and/or crisis events, in which sometimes-large numbers of people participate in the creation of news media content. Incidents such as September 11 in 2001 and the London bombings in 2005 have been perceived as key moments in the emergence of amateur content inside and outside the professional news media environment. Additional critical moments were the coverage of natural catastrophes such as the devastation caused by the tsunami in South-East Asia in December 2004 and Hurricane Katrina in the United States in August 2005 (Allan 2006, p. 7; Allan 2006, p. 157; Allan 2009, p. 29; Allan 2009, p. 18; Andén-Papadopoulos & Pantti 2011, pp. 13-14; Vis 2009, pp. 65-74; see also Introduction).

Since then, increasing academic interest in amateur content has been seen in media and journalism research. Some projects (including my research) focus on the accommodation of amateur material in the professional news media, as I will discuss below. Others have engaged with amateur content published largely independently from traditional gatekeeping and editorial practices, central authorities and the decisions of news media workers (Bruns 2008; Bruns & Jacobs 2006). In particular, sites that reach large numbers of people (such as YouTube, Flickr and Twitter) have attracted the interest of researchers (Antony & Thomas 2010; Burgess & Green 2009a; Le Clerc 2009; Liu et al. 2009; Palen 2008; Snickars & Vonderau 2009, Van House 2007).

For example, scholarly attention has been given to online fan activities (Coppa 2014; Hellekson 2009; Jenkins 2006a; 2006b; 2012; Lee 2011; Pearson 2010), as fans use the Internet to exchange content related to their objects of interest, form online communities and create culture independently from large cooperate companies. “Driven by fans’ love for the chosen medium, the work is unpaid, self-organized and decentralized”, writes Lee (Lee 2011, p. 1137). Fan work can be fulfilled 24/7 from diverse time zones and is practiced by enthusiasts who regard the fan activity they are involved in as hobby rather than work (Lee 2011, p. 1137). It is believed that fandom has an “economic and promotional value” (Coppa 2014, p. 73) and may even express itself in “forms of civic engagement and political participation” (Jenkins 2012).

Another area of Internet research is the “blogosphere” (Bruns 2008; Bruns & Jacobs 2006<sup>15</sup>; Dart 2006; Koop & Jansen 2009; Pluempavarn & Panteli 2008; Rettberg 2008), which is conceived as an alternative to traditional news making.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> For example, in a collection of texts edited by Bruns and Jacobs, the authors analyse the “economic benefits,” the “social and communal aspects” as well as “some of the technological and legal possibilities for blogging” (2006, p. 3f). They identify “the potential for individual and informal expression and ungatekept self-publishing” as one of the main attractions of the blogging practice (Bruns & Jacobs 2006, p. 250).

<sup>16</sup> Internet research also prompted the development of new forms of data collection to understand amateur online content. For example, Bruns and Burgess use software-supported methods that allow them to analyse large amounts of online material (2012). Wueller and Fageth introduce “semiautomatic or automatic image analyses,” allowing the collection of data such as date, time or camera type (2008). Tags add additional semantic information that enable researchers to better

Blogs are used for a wide range of reasons; for example, to monitor or criticise the professional news media (Cooper 2006; Coopers 2007). A famous case in the domain of photography is the manipulation scandal involving Reuters, whereby bloggers revealed that the agency had distributed misleading testimony (see Chapter 3.4). Scholars introduced the concept of the fifth estate to grasp the potential power of independent online publishing. This potential is seen in the increased ability of people to communicate with each other and the availability of internet platforms that allow “the creation of networks which have a public, social benefit” (Dutton 2009, p. 3). The fifth estate is thus seen as an “independent source of social accountability” (Dutton 2009, p. 10), which may exercise influence on policies or, as the Reuters example demonstrates, can challenge the credibility of sources used in the professional news media (Dutton 2009, p. 11).

The revolutionary otherness of alternative publishing platforms such as blogs has also been challenged (Mitchelstein & Boczkowski 2009, p. 573; Daniels 2006; Haas 2005; Lowrey 2006; Reese et al. 2007). For example, Daniels finds striking similarities between the news content of traditional and more alternative media (Daniels 2006, p. 321). Haas states that blogs simulate rather than oppose professional news media. Referring to selected case studies and empirical research, he shows the similarities between the more traditional and alternative ways of news content-making (Haas 2005, p. 387). The format is also used inside the professional news media sphere and here plays a role in the attempt to gather material relevant for creating the news and/or to interact with the audience (Garden 2011, p. 493).

While alternative forms of publishing content were not the focus of my project, they were still important for my research, particularly since my findings demonstrate that personal online archives, including alternative publishing platforms such as blogs and social networking sites, have also become resources for news media workers (see Chapter 3.3). Independently-published online content must therefore not only be understood as antithetical to the content production in the professional news media sphere, but also as accessible

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understand the identity or location of the internet user (Iofciu & Fankhauser 2011). Amateur material including amateur photography has not only become more visible, but also more usable by diverse groups, including academic researchers and news media workers.

material that is consequently used by news media workers as part of the news-making process (Calcutt & Hammond 2011, p. 8; Northrup 2006, p. 37; see Chapter 3.3). It must be asked how much influence the fifth estate exercises through amateur photographs, and what implications this influence has on the professional news media and its practices, function and role in democratic societies.

### ***Resistance and change***

Professional news media have the obligation to provide an environment for “voices from outside the media” (Heinonen 2011, p. 35), which has traditionally been limited due to the one-sidedness of media communication, the influence of a restricted number of influential sources (see Chapter 3.1), and the position of news media workers as gatekeepers who decide what is important enough to be mentioned. The accommodation of amateur content in the professional news media has been seen as necessary to secure the future of the industry. Thus amateur work has been understood as an opportunity for professional news media (Paulussen & Ugille 2008, p. 24) and as a chance to develop, sustain and establish their role in democratic societies.<sup>17</sup>

Deuze, Bruns and Neuberger write:

“In a time of declining public trust in news, loss of advertising revenue, and an increasingly participatory, self-expressive and digital media culture, journalism is in the process of rethinking and reinventing itself” (2007, p. 322).

On the other hand, some have argued that the accommodation of amateur material can lead to the sacrifice of professional standards including quality, ethics, values and legalities, which can weaken the credibility of established media organisations (Manosevitch 2011, p. 422; see Chapters 3.4; 3.5). Such

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<sup>17</sup> A growing number of scholars have begun to examine the presence of amateur content in the professional news media (Deuze, Bruns & Neuberger 2007; Hermida & Thurman 2008; Paulussen & Ugille 2008; Örnebring 2008; Harrison 2010; Wardle & Williams 2010). Others compare the traditional approach with more alternative ways of news content-making (Holt & Karlsson 2011; Carpenter 2008; Carpenter 2010).

concerns have prompted a debate on what standards in the context of current changes are, whether they are outdated and whether and how they need to change in order to sustain the profession of content-making (Howarth 2012, p. 210). The lack of clarity has also created “acute public anxiety about risks” and “undermined confidence in the validity of long-standing premises about the ideal role in society and professional journalism” (Howarth 2012, p. 210). Furthermore, it prompted researchers to examine the role of amateur material in the professional news media, which few scholars focused on before news became digital (see also Part 3).

One study that marks the shift in the way the amateur is studied in journalism and media research is the widely-cited study of Alfred Hermida and Neil Thurman, who examined how amateur material was integrated in British newspaper websites. The researchers quantified amateur content and demonstrated a strong expansion in what they called “the opportunities for contributions from readers” (Hermida & Thurman 2008, p. 343). Additionally, they conducted in-depth interviews, leading them to conclude that this development takes place in spite of doubts about the value of amateur content and in spite of the tendency of media professionals to hang on to their traditional roles as gatekeepers (Hermida & Thurman 2008, p. 343).

While the study suggests that the amateur has a significant impact on the professional news media, other research argues that this is not the case (Harrison 2010; Paulussen & Ugille 2008). On the basis of semi-structured interviews with news media workers at two Belgian newspapers and a local community website, Paulussen and Ugille observed that “participatory journalism is developing rather sluggishly” (2008, p. 24). According to the researchers this is not due to the unwillingness of news media workers, but because professional beliefs, routines and structures in professional news media counteract the idea of participatory journalism (Paulussen & Ugille 2008, p. 24). While it is disputable whether the willingness of news media workers can be considered independently of professional beliefs and routines, my research confirms the strength of the system in which amateur photographs are accommodated. At the same time, my project reveals a strong resistance to the amateur on the side of news media workers as well as to the impact of amateur photographs and the corresponding

adaptation of professional routines, suggesting that the above findings only partly capture what is going on in the news media industry.

Reservations towards the amateur are demonstrated in research conducted in the UK (Singer & Ashman 2009; Wardle & Williams 2010), the US (Lewis et al. 2010) and other countries (Manosevitch 2011). According to Lewis and colleagues, who conducted interviews with news media workers at 29 community newspapers in the US, this is mainly due to the integrity and quality of contributions and the attempt to maintain professional standards (Lewis et al. 2010, p. 176). Additionally, these authors distinguish between “philosophical-versus-practical concerns” to visualise the conflicting stimuli that influence the use of amateur material in the news (Lewis et al. 2010, p. 164).

In this thesis, I focus on the sourcing of amateur photographs, arguing that practical issues dominate the decision-making process. In doing so I build on other recently-published findings, in which the role of amateurs as sources has been recognised (De Keyser, Kristensen & Mortensen 2013; Pantti & Bakker 2009; Raeymaeckers & Paulussen 2011; Wardle & Williams 2010). Wardle and Williams, for example, analyse the attitudes of BBC journalists towards amateur material and the impact on the production of news media content (Wardle & Williams 2010, p. 782). They show that for many news media workers, amateur material is “just another news source,” which is “firmly embedded within a traditional newsgathering process” (Wardle & Williams 2010, p. 791; see also Pantti & Bakker 2009, p. 485). In Part 3, I discuss the findings of my project in relation to the literature on sources and sourcing practices and argue that amateur photographers in the professional news media must be largely understood as sources (see Chapter 3.1). Thus amateur photographs in the professional news media generally do not constitute a fifth estate activity, although they do have a presence in and impact on the professional news media.

While this enables us to see the use of amateur photographs within a historical trajectory, it also challenges assumptions about the general shift from one-way content-making towards a conversation between the professional news media and their audiences. Research has shown that “there has been no radical upheaval in the way they work, and no great change in the structural roles played

by traditional producers and consumers of the news.” As a consequence, “journalists have remained journalists and audiences have remained audiences” (Wardle & Williams 2010, p. 792). On interactive news platforms scholars find “a tendency towards reproducing mass media models, in which journalists were the sole producers, and users were regarded as a rather passive audience, consumers of the stories” (Domingo 2008, p. 692). Ye and Le describe interactive forums of online newspapers as “reader’s playgrounds,” since according to their findings, news media workers did not usually moderate forums, nor did they participate in conversations that were taking place (2006, p. 255). Professional news media outlets “set up a separate space” as a ‘playground’ strategy” (Domingo 2011, p. 85). This can be distinguished from the attempt to incorporate amateurs as sources (Domingo 2011, p. 86).

Chapter 3.7 discusses this in detail, as the professional news media presented in my thesis create spaces to incorporate amateur material beyond daily sourcing routines and newsgathering practices. Such distinctions confirm that the use of amateur photographs can be understood in terms of sourcing as well as in terms of participating, allowing people to be part of the news, but also motivated by experimentation, play and customer relations (see Chapter 3.7). While researchers such as Singer and colleagues recognise the creation of separate spaces (2011), I am not aware of any research that examines this aspect in relation to amateur photography and combines the analysis of sourcing amateur photographs in the traditional news media environment (see Chapters 3.1-3.6; 3.8) and separate spaces (see Chapter 3.7).

### ***Amateur photography in the professional news media***

When I started this project, only a small number of projects had focused specifically on amateur photography in the professional news media. However, this modest scholarly interest is not reserved only for the amateur, but is symptomatic of the research on photography-related practices and processes in professional news media more generally (see Chapter 1.3). Photography is an often-ignored subject within media and communication studies (Hardt 2004, p. 379) and continues to play a minor role despite the ubiquity of photographs in the

media. The “influential opinion among the intelligentsia is still literally iconoclastic, still trying to ‘win’ the Reformation,” Hartley and Rennie write (2004, p. 461).

Amateur photographs are usually analysed “en bloc” and as part of amateur material in the professional news media more generally (Pantti & Bakker 2009, p. 473). However, it has been argued that amateur photographs should be studied separately from overall amateur content, as the ethical and professional implications are different (Pantti & Bakker 2009, p. 472).<sup>18</sup> These include the aesthetic dimensions of photographs (see Chapter 3.5), the involvement of amateurs in the production of news media (beyond the ability to respond to or comment on professional content), the widespread use of amateur photographs that “break” news and cover unforeseen incidents, and the way amateur photographs are edited and moderated (Pantti & Bakker 2009, p. 485). At the same time major themes of professional news content-making such as sourcing, gatekeeping, quality, news values and trust also apply to the use of amateur photographs. As cameras have become tools of everyday communication, images need to be included in concepts and theories that have so far often been reserved for text-related inquiries. I discuss such themes with regard to the findings of my project in Part 3 of my thesis (see Chapters 3.1-3.8).

In recent years a small but growing number of researchers have begun to research amateur video and photographs in the context of professional news media (Andén-Papadopoulos 2008; Andén-Papadopoulos 2013; Andén-Papadopoulos & Pantti 2011; Andén-Papadopoulos & Pantti 2013; Becker 2013; Lorenzo-Dus & Bryan 2011; Mortensen 2011a; 2011b; Niekamp 2010; Pantti & Bakker 2009). Mervi Pantti and Piet Bakker analysed the websites of several

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<sup>18</sup> Ethics relate to every aspect of news media practice (Petley 2012, p. 531). As such it is not surprising that there exists a significant amount of scholarly literature addressing the ethical issues of journalism (Berkowitz, Limor & Singer 2004; Wasserman & Rao 2008; Himmelboim & Limor 2008). Academics highlight the importance of the credibility, accountability, and authenticity of news media content (Hayes, Singer & Ceppos 2007). They debate the freedom and autonomy of the press, the need for responsibility and fairness as well as respect for private matters (Hafez 2002). Other authors discuss the ethical aspects of photographs used in the professional news media context (Roberts & Webber 1999; Perlmutter & Major 2004; Slattery & Ugland 2005; Cooper 2007; Bowers 2008) and try to grasp the challenging relationship between photography and the idea of capturing parts of reality.

Dutch news media outlets to find out how amateur photographs were requested and used. Through interviews with leading news media workers in several media organisations in the Netherlands, they showed how news media workers understand and value amateur photographs, finding that amateur photographs accommodated in the professional news can be classified according to the preferences of the professional news media system and are predominantly used for soft news content (Pantti & Bakker 2009). A further study of amateur photographs in the professional news media examines the issue of crisis reporting in Finnish and Swedish news media, and reveals notions of resistance, resignation and renewal amongst professional news media (Andén-Papadopoulos & Pantti 2013).

Particular attention has been given to the emergence of photographs taken by bystanders during or after sudden or unsettled high-impact events, and the concept of eye-witnessing (Andén-Papadopoulos 2008; Andén-Papadopoulos & Pantti 2013; Lorenzo-Dus & Bryan 2011; Mortensen 2011b; Reading 2011; Pantti 2013a; 2013b; Zelizer 2007). For example, Lorenzo-Dus and Bryan analyse how amateur pictures of the London bombings were framed in television news directly after the incident, as well as how they were reused in the following year (Lorenzo-Dus & Bryan 2011, p. 25). As with research on text-based content, they found that professional routines, standards and pressures had a strong influence on how such amateur imagery was framed (Lorenzo-Dus & Bryan 2011, p. 37). I consider this further in my discussion of amateur eyewitness photographs as visual quotes, a concept that I introduce in Chapter 3.1.

A separate body of literature exists on the amateur photographs taken of the Abu Ghraib prison (Allan 2006; Carrabine 2011; Laustsen 2008; Lewis 2011), Gaddafi's death (Kristensen & Mortensen 2013) and other high-impact stories that are considered "turning-points" (Andén-Papadopoulos & Pantti 2013, p. 960).<sup>19</sup> The focus of these and other studies is often on the news media content,

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<sup>19</sup> Andén-Papadopoulos, for example, examined how the Abu Ghraib photographs were regarded and framed in professional news media (2008, p. 5). Kristensen and Mortensen analysed the sources used in the coverage of the arrest and death of Muammar Gaddafi on 20 October, 2011 and discussed the "interplay of sources" that their research indicates (2013, p. 353).

whereas my thesis attempts to understand the decisions and attitudes of news media workers beyond what is published as news (see Part 2).

In addition, the everyday attitudes and routine decisions of news media workers towards amateur photographs have a tendency to be overlooked in research that concentrates on prominent cases, and thus risks misrepresenting the presence of amateur photographs in professional news media. For example, little has been said in the research about the instances when news media workers decide not to use amateur photographs. My research demonstrates that this is a crucial issue and suggests that recognising this absence helps to better understand the role of amateur material in the professional news media (see Chapters 3.2; 3.3).

While many of my findings confirm the research of the aforementioned scholars, I extend on their work by focusing on the practice of sourcing, by using data from several countries, and by including news and picture agencies in the data collection. In Chapter 3.1 I introduce the concept of the visual quote, which emerged from my focus on the practice of sourcing. Furthermore, I examine the phenomenon of sourcing amateur photographs with reference to a number of additional concepts of journalism research including the concept of quality and trust, as well as the concept of news values (see Part 3). Researchers who deal with news values in visual content tend to come from the field of television studies (Maier & Ruhrmann 2008; Kästner 2008). Only few analyse news values with reference to photographs (Bednarek & Caple 2012b, Caple 2013; Craig 1994; Hall 1973; Rössler et al. 2011). Such research does not focus on amateurs, and has a tendency to overlook the elements of the decision-making process that content criteria cannot unveil.

The first English-edited book on amateur photographs in professional news media was published in December 2011 (Andén-Papadopoulos & Pantti 2011). *Amateur Images and Global News* combines the discourse on amateur photographs and amateur video with the histories, practices and circulation of amateur pictures including ethics (see Chapter 3.4), aesthetics and picture quality (see Chapter 3.5), which are all relevant for my project, as I will demonstrate in

Part 3 of this thesis.<sup>20</sup> First and foremost the research presented in the book deals with amateur eyewitness photographs and video coverage of news events, largely ignoring portraits, stock pictures and other amateur photographs that are used in the professional news media, as Chapter 3.3 demonstrates. Furthermore, cost-saving motivations behind the sourcing of amateur photographs are not comprehensively analysed. I explore this issue in Chapter 3.8. No particular attention is given to the practice of gathering amateur photographs from personal online archives, although there exists a large body of research on independently-published content, as I mentioned earlier in this chapter. Furthermore, researchers tend to concentrate on people submitting and contributing to the news media. My thesis suggests that the targeted search for amateur photographs in personal online archives has little to do with the idea of audience participation and needs to be framed in terms of sourcing (see also Kristensen & Mortensen 2013).

Another under-researched area in the analysis of amateur photographs in the professional news media is the different use of amateur photographs for print and online publishing, as discussed in Chapter 3.6. Research into text-based news has also paid little attention to the accommodation of amateur material in print media. Although the international research conducted by Singer and colleagues includes both online and print editors (Singer et al. 2011, p. 5), the researchers focus on newspaper websites (Singer et al. 2011, pp. 3-5). McElroy examines comments published in newspapers, showing the editorial influence of news media workers who “shape online content for print” (McElroy 2013, p. 755).

However, most research on amateur material in the professional news media focuses on online content. Is this because studies tend to focus on the newness of the phenomenon, overlooking the historical trajectories of amateur content in

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<sup>20</sup> For example, Mortensen writes about the ethical dilemmas of incorporating amateur pictures of the Iranian protests in 2009 into the news and refers to the challenge it poses to professional standards, such as the lack of editorial methods for incorporating anonymous amateur pictures of a subjective and fragmentary format (2011b). Niekamp analyses the aesthetic quality of amateur video, comparing it with standards of professional content. He asks how decisions to use such videos are made and finds different expectations of amateur video (2011). Sjøvaag examines the narrative techniques used to integrate amateur video into professional news and questions the extent to which professional authority is threatened when amateur videos are incorporated (2011).

the professional news media? My thesis attempts to combine the online and print perspectives (see also Pantti & Bakker 2009), suggesting a stronger connection between amateur photographs and free online news media. The deep-seated prejudice against the amateur must therefore partly be seen in relation to professional standards and ideologies of print media production (see Chapter 3.6).

### ***The newness of the amateur***

The vast majority of research on amateur content inside and outside the professional news media refers to the newness of the phenomenon, as I demonstrated above. This perceived newness is illustrated by the conception of terms such as ‘citizen journalism’, ‘user-generated content’ or ‘participatory journalism’, which signal the changes in the media landscape and the shift from passive audiences towards active participants.

Citizen journalism is usually discussed as an alternative or additional way of producing the news, as well as a challenge to the dominance of the professional news media. The term denotes the “new stature” of the amateur (Allan 2009, p. 31) and changes in the way content is made. According to Jay Rosen, professor of journalism at New York University, “the people formerly known as the audience employ the press tools they have in their possession to inform one another” (Rosen 2008). Thus the concept implies that “citizens are not simple sources of information and/or audiences, but also recorders and creators of news” (Mythen 2010, p. 45), suggesting newfound control and independence. Because of the relative newness of the concept, citizen journalism is not clearly defined (Goode 2009, p. 1288) and is applied to news published independently from traditional editorial processes and organisational structures (Carpenter 2010), as well as to non-professional content published in the context of professional media (Lewis 2010). Some writers use citizen journalism as a synonym for online news content creation more generally and include photo sharing, blogging and even commenting or tagging in its definition (Goode 2009, p. 1288). Citizen journalism has also been discussed beyond online media content (Goode 2009, pp. 1288-1289). Authors therefore call for a broader understanding of citizen journalism (Bruns 2009; Goode 2009), as artificial boundaries are not always helpful in

understanding the complexity of the phenomenon (Goode 2009, p. 1288). At the same time the subsuming use of the term obscures the diverse approaches that exist (Deuze, Bruns & Neuberger 2007, pp. 323-324).

From Carpenter's point of view, a citizen journalist is "an individual who intends to publish information online, meant to benefit a community" (Carpenter 2010, p. 1064). This is a rather challenging use of the concept for research on amateur online content, as it requires knowing the motivation of the amateur contributors. Nevertheless, it is important for my research, as interviewees spoke of the distinction between different purposes when differentiating between professional and amateur photography (see Chapters 1.3; 3.1).

Online amateur content has also been discussed with regard to the changing relationship between producers and consumers, and thus between audiences and news media workers. With reference to Alvin Toffler, who offered the term "prosumer" (1980, p. 265), media scholar Axel Bruns has introduced the term "produser" to describe the internet user. "Produsers" are "users of collaborative environments who engage with content interchangeably in consumptive and productive modes" (Bruns & Jacobs 2006, p. 6). The fundamental idea of this concept is that we are witnessing a transition from production to produsage with implications not only for content-making, but also for larger cultural and sociological changes (Bruns 2008). While consumption has been associated with passivity (Goode 2009, p. 1293), production has been understood as a more active process. The combination of the terms communicates that production and consumption can now happen simultaneously.

A third concept frequently used in this context is "user-generated content (UGC)." Users are perceived as "active internet contributors" who engage in the production of material outside the traditional media environment (Dijck 2009a, p. 41). Like 'citizen journalism,' UGC is used flexibly to describe a wide range of independently-published online content. The concept has also been applied to amateur material used in the professional news media environment (Hermida & Thurman 2008; Manosevitch 2011), where it is used as an umbrella term that is only partly useful "to capture adequately the range of phenomena it describes" (Wardle & Williams 2010, pp. 781-782). The term 'user' does not include media

types beyond the online environment; the word 'generated' does not match contributions such as comments; and the concept of 'content' might not capture participatory approaches that include the collaboration between the professional news media and amateurs (Wardle & Williams 2010, p. 782). It was also found that news media workers do not feel comfortable with the terminology (Wardle & Williams 2010, p. 786).

Online amateur content found in professional news media is most commonly discussed in the academic literature as participatory journalism (Lorenzo-Dus & Bryan 2011; Singer et. al 2011). Joyce Nip writes that people generate content under the umbrella of participatory journalism "more or less independently of the professionals, whereas the professionals generate some other content, and also produce, publish and market the whole news product" (Nip 2006, p. 217). Alfred Hermida understands participatory journalism as "the technical, editorial, and managerial processes that allow readers' contributions to be elicited, processed, and published at professional publications" (Hermida 2008). The latter implies that participatory journalism could be examined with respect to the process of newsgathering (Lorenzo-Dus & Bryan 2011, p. 26). If so, it should be asked whether and how this process has changed. The idea of participation suggests the equal co-creation of content (Tapscott & Williams 2006, p. 150), which a number of projects including my research show to be false (see above; see Part 3).

Other media scholars use the terms 'co-creation' or 'co-creative labor' (Banks & Deuze 2009, p. 419). These concepts shift the discussion about online amateur content from an idealistic perspective on participation, democratisation and the fifth estate towards an understanding that content-making is strongly influenced by economic factors and is changing labour relations (Van Dijck 2009a, p. 49).<sup>21</sup> Additionally, highly-frequented sites are used to generate advertising revenue (Goode 2009, p. 1289). Thus the discourse has moved towards "the potential rather than actual democratic impact" of amateur content in the media (Goode 2009, p. 1292).

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<sup>21</sup> Several internet companies have in recent years purchased platforms used for citizen journalism and user-generated content. For example, Yahoo bought Flickr in 2005 and Google purchased YouTube in the following year (Goode 2009, p. 1289).

Interestingly, the amateur is just one of several concepts that have been used to describe the phenomenon of sharing digital content in the online environment, and is used noticeably less than some other labels. Some of the terminologies that surround online amateur content reflect polarised views and idealistic notions, as discussed above. Most, if not all, remain vague as to what kind of content and collaboration is occurring and who is involved. As part of this discourse, authors have asked whether categories such as amateur and professional are still useful and if so, what meaning they have today (see Chapter 1.1). The terms also tend to disempower the people who are the focus of academic research of their individual decision-making capacities. “Words Matter,” Norman writes, and calls upon us to “Talk About People: Not Customers, Not Consumers, Not Users”, as behind all these concepts stand individuals (2006).

While I recognise the importance of the above concepts, I do not to use them in the results section of this thesis, as they do not adequately deal with the accommodation of amateur photographs as sources, in that they do not account for practices used to adjust amateur material to the needs of professional news media. In addition, I discovered during the data collection of my research that news media workers found it difficult to relate to the above terminologies. While this can be interpreted as a refusal to accept change, I share the view that, in order to make media research more accessible and useable for the industry, it is helpful to revise the academic language and adapt it to a language with which media workers can identify (Wardle & Williams 2010, p. 781). I choose to use the term ‘amateur’, partly because interviewees used the term frequently, but also because the historical trajectories described in Chapter 1.1 carry through to today (see Chapter 1.1; see Part 3).

### ***Conclusion***

Recent research on amateur material in the professional news media has shown that news media workers perceive amateurs largely as sources and persist with standards, ideologies and attitudes that originated in traditional print news practice. Such insights strongly align with my own findings and contributed to framing the research topic in terms of sourcing. This research frame gave rise to the understanding of amateur eyewitness photographs as visual quotes, which I

will discuss in Chapter 3.1. I ask whether amateur photographs that capture news events can be understood as quotes and thus as elements of the enduring professional news media system (see Chapter 3.1). Very little attention has been given to the work of news and picture agencies, which—I suggest—must be taken more seriously. In Chapter 3.3 of this thesis I show that agencies play a key role in determining if, when and how amateur photographs enter the professional news media arena. I suggest that they provide a cleaner, more professional version of amateur content, which is partly why some amateur photographs blend into the large pool of usable images and may remain invisible as amateur contributions (see Chapter 3.3). Most research focuses on the newness of phenomena rather than on understanding the rise of the amateur as part of long-term developments. In my thesis I attempt to overcome this limitation without denying that change is occurring. In the next section I will explain the methods and methodology before moving on to present and discuss the findings of my research in Part 3.

## Part 2 Research Design

In this chapter I describe the methods used to examine the presence of amateur photographs in the professional news media. These included an in-depth study at *Leader Community Newspapers*, followed by interviews in other media institutions in Australia, Germany and the UK in 2010/2011. In addition, I applied textual analysis and used secondary sources, leading to a saturation of the collected material and to the phase of sorting, writing and theorising of the data (see also Jones & Alony 2011, p. 102). By using interviews as the main method in this project, I was able to show why news media workers decide to include amateur photographs and why they decide otherwise, how they tend to conceive of amateur photographs and the ways in which this influences the sourcing practice. If I had looked exclusively at amateur photographs in terms of content, important insights into the practice of sourcing of amateur photographs in the professional news media (as presented in part 3 of this thesis) would have remained hidden.

### ***Investigating the sourcing practice***

Historical examples show that the sourcing of amateur photographs in professional news media is not a new phenomenon (see Chapters 3.2; 3.3). However, since the beginning of the millennium, several authors have written about the accommodation of amateur content in terms of rise, emergence and change. For this reason, I chose to use grounded theory, an approach that can account for emerging phenomena, but also for processes and practices that are considered complex and elaborate or need to be examined from a fresh perspective (Charmaz 2006; Charmaz 2013).

The primary focus of my research was to examine the practice of sourcing amateur photographs in the professional news media. Inherent in this practice is the requirement for news media workers to make decisions over amateur photographs. Such decisions are influenced by a wide variety of factors such as the merging, changing and fluid media landscape (see Chapter 1.3), the political economy of professional news media (see Chapter 3.8), changes in consumption

such as the shift from print to digital (see Chapter 3.6), or the interactive and omnipresent nature of today's media (see Chapters 3.1; 3.7). They are affected by the direct work environment and workplace structure, by hierarchies, news values, professional standards and by individual influences such as the educational background of news media workers (Shoemaker & Resse, cited in Kim & Kelly 2008, p. 158). Furthermore, it must be acknowledged that decisions in the professional news media are often made quickly and intuitively and are based on expectations, preferences and choices that have been made before (cf. Betsch & Haberstroh 2005 p. xii). The practice of sourcing amateur photographs is thus closely linked to newsroom routines as well as to the habits and attitudes of news media workers towards amateur photography (cf. Betsch & Haberstroh 2005 p. xiii).<sup>22</sup> News making by nature is a matter of choices "that inevitably affect meanings and context" (Killenberg & Anderson 2009, p. 49).

Although it is widely known that photographs are "actively produced" and that processes behind them are "full of decisions" (Birnbaum 2008, p. 8), journalism research in the past has often concentrated on content rather than on practices that are mostly "based on a set of routine, standardized activities" (Deuze 2007, p. 160). For example, many studies on sources in the professional news media exclude the editorial process and instead undertake content analysis (Grabe, Zhou & Barnett 1999; Hickerson, Moy & Dunsmore 2011).<sup>23</sup> As my focus is on the practice of sourcing amateur photographs (rather than content), it was not sufficient to look exclusively at news media publications.<sup>24</sup> Instead I focused on

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<sup>22</sup> Decision research is largely the domain of cognitive and social psychology (Betsch & Haberstroh 2005 p. xiv), which I did not include in my research as it is a specialist field.

<sup>23</sup> Research into amateur material online also looks often at media content, which is produced in certain moments, geographical regions or for web platforms (see Chapter 1.3). To understand news values, media scholars have also focused on the content criteria (see Chapters 3.2; 3.3). While there is a large body of literature on news values related to written and spoken news media content, so far only a small number of academics have looked at this issue in the context of picture production in the professional news media (Banks 1994; Caple 2013; Rössler et al. 2011). In photojournalism research the analysis of content stands in the foreground (Kim & Kelly 2008; Kim & Smith 2005; Fahmy & Kim 2008). Others understand photojournalism as the work of photographers, which also ignores the role and influence of editors in the newsroom (Slattery & Fosdick 1979; Smith & Hubbard 1987; see also Chapter 1.2).

<sup>24</sup> Research on amateur material in the professional news media applies a variety of methods including content analysis (Örnebring 2008; Holt & Karlsson 2011), newsroom ethnography (Wardle

the decision-making underlying what becomes news and what does not, which is considered one of the most important processes in the production of news (Reinemann & Schulz 2006, p. 1).

I chose to conduct interviews with news media workers in order to understand this decision-making practice. While it proved to be useful to apply one key method, a single method was insufficient (cf. Haseman 2006, p. 2). Grounded theory supports the combination of multiple methods, which according to Glaser can be perceived as data “whatever the source, whether interview, observations, documents” (2001, p. 145). I therefore undertook observation and textual analysis, and included secondary data, which opened up several perspectives, as well as multiple dimensions of the phenomenon.

### ***In-depth study at the local Leader Community Newspapers***

In the early stages of data collection I spent six weeks part-time at a newsroom of the *Leader Community Newspapers* chain to understand the processes that are involved in the practice of picture production and to learn when and how amateur photographs are sourced in this context. The *Leader Community Newspapers* is a chain of commercial publications, which uses the term “community” to mean local. The editorial team in 2010 included about 180 staff, of whom 36 were employed photographers (Richardson 2010, interview). The photographic editor in 2010, John French, was a former photographer and picture editor of the Melbourne-based newspaper *The Age* and a long-term representative and observer of Australian photography in the news media. According to Group News Editor Nick Richardson, this, together with the comparatively large number of employed photographers, indicates the importance of the pictorial component at the *Leader Community Newspapers* (2010, interview). The *Leader* was from also an interesting site to examine the sourcing of amateur photographs, especially as the role of the newspaper chain is to inform and reflect the community (Richardson 2010, interview).

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& Williams 2010) and interviews (Hermida & Thurman 2008; Pantti & Bakker 2009; Paulussen & Ugille 2008; Thurman 2008).

Richardson said:

“The paper has a particular resonance for people in certain circumstances. You might be a house buyer; you might have family or elderly people. Young single people are not going to find a lot in our papers because they are not in the community very often. [...] Our paper is really about people who spend time in their community” (2010, interview).

The *Leader* is therefore arguably closer to the people and potentially more dependent on amateur material. So far, relatively little scholarly attention has been given to the accommodation of amateur material at local newspapers (Lewis et al. 2010, p. 164), which was a further reason for me to choose the *Leader* for my investigations.

Apart from the senior management most staff members at the *Leader* newsroom in Blackburn, Victoria (Australia) worked in an open-plane office. At the time the research took place this space was shared between the advertising and editorial teams. I used a desk in the photography department, which was situated in the middle of the office and allowed me to observe the interactions between staff members including photographers, editors, writers and administrative staff members. Additionally, I had access to a computer and thus was able to examine the picture archive, the mailbox of the photography assistant as well as the staff rosters.

The photography assistant often permitted me to look over her shoulder as she explained to me how photographs, including amateur photographs, reached her. The work of *Leader* editors and writers was less accessible, as the setup of desks did not allow me to sit for any length of time with staff members. Additionally, conversations in the open-plane office were perceived as disturbing, which was possibly one of the reasons why staff members often communicated with each other via email or telephone. Such interactions were not easy to observe. Photographers used the workspace mainly to upload their pictures and meet editors. They usually spent little time in the newsroom, which in some way separated them from the rest of the editorial team that primarily worked in the Blackburn office. I accompanied three staff photographers on their assignments during the time of the fieldwork in order to understand how assignment

photography worked (see Chapter 1.2). These observations revealed how amateur photographs are used as tips for a story that staff photographers later visualize in a professional manner (see Chapter 3.1). Assignment photography largely followed standardized procedures. In contrast, collaborations with amateurs seemed more in the hands of individual editors. For example, once a week editors of the local newspapers (see Table 1) met with the picture editor John French in order to discuss the use of images in the following issues. The picture conferences usually took around 10 minutes. Interestingly, only a few pages (including 1, 3, 5 and 7) were discussed. These – traditionally important – pages were usually reserved for professional produced images. The use of photographs captured by members of the public was not usually discussed during picture conferences. Decisions about the accommodation of amateur photographs were made instantly or were only briefly discussed in the corridor or on the telephone. The few times they were officially discussed during a picture conference was when they were considered to be problematic.

The newsroom of the *Leader* was thus a convenient site for observing an approach to picture production as well as applied sourcing practices. While the observation helped me obtain access to the Australian news media industry, it also allowed me to broaden my overall knowledge about the field that I was examining beyond the academic perspective. Additionally, the newsroom of the *Leader Community Newspapers* was a useful place to conduct interviews with staff members about the sourcing of amateur photographs.

Interviewees at the *Leader Community Newspapers* included staff members of the picture department, staff members of the online department as well as News Group Editor Nick Richardson and editors who work for specific *Leader* outlets such as the *Heidelberg*, *Maroondah* or *Diamond Valley Leaders* (see Table 1). My rationale for taking this wide scope was that photographs enter the newsroom and are processed differently depending on how they reach the newsroom, where they get published and who is involved in the sourcing of amateur photographs, as the observation showed.

Due to the specific issues involved in the production of photographs in journalism, I set out to talk primarily with staff members who were directly involved in the

process and practice of sourcing photographs. As such, participants were mostly editors, picture editors, the picture assistants and photographers. The authority of these news media workers in times of centralised news content production must be critically questioned (Simons 2012, p. 8). However, due to the specific knowledge and skill necessary to deal with and talk about photographs, it was more suitable for collecting data than to talk only with “high-ranking” (Singer et al. 2011, p. 192) staff members, as other researchers have done (for example Singer et al. 2011). Additionally, research has shown that “multiple (and proliferating) styles of control and decision-making” persist as long “as those at the centre of the web can gain some benefit from allowing a particular practice and/or organisational arrangement to exist” (Louw 2001, p. 64; Louw cited in Deuze 2007, p. 145). As such, news media workers do have “some degree of autonomy” (Deuze 2007, p. 145) regarding the sourcing of amateur photographs in the professional news media. I describe the interview process in the section ‘Conducting interviews’ (see below).

### ***Overview of interviewees at the Leader Community chain***

Interviewees at the Leader Community Newspapers included the staff members listed in Table 1. Some of the interviewees have changed jobs since the fieldwork in 2010/ 2011. Due to this fluctuation, I have chosen to refer to the position the participants had during the time of the data collection.

*Overview of interviewees at the Leader Community chain*

<b>Interviewees</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Leader</b>	<b>Time of data collection</b>
Nick Richardson	Group News Editor	General	16 Mar., 2010 16 Apr., 2010
John French	Picture Editor	General	06 Mar., 2010
Clair Harris	Photo Assistant	General	21 May, 2010
Jon Burton	Online Journalist	General	22 Apr., 2010
Bryan Allchin	Editor	Maroondah Leader	06 May, 2010
Belinda Mackowski	Editor	Manningham Leader	28 May, 2010
Blair Corless	Editor	Heidelberg Leader	27 May, 2010
Dave Crossthwaite	Editor	Diamond Valley Leader	25 May, 2010
Janine Eastgate	Photographer	Heidelberg Leader	12 May, 2010
Steve Tanner	Photographer	Whitehorse Leader	27 May, 2010
Mark Stewart	Photographer	Waverly/Oakleigh Monash Leader	13 May, 2010
Michelle Kelcey	Photographer	Maroondah Leader	03 Jun., 2010
Jason Edwards	Photographer	Maroondah/ Diamond Valley Leader	26 May, 2010

Table 1

***Beyond the Leader Community Newspapers***

In the second stage of the data collection I sought out interviewees who worked for a wide range of news media including daily newspapers, weekly newspapers/magazines, monthly magazines, public broadcasting corporations and agencies in Australia, the UK and Germany (for an overview see Appendix). These countries were selected because they represent places in which professional news media are present, operate in similar societies and have comparable cultures, functions, practices and traditions (see also Deuze, Bruns & Neuberger 2007, p. 325).<sup>25</sup>

Although cultural differences must be taken into account, the aim of this project was *not* to compare the sourcing of amateur photographs in different countries, but to reveal the principles that characterise and explain the practice of sourcing

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<sup>25</sup> I chose Australia, as this is where I lived at the time of data collection. Additionally, I had the chance to collect data in Europe. I selected the UK due to the relationship between Australia and the UK. Germany was chosen on the basis of my own cultural background, which allowed me to get access to newsrooms that to which Anglophone researchers have limited access.

amateur photographs in the professional news media. Thus my intention was to analyse a current practice within professional news media and thereby to develop theory. The sourcing practice also encompasses aspects that are relevant to understanding the path professional news media will take in the future and which changes are required in order to endure. On the basis of my research goal I attempted to overcome the conventional grouping of media types and technologies. As described in Chapter 1.3, researchers have mainly examined the adaptation of amateur material in specific types of news media such as online newspapers (Chung 2008; Domingo et al. 2008; Hermida & Thurman 2008; Reich 2008, Thurman 2008), print (Örnebring 2008; Pantti & Bakker 2009; Paulussen & Ugille 2008) or television (Bridge & Sjøvaag 2008; Lorenzo-Dus & Bryan 2011). This grouping has been useful as different outlets have different purposes, target groups and needs, and this has also influenced the methodological approach in media studies, for example, the theory of recipients (Van Dijck 2009a, p. 41). However, in a time of merging and centralised forms of content production, multiplatform journalism and fluid media content (Simons 2012, p. 8), the traditional segmentation of media types cannot be taken as a given (Deuze 2007, p. 143) particularly when investigating phenomena such as the sourcing of amateur photographs in the professional news media.

Therefore I chose research participants from a variety of professional news media outlets such as daily and weekly newspapers or magazines. Although they can be considered different, research has demonstrated that news media workers have an inclination to share comparable standards and norms (Hermida & Thurman 2008, p. 343). For example, tabloid editors and reporters have the same professional ideas as journalists who work for other media (Bird, cited in Deuze 2005b, p. 861; Bird 1992). Public and commercial media work is increasingly similar (Deuze 2007, p. 146), and all over the world newsrooms are organised in a comparable manner (Deuze 2007, p. 159). In addition, news media workers in western democracies “follow routines that are essentially the same” (Langton 2009, p. 96), “share similar characteristics and speak of similar values in the context of their daily work” (Deuze 2007, p. 168). News workers “across genres and media types invoke more or less the same ideal-typical value system when discussing and reflecting on their work,” Deuze writes (2005a, p. 444). Research on the participatory approach also indicates that attitudes

towards the sourcing of amateur material in a number of professional news media outlets is remarkably similar and constructed by shared professional principles (Manosevitch 2011, p. 424; see also Hermida & Thurman 2008; Paulussen & Ugille 2008; Thurman 2008). Others point out that there are some essential differences in the processing of amateur material that need to be acknowledged in order to understand the accommodation of amateur material (Andén-Papadopoulos & Pantti 2013, p. 965).

In my research I took into consideration whether, and to what extent, the type of media outlet plays a role, and whether this influences the decisions involved in the practice of sourcing of amateur photographs. The findings in Part 3 of this thesis are therefore presented in reference to the source of information and to the context in which they originated (see Part 3). I reduced the interviewees to news media workers who worked for newspapers and news magazines, as well as for online outlets such as news media websites. Other digital formats were just emerging at the time of the data collection and thus were excluded from this project. Furthermore, I did not explicitly look at the sourcing of photographs in the context of television news.

In addition to interviews with staff members at a range of news media outlets, I included interviews with news media workers at picture and news agencies. Agencies do not represent news media outlets in the traditional sense, as the conventional role of agencies is to deliver raw content (Boyer 2011; Boyd-Barrett 1980; Boyd-Barrett & Rantanen 1998). Nevertheless, it is known that agencies strongly influence the news (Boyd-Barrett 1980, p. 19; Boyd-Barrett & Rantanen 1998, p. 1; Deuze 2007, p. 159) and not only deliver raw material, but also sell media packages including text, video and photographs. At the same time, they publish content on their own websites, which can be understood as further expressions of today's "convergence culture" (Jenkins 2006b, title). I interviewed news media workers at traditional news wires including the *Australian Associated Press (AAP)* and the *Deutsche Presse-Agentur (DPA)*, as well as staff members of picture agencies. I also included one interview with staff members of a stock picture agency, as illustrative photographs play an important role in today's news media (see Chapter 3.3; see Appendix).

Last but not least, I conducted a number of interviews with experts in the field who did not necessarily work for currently-published news media outlets, but who had expert knowledge about photography in the media or the use of amateur material more generally. These interviews were especially valuable, as they allowed me to critically scrutinise the statements of other interviewees that gave insight into professional news media. In total I conducted 42 interviews. Due to time and resource constraints I conducted the majority of interviews (26) in Australia where I lived and worked at the time of the research, with an additional 14 interviews conducted overseas and two interviews conducted via email correspondence (see Table 2).

### ***Conducting interviews***

The inclusive nature of my research approach manifests not only in the choice of interviewees and in the broad cross-section of professional news media, but also in the way I conducted interviews. I asked news media workers about the sourcing of amateur photographs, and about the overall processing of photographs. For example, I asked how they are involved in the process of picture production; how and why they gather images; how they process photographs; and how they collaborate with photographers including staff members, professional freelancers and amateurs. Additionally, I asked participants to describe their professional and educational background, which helped me to open the conversation.

The first interviews were open-ended and were usually lasted around 50–60 minutes. These interviews provided me with data that influenced the path of the project and led to the clarification of the research questions, themes and core categories (Jones & Alony 2011, p. 102). Interviews at later stages of the project became shorter and more targeted towards the sourcing of amateur photographs and on the categories and properties I had identified during the first phase of the data collection, until the categories became dense and saturated (Jones & Alony 2011, p. 104; see also Glaser & Strauss 1967). As many people told me they had little time for research interviews, I was flexible in adapting the interviews to the participants' schedules and time frames. Research looking at a cultural praxis that is changing within itself and influenced by a changing environment must be,

in my understanding, equally dynamic, and equally willing and open to change. Moreover, it was of great importance to me to conduct a project that is “responsive to the situation in which the research [was] done” (Dick 2005), to navigate through the changes and to stay open to new developments and unexpected insights.

Following grounded theory, I did not conduct the interviews to test a thesis, but to allow issues to emerge. Linked to the question of how and why amateur photographs are sourced, the issues that came up included motivations for sourcing amateur photographs (see Chapters 3.2; 3.3; 3.8), their distinct position in relation to the professional approach to picture and news content-making (see Chapters 3.1; 3.7), the perceived limitations and challenges (see Chapters 3.4; 3.5) for specific types of media (see Chapter 3.6) and the methods of dealing with amateur photographs in order to adjust them to professional norms and standards (see Chapters 3.1; 3.3; 3.4).

During my observation at the open-plan office at *Leader Community Newspapers*, I could see that some staff members dominated the conversations in the newsroom, whereas others were not heard; that some thoughts and opinions were expressed, whereas others were kept silent. One-to-one interviews (or, in a few cases, with two interviewees) enabled me to respond to the interviewees and allowed them to talk about issues that were important to them (Denscombe 2007, pp. 173-175). Interviews were also useful in checking the trustworthiness of observation (Goodrick 2010, p. 30). By conducting interviews in a separate room I reduced the potential professional risk for interviewees and gave them the chance to speak freely and comfortably. Such individual perspectives were especially important for my research, in particular to be able to understand the decisions and attitudes of news media workers that influence the practice of sourcing amateur photographs.

I asked interviewees at the end of the meetings who, from their point of view, would be an interesting interviewee for the project, which usually led to a new contact and often to the next interview. This is known as the snowball technique (Glaser 1978, p. 88), an approach that allowed interviewees not only to provide information, but also to provide input into the research process. I chose

interviewees according to their willingness to participate, their involvement in the sourcing and/or picture production process, their ability to talk about photography and about the sourcing of amateur photographs in professional news media. Interviewees were either specialists in the production of pictures or they sourced photographs as part of several tasks. They worked either for print, online or both, or for an agency.

When conducting interviews, it was necessary to keep in mind that participants told only part of what was going on in the newsroom, and only what they felt was relevant to mention (Denscombe 2007, p. 190). Hence it became important to listen to what was not said (Law 2004, p. 86) or to listen “with a big ear” (Glaser 2001, p. 175; Jones & Alony 2011, p. 104). The knowledge gained through other methods, such as observation and textual analysis (see below), insights from projects by other researchers, as well as photography and journalism studies generally helped me to be aware of those issues and to read “between the literal lines” of what was presented “to understand what is actually depicted” (Law 2004, p. 88). For example several interviewees raised dramatic examples to highlight the inaccuracy and unreliability of amateur photographs. However, when they actually talked about their own work experiences, they usually did not speak of many instances that demonstrated the lack of credibility of amateur photographs (see chapter 3.4). While this could indicate the way news content-makers protect their own professional approach to news making, it also suggests that brash statements about the limitations of amateur photography may be used to emphasise the importance of professionalism in journalism and to downplay the rise of the amateur.

Listening to news media workers also gave me an understanding of their professional ideology and identity as well as the perceptions, ideas and beliefs they held (Denscombe 2007, p. 175; Deuze 2005b, p. 862; see Chapter 1.2). Understanding this ideology and identity helped me to grasp “how journalists give meaning to their newswork” (Deuze 2005a, p. 444), as well as why and how they perceive and use amateur photographs. Of relevance to this project was also the need to “acknowledge biases” (Jones & Alony 2011, p. 103) and to capture individual perspectives, which are often overlooked or brushed aside as less relevant. The practice of sourcing amateur photographs is strongly influenced by

people who are involved in the processes and practices of news content-making and who nurture the culture of it. Eliminating their individual perspectives, attitudes, emotions and opinions would construct knowledge that would have little to do with the people involved and tell little about what actually happens in the newsrooms of professional news media organisations (cf. Haseman 2006, pp. 98-99). Thus rather than only seeing the subjective views and attitudes of individual interviewees as problematic, in this research I recognised them as relevant and valuable (see also Leavy 2009, pp. 06-08).

Several participants gave the feedback that interviews provided a stimulus for reflection and were welcomed, even though they usually told me beforehand that they would have little time for it. For example, Anke Wellnitz, picture editor of the German news magazine *Der Spiegel*, said that talking about her work was not something she would do regularly (2010, interview). Janine Eastgate, photographer at the *Leader Community Newspapers*, said: "I'm going to think about all this now, that's good" (2010, interview). Michelle Kelcey, another *Leader* photographer, similarly said: "You made me think about things" (2010, interview). While it cannot be determined whether the interviews had any further impact on their professional practice, the statements clearly reinforce Law's argument, that in fact, "methods don't just describe social realities but are also involved in creating them" (Law 2004, p. i).

I coded all interviews thematically, a process that led to the categories as presented in Part 3. I looked for emerging themes, categories or issues that described the phenomenon of using amateur photographs in mainstream media. I also applied the process of coding during data collection, which influenced how interviews were conducted, which news media workers were included, which questions were asked and which other methods were used (see below). Hence the focus of the later phase of the coding process was not only to identify categories, but also to clarify subcategories and related properties, to start to sort the emerging themes, and to structure ideas and theories. In addition, I translated all German interview statements that I considered to be relevant to the research.

### ***The inclusion of further sources and methods***

To understand the sourcing of amateur photographs in the professional news media, it was necessary to examine published photographs as the outcome of sourcing practices as well as photographs that were discarded. Guided by the issues that emerged from the research process, I looked in depth at selected images and thus at which amateur photographs are sourced in what context and how they are framed as part of the professional news media environment. For example, in order to explain how amateur pictures are used as raw materials I analysed variations in the use of the video footage depicting the shooting of the Iranian girl Neda Agha-Soltan in 2004 (see Chapter 3.1).

In studying selected amateur photographs that were pointed out in the interviews, textual analysis enabled me to examine specific choices (Bowles 2010, p. 92), allowed me to broaden my understanding of the practice of sourcing amateur photographs and to scrutinise critically what interviewees said. I only included printed and freely-available news media content, ignoring formats such as apps for smart phones, digital outlets for tablets or news media content behind paywalls, mainly because at the time of data collection, they were either still new or in a stage of development and/or not the responsibility of research participants.

As part of this process I realised how difficult it could be to track down amateur photographs. For example, at the *Leader Community Newspapers* chain, amateur photographs that had been printed in one of the newspapers were archived alongside professional photographs. Unlike professional photographs, they were usually filed under the term “supplied”<sup>26</sup> and only occasionally under the photographer’s real name (Allchin 2010, interview; see Chapter 3.1). While the terminology helped to distinguish external from internally-produced photographs with different legal requirements, it also obscured the origin of photographs submitted and demonstrated that amateur photographs in the news could only be identified in hindsight with difficulty (see Chapter 3.6).

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<sup>26</sup> The term ‘supplied’ at the *Leader Community Newspapers* includes amateur photographs, but also photographs by members of organisations such as local sporting clubs or Lions clubs, the police, PR agencies and real estate agents (Harris 2010, interview).

In addition to my own research, I considered the findings of several media and journalism studies conducted by other researchers that have examined the phenomenon of amateur work, citizen journalism, participatory journalism and user-generated content in recent years. According to grounded theory, I included such secondary material not just in terms of what has been done, but also in terms of data (Morse et al. 2009, p. 9). The use of secondary sources was essential for the historical components of the previous chapters. I employed a number of historical texts across a range of disciplines such as art history and photography theory, as photography is often ignored in journalism and media studies. The “diverse and dispersed nature of photographic practices” and the “nomadic status” of photography studies (Welch & Long 2009, p. 4) enforced the interdisciplinary approach of this research. While the main focus of my thesis is on decisions of news media workers over amateur photographs and thus on issues in media and journalism studies, I have aimed to link such disciplines with research on photography conducted in other fields.

Further, I accessed the experiences and memories of several interviewees to understand past practices. Therefore I was in email contact with a number of experts in the field, such as Carry Levy, former picture editor of *Newsweek*, and Jim Hubbard, photographer and former bureau manager at *UPI* (see Table 2). Introductory texts in photo books, textbooks, and exhibition catalogues, as well as articles in publications such as magazines, turned out to be rich resources for the broader understanding of photography. A number of practitioners, including photographers and photo editors, have written on the production of photographs and on the changes that influenced their own understanding of photography, their identity and the practice of taking and working with images. These issues were relevant to understanding the role and meaning of amateur photographs in the professional news media.

An additional source was internet publications, which added to my understanding of the sourcing of amateur photographs, especially where currency was required. One of the major challenges I encountered in this regard was dealing with the quantity, but also with the fluidity and short life span of some online content. Furthermore, it was crucial to look carefully at the credibility of online sources and to evaluate whether they could be understood as reliable information (Metzger

2007). The use of such sources was an attempt to stay as current and open-minded as possible. Nevertheless, I had to accept that the addition of secondary material and empirical data is never complete and, like a series of photographs or a list of numbers, “cannot but end with an etcetera” (Eco 2009, p. 7).

### ***Overview of further interviewees in this project***<sup>27</sup>

Table 2 provides the names of the professional news media accessed during this project, the country where they are published, the type and frequency of the printed publication, as well as the names, roles and affiliation of interviewees. The agency representatives and further experts in the field with whom I consulted are shown in Tables 3 and 4.

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<sup>27</sup> As explained in the context of the Leader Community Newspapers chain, some of the interviewees have changed their professional positions. Due to this fluctuation, I have chosen to refer to the position the interviewees had during the time of data collection.

*Overview of interviewees at news media outlets*

<b>News media<sup>28</sup></b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Frequency of the print media</b>	<b>Interviewees</b>	<b>Time of data collection</b>
The Age	Australia	Newspaper	Daily	Leigh Henningham, Picture Editor Mario Borg, Assistant Picture Editor	01 Mar., 2010 22 Jul., 2011
The Sydney Morning Herald	Australia	Newspaper	Daily	Meg King, Deputy Picture Editor	10 Nov., 2011
The Australian	Australia	Newspaper	Daily	David Geraghty, Photographer	14 Nov., 2011
Herald Sun	Australia	Newspaper	Daily	Ian Baker, Assistant Picture Editor Steve Perkin, Columnist Jay Town, Picture Editor	16 Nov., 2011 06 Dec., 2011
The Leader Community Newspapers	Australia	Newspaper	Weekly	See above	See above
Die Zeit	Germany	Newspaper	Weekly	Ellen Dietrich, Picture Editor	29 Jul., 2010
Der Spiegel	Germany	Magazine	Weekly	Matthias Krug, Anke Wellnitz, Picture Editors	29 Jul., 2010
Der Stern	Germany	Magazine	Weekly	Volker Lensch, Picture Editor	28 Jul., 2010
The Monthly	Australia	Magazine	Monthly	Ben Napartstek, Editor Michael Lucy, Production Manager	15 Jul., 2011
BBC	UK	Public Broadcaster	N/A	Phil Coomes, Picture Editor	09 Jul., 2010

Table 2

<sup>28</sup> For more information see Appendix.

*Overview of interviewees at news and picture agencies*

<b>Agency<sup>29</sup></b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Agency Type</b>	<b>Interviewees</b>	<b>Time of data collection</b>
DPA	Germany	News Agency	Maurizio Gambarini, Photographer, Picture Editor	30 Jul., 2010
AAP	Australia	News Agency	Dan Peled, Picture Editor	11 Nov., 2011
Demotix	UK	News Agency	Turi Munthe, founder and Chief Executive Officer of Demotix	10 Jul., 2010
Panos Pictures	UK	Picture Agency	David Arnott, Picture Editor	13 Jul., 2010
Plainpicture	Germany	Picture Agency	Roman Haerer, Astrid Herrmann, Managing Directors	29 Jul., 2010

Table 3

*Overview of further experts in the field*

<b>Further experts in the field</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Time of data collection</b>
Markus Seewald, Picture Editor	Germany	28 Jul., 2010
Claudia Sonntag, Picture Editor	Germany	06 Aug., 2010
Lutz Fischman, Director Freelens	Germany	26 Jul., 2010
Chrissie Goldrick, Picture Editor	Australia	10 Nov., 2011
Tamara Voninski, Photographer	Australia	07 May, 2010
John Jacobs, Community Manager ABC Pool	Australia	05 Mar., 2010
Andrew Chapman, Photographer	Australia	05 Dec., 2010
Carry Levy, Picture Editor and Photographer	US	19 May, 2010 (email)
Jim Hubbard, Photographer	US	10 Aug., 2011 (email)

Table 4

<sup>29</sup> For more information see Appendix.

## ***Conclusion***

Projects that start with a hypothesis and a strictly-defined research plan can certainly still have meaning and produce valid and useful findings. However, they are not the only way to search for knowledge and are not necessarily the most appropriate way. In this project I applied the principles of grounded theory, which aims to describe and interpret processes and complexities (Charmaz 2006; Charmaz 2013). Thus it was suitable for analysing the practice of sourcing of amateur photographs in the professional news media. This approach also suited the emerging nature of the sourcing of amateur photographs in professional news media, and the perceived newness of the phenomenon in the academic literature. In addition, grounded theory was employed to grasp the practice of sourcing amateur photographs that stands behind the news, the complexity of the decision-making, and the complexity of the field in which this practice is situated. The approach draws on the value of qualitative research settings, in particular within research disciplines that look at problems resulting from human interactions (Haseman 2006, p. 99). The key method of this research was interviews, as it allowed me to listen and to learn (Denscombe 2007, p. 185) from news media workers. The focus on newsroom decisions revealed that the sourcing of amateur photographs does not necessarily need to be seen in competition with the professional approach of producing photographs, but is more closely related to the practice of sourcing information, as I will demonstrate in the next chapter.

## Part 3 Results

### 3.1 Amateur photographs as visual quotes

*“Non-stop imagery is our surround, but when it comes to remembering, the photograph has a deeper bite. Memory freeze-frames; its basic unit is a single image. In an era of information overload, the photograph provides a quick way of apprehending something in a compact form for memorizing it. The photograph is like a quotation, or a maxim or proverb” (Sontag 2003, p. 22).*

As I will demonstrate in the chapters that follow, the volume and accessibility of amateur photography influences professional news media practice. Nevertheless, professional news media retain their traditional roles and functions, as amateur photographs are largely subordinate to established attitudes, standards and routines. The results of this project demonstrate why news media workers source amateur photographs and how this is occurring. In Chapter 3.1 I define the practice of sourcing and the role of sources. I then introduce the concept of the visual quote. In making the connection between amateur photographs and quotes, I seek to shift the understanding of amateur photographs away from the perception that they are part of a new kind of journalism towards an understanding of them as elements that in some way have always been present in the creation of news media content. I also use the concept to identify how news media workers actually conceive of amateur photographs, how they distance themselves from them and maintain their professional authority over them. Additionally, I demonstrate that amateur photographs are subject to a “process of translation” (López Pan 2010, p. 192) and consider whether the same issues of power and influence that arise in the use of quotes apply to sourcing amateur photographs. The concept of the visual quote is of special importance in my research. It not only suggests a different way of looking at amateur material in the professional news media, but also reinforces the changing role of photography, as cameras have become note-taking devices that can be used for everyday communication.

### ***The practice of sourcing***

The practice of sourcing in professional news media involves the interactions between news media workers and the outside world that are necessary to produce news media content (Carlson 2009a, p. 527; Enli 2007, p. 49). Thus news is the product of the cooperation between those inside the news media system including writers, editors and photographers, and those outside it, including informants (such as experts or policy makers), influential institutions (such as the police or the courts) and other people who are commonly recognised as news sources (Conrad 1999, p. 285).

A news source is “any person or group to which information was attributed” (Kurpius 2002, p. 858) and includes “actors whom journalists observe or interview [...] and those who only supply background information or story suggestions” (Gans 2004, p. 80). In the context of this research amateurs are sources or “source-actors” (Couldry 2010, p. 138) whose “source materials” (Kristensen & Mortensen 2013, p. 354) are photographs that become part of the professional news. Therefore the sourcing of amateur photographs must be understood as a part of the process of information gathering, essential for the practice of news content-making (Hossain & Islam 2012). The broad functions for which news media workers use information include fact-checking, current awareness and researching to obtain context and story stimuli (Nicholas & Martin 2007, pp. 44-45). Sources are also important as “news tips, eyewitness accounts, or inside views of events” (Conrad 1999, p. 288).

A body of literature examines the relevance of the people involved in sourcing, as well as the relationships and processes that create and define news (Carlson 2009a, p. 527; Soloski 1989, p. 864). The question of who sources are and how they are used, who is allowed to speak through news media and who is excluded from it have all been raised in this literature (Ross 2007; Conrad 1999). News can also be understood as “a sampling of sources” (Sigal 1986, pp. 27-28), which unconsciously influences what people know about the world (Berkowitz 1987, p. 513). A large quantity of news comes from official sources and through channels that are routinely used (Carlson 2009a, p. 529; Brown et al. 1987; Conrad 1999; Hallin et al. 1993; Ross 2007; Sigal 1973;). One rationale for these “sourcing patterns” (Hallin 1993, p. 753) is the workflows, processes and practices of news

content-making and the need to establish relationships with contacts on whom news media workers can rely (Carlson 2009a, p. 529; see Chapter 3.4). Other reasons include the authority of news media partly resting on the authority of certain social groups (such as white men, Brown et al. 1987; Ross 2007), or institutions such as the police, government or the courts (Ericson, Baranek & Chan 1989). News media reinforce established authorities by “displaying the place of authorised knowers in the knowledge structure of society, and conveying the type of knowledge that gives them that place” (Ericson, Baranek & Chan 1989, p. 5).

A study by the American scholar Leon Sigal in 1973 is frequently cited as a milestone in this field of research (Carlson 2009a, p. 529). Sigal showed that most of the news in the Washington Post and New York Times from 1949 to 1969 was a result of “routine channels” such as press releases and press conferences. Much of the information presented in the media came from official sources; a comparatively low percentage was of non-official origin (Sigal 1973, p. 119). Later research shows that not much has changed since Sigal’s investigations, which led to the conclusion that newspapers have not only resisted the opportunity to change, but also “have failed to live up to the expectations of the media in a pluralistic democracy” (Brown et al. 1987, p. 53).

The absence of ordinary people<sup>30</sup> as sources in the professional news media is relevant to my project on the sourcing of amateur photographs. A content analysis of 5190 evening news stories broadcast in the US between 1982 and 1984 shows that only 25.7% of sources were ordinary people (Whitney at al. 1989, p. 171). Instead, major institutions and governmental agencies were most frequently used (Whitney at al. 1989, p. 159; p. 171).<sup>31</sup> Ordinary people are not only underrepresented numerically, they are also represented in much shorter

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<sup>30</sup> With ordinary people I mean those people who do not represent particular authorities.

<sup>31</sup> For example, in examining the use of expert knowledge in news about genetics, it has been shown that expert researchers are cited frequently, whereas affected people are less often quoted (Conrad 1999, p. 300). Grabe, Zhou and Barnett found that news media workers were more present in TV news stories than any other sources (1999, p. 305). Scholars also criticise the dominance of male voices, which, according to Ross, are “twice as likely as women to be quoted as sources” (2007, p. 449). Other projects arrived at similar results (Brown et al. 1987; Whitney at al. 1989).

sound bites (Hallin 1992, p. 35). Gans includes ordinary people in the category of unknowns that only make up about one fifth of the available space or time in TV stories, news magazines and columns. Most of these unknowns were found to be protesters, strikers and rioters, as well as victims (Gans 2004, p. 13). Even in a case like Abu Ghraib, where amateur photographs encouraged a debate on abuse and torture, news media workers soon used official sources (as a content analysis of related articles in *The New York Times* between 2004 and 2005 shows) (Hickerson, Moy & Dunsmore 2011, p. 790). The main concern is that the media do not represent the diversity of societies (Brown et al. 1987; Stempel & Culbertson 1984; Sigal 1973), thereby creating a distorted image of reality, and reaffirming the established power structures and social and economic hierarchies (Grabe, Zhou & Barnett 1999, p. 306).

The interplay between sources and news media has been understood as a play of power and influence, perceived as a process of duelling, dancing or dominating (Carlson 2009a, p. 527). 'Duelling' stands as a metaphor for the competition between news media workers and their sources, and 'dancing' for the symbiotic, mutual benefit of both parties. Again dominating stands for the overpowering influence that sources can have (Carlson 2009 p. 526; Gans 1979). Opinions in this matter are divided. Some describe sources as "primary definers" of news production (Hall et al. 1978, p. 59) while others criticise this simplified perspective, as the process of sourcing is far more complex (Miller 1993). In 1989, Ericson, Baranek and Chan examined the "degree of convergence [...] between sources and journalists" and asked to what extent sources, such as the aforementioned institutions, adapt formats, media logic and power in order to gain influence. The authors concluded that professional news media have maintained influence and "relative autonomy" due to their key position in society, gatekeeping methods and role as agenda setters (Ericson, Baranek & Chan 1989, p. 12). This key position has changed since the advent of the internet (Singer 2011a, p. 106; see chapter 1.3), which has affected the sourcing practice.

In recent years, special attention has been paid to the impact of the public relations (PR) industry, which, as part of the professionalisation of sources, is perceived as especially influential on news media practice (Carlson 2009a, p. 537; Enli 2007; Miller & Dinan 2000). Additionally, scholars have begun to focus

more on the role of non-elite and non-official sources, usually seen in close relation to regional rather than metropolitan journalism (Ewart 1997; Ewart & Massay 2006) or contextualised under the umbrella of civic (Kurpius 2002), citizen or participatory journalism (see Chapter 1.3). The latter are often discussed separately from research on sources. This disconnect reinforces the value of linking the literature on news sources with the literature on participatory practices, which I suggest allows us to understand better the use of amateur photographs in the news. The relationship between news media workers and well-established organisations, experts and specialised public relations practitioners can be considered quite different from the relationship between professional news media and amateurs. Nevertheless, amateur photographers can equally be understood as sources, represented by their photographs used in the news. Additionally, the sourcing of amateur photographs is naturally subject to power relations, which influences the meaning of amateur photographs in professional news media, how they relate to the use of other sources and whether their use is significant for professional news media practice.

### ***Visual quotes***

A central requirement for sources in the news is witnessing—a key element of news content-making, as demonstrated in the literature (Mortensen 2011b; Peters 2001; Zelizer 2007). In particular the “act of eyewitnessing has become for many not only a mark of journalism but a synonym for good journalistic practice” (Zelizer 2007, p. 408). One of the explanations for the relevance of witnessing is that it “relates to disputed, unstable, conflicting, or transitory realities” (Thomas 2009, p. 96) and takes place “where it is yet to be established what is true, real and just” (Mortensen 2011b, p. 71). Another reason involves the ubiquity of photography and the attitude of bystanders who once generally just watched and nowadays may also raise their (built-in) cameras (Mortensen 2011b; Zelizer 2007; see below).<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Reading applies the term “mediated witnessing”<sup>32</sup> (Reading 2011, p. 303) to describe the behaviour of people to monitor news events. Scholar Carrie Rentschler used the same terminology to describe how people “learn, and are expected, to bear witness to human suffering through mass mediated depictions” (2004, p. 296).

Part of the practice of witnessing in the professional news is the process of attributing information to a source. Most commonly this is done through quotation, which is the most common way to give informants recognition (Ericson, Baranek & Chan 1989, p. 6). Quoting enforces the notion of objectivity by presenting an individual perspective without appearing to be biased, and liberates the journalist from the need to verify the accuracy of the information provided (Carlson 2009a, pp. 527-528). Writers often quote eyewitnesses when they are not able to get to an event or ask an associate for information. Photographers who work on behalf of professional news media are not able to do this in the same way.

Washington Post photographer and photography columnist Frank Van Riper writes:

“The plain truth was that, even though it always was preferable to witness a story happening firsthand, we writers could make do if need be with a ‘fill’ from colleagues: quotes drawn from another’s notebook or tape recording. Not so with photographers. ‘F.8 and be there,’ was, and is, the news shooter’s credo” (2000).

I suggest that the practice of quoting has now reached photography in the professional news media. The rationale for this is the shift from media as “external agents” to media that “penetrate all aspects of contemporary life” (Deuze 2011, p. 137). For photography that includes the aforementioned ubiquity of digital photography, the use of built-in cameras as note-taking tools and the behavioural changes in the way people have integrated mobile devices and communication with pictures into their lives. Photography has always been a medium of communication able to capture anything that happened to be in front of the camera (Szarkowski 2007, p. 7). However, the “comprehensively mediated public space where media underpin and overarch the experiences and expressions of everyday life” (Deuze 2012, p. 2) allows the lens to be not just focused on what has generally been perceived as important, but also on a wide range of minor visual information and everyday events (Gye 2007, p. 284). For example, diaries can be now entirely visual (Long & Currie 2006 p. 14). Thus size, flexibility and accessibility of digital devices allow the use of cameras as “wearable multimedia computers” or a “personal and global prosthetic to human memory” (Reading 2011, p. 303). This has an impact on how people use

photographs, and changes their role in a wide range of communication processes, including the professional news media context. The symbiosis of humans and computers such as iPhones or google glasses is only the beginning of what Deuze termed media life (2011; 2012), in which “media have become infinitely intertwined with every single way of being, seeing, moving and acting” (Deuze 2012, p. 3). Visual media such as photography have the potential to replace the need to describe those people, things, spaces or moments that people once recounted with words. Arguably a written or spoken account (Oxford Dictionaries, Definition of ‘description’ in English 2014) of life has never been fully satisfactory, which is why the role of recorded images for everyday communication cannot be underestimated.

Quotes are used in the news for various reasons. They are integrated to legitimise and explain scientific content, to provide context and balance and to describe consequences (Conrad 1999, p. 285). They may also convey another viewpoint, express what news media workers cannot express, and support the structuring of a news story (Conrad 1999, p. 285). It has even been claimed that news is largely concerned with quoting (Nylund 2003, p. 844). Quotes function as “fuel to drive forward the news” and are used to acknowledge ideas of newsworthiness (Nylund 2003, p. 851) and to signal why something is news (Conrad 1999, p. 292). Additionally, quotes are used to evaluate and to establish problems, to present solutions, to critique or to blame and, in turn, to add news value. They may provide additional emotions or subjective experiences (see Chapter 3.3) that news media workers are not able to express, or add a “sense of presence and validity” (Nylund 2003, p. 851). The latter points are important to my research, as comparable aspects have been raised in relation to the use of amateur photographs (Mortensen 2011b).

Like quotes, eyewitness accounts are understood as an indispensable element of journalistic evidence. The quote is “the fact of being from the source” (Carlson 2009a, p. 527). Amateur photographs (as well as amateur video) can be understood as “visible evidence” (Andén-Papadopoulos 2013, p. 342). They are additions to witnesses’ words, and may even be substitutes, providing visual information, emotions, subjective perspectives and emphasising the truthfulness of what has happened (cf. Nylund 2003, p. 851). Correspondingly, amateur

photographs that become part of the news can be understood as visual quotes, partly comparable to a verbal quote given by an eyewitness when questioned by a reporter during or after a news event (Burton 2010, interview).

### ***Elements of a story***

Quotes are easily distinguishable from the rest of a news story, as they imply an introduction, the quote itself, a verb and the identification of the quoted person (Nylund 2003, p. 845). In spite of this visibility, Nylund points out that the meaning of quotes is also influenced by their context, including the text in which they are incorporated. Like quotes, photographs are elements of a “narrative unit” (Nylund 2003, p. 845) that news media workers use to create stories. In a print medium such a unit traditionally includes a headline, a caption and text as well as the names of writers and photographers. In online galleries photographs may be combined with a gallery heading, a caption and a scroll tool to be able to flick through the images (Caple & Knox 2012, p. 216). They are either part of a written story or are published as an independent unit (Caple & Knox 2012, p. 209).

Photographs have been part of the package of news media content for a long time (see Chapter 1.2). Nevertheless, interviewees in this project understood amateur photographs as extra components that provide a perspective from people outside the news media system. Like quotes, they are second-hand information that may be combined with the first-hand reporting of news media workers (cf. Nylund 2003, p. 845). In Chapter 3.6 I compare the use of amateur photographs in online galleries with “people in the street” interviews that news media workers conduct to get a number of opinions on a certain issue (Prato 1999), which reinforces the idea of the visual quote. When amateur photographs are the only material, they provide information and are used to communicate a sense of presence, as Nylund writes in relation to the function of quotes in journalism (2003, p. 846). Research on amateur eyewitness photography also refers to this sense of presence (Andén-Papadopoulos & Pantti 2013, p. 983), which makes news media workers appear to have witnessed the event even though a staff member may not have been on location (Nylund 2003, p. 846). The use of amateur photographs as visual quotes arguably adds to the authenticity and credibility of professional news (see Chapters 3.4; 3.5).

### ***Raw materials***

News media workers frequently use sourced information as raw material, which is further processed rather than simply passed on (Grabe, Zhou & Barnett 1999, p. 295). Interviewees explained that the sourcing of amateur photographs is no different in that photographs in the news are generally processed. However, the assumption is that professional news media give amateurs a voice when their eyewitness accounts are published in the news. The “raw and fragmented bits of visual and verbal information” during unfolding events (Kristensen & Mortensen 2013, p. 353) seem to meet this requirement. The idea of giving people a voice also exists in relation to the practice of quoting, as it is believed that “a quotation is an account of what is said, as it is said” (Killenberg & Anderson 2009, p. 39), allowing a source to communicate for him or herself (Fontcuberta, cited in López Pan 2010, p. 196). A number of textbooks [as well as studies] on journalism comply with this interpretation of quotations (López Pan 2010, p. 197).

At the same time, it is known that news media workers frequently change interviewees’ words in a number of ways (Killenberg & Anderson 2009; López Pan 2010). López Pan, for example, notes the “process of translation from the spoken word to the written, between the words expressed by the celebrity or the source and those attributed to that figure in the journalistic text.” While textbooks usually state that “direct quotes are textual transcriptions of the words of the person quoted” (López Pan 2010, p. 192), he asserts that “direct quotes in the news usually change a speaker’s original pronouncements in varying degrees” (López Pan 2010, p. 201). Killenberg and Anderson offer “a typology of problematic quotations”, suggesting that quotes are different from the original words (2009, p. 42). The researchers assume that this is partly due to the fact that news media workers try to create better texts, in part due to the psychology of selective perception (Killenberg & Anderson 2009, p. 39). They explain that this process is subject to a number of individual decisions (Killenberg & Anderson 2009, p. 42). Thus original words can be understood as raw data that news media workers tune to the content of professional news media.

Interviewees confirm that amateur photographs are also understood as raw material (see also Becker 2011; Pantti & Bakker 2009). While “raw” might suggest that the photographs have not been manipulated (Becker 2011, p. 31;

Gambarini 2010, interview), raw could also imply that they are “too graphic” (Becker 2011, p. 31; see Chapter 3.4). Furthermore, the terminology suggests that their use still has to be decided upon and that they need editing and “must be reworked and prepared before they can fit into the frame of the news story” (Becker 2011, p. 31).

An example that illustrates the latter is the still taken from an amateur video that shows the death of the Iranian girl Neda Agha-Soltan, shot in the streets of Teheran in June 2009 (Mortensen 2011a). While the mobile phone video is about 50 seconds long, several news media outlets decided at the time to play short fragments of the video (Griffin 2012, p. 182), or to select individual frames to refer to the footage. For example, the German news magazine *Der Spiegel* selected the still of a collapsing woman held by two men (Putz 2009). The New York Times chose a similar frame, one of several pictures that show the woman lying on the ground as well as the two men trying to save her life (Fathi 2009). This example shows that news media workers made editorial decisions about what to take from the raw video footage to produce noteworthy still pictures that are ethically less problematic (Griffin 2012, p. 183, see Chapter 3.4). Therefore, the value lies not only in the existence of the amateur material, but also in the selection of particular frames, influenced by the conventions of professional news practice and the attempt to reduce “larger, longer and complex events to manageably-condensed icons for media consumption” (Griffin 2010, p. 183). The editorial process must be understood as a part of the process of creating pictures in the news, as it was the selection of particular stills that made certain aspects of the amateur footage visible (and invisible) for the viewer (see also Griffin 2012, p. 182).

In addition to the selection process, amateur photographs are subjected to a process of polishing. Lorenzo-Dus and Bryan spoke about “visual sanitization” (2011, p. 29), whereby amateur materials are tailored to the needs, standards and ethics of professional news media. The research team analysed the use of amateur eyewitness material of the London bombings on British television, finding that the process of sanitisation was not only part of the selection process (Lorenzo-Dus & Bryan 2011, p. 29), but also part of how amateur footage was

incorporated. For example, out of 20 amateur videos, only five files were left as they had been recorded (Lorenzo-Dus & Bryan 2011, p. 33; see Chapter 3.3). While viewers and readers may overlook such choices and assume that quotes are direct reproductions of what people said, news media workers are “happy to let them think so,” as Stimson claims (Stimson 1995, p. 70). López Pan writes that as a consequence of such practice, the alliance between news media workers and audiences has been betrayed, as “not making the keys to the interpretation of journalistic texts public creates an ethical problem of transparency” (2010, p. 202). The same could be said about the processes involved in publishing amateur photographs and the related ethical challenges, as I discuss further in Chapter 3.4.

### ***Rhetorical distance***

Some interviewees in my research tended to create a rhetorical distance from amateur photographs while talking about the matter during interviews (Burton 2010, interview; French 2010, interview; see also Pantti & Andén-Papadopoulos 2011 p. 110). For example, in pointing out that amateur photographs have been “supplied” and that they communicate the perspective of a witness rather than the views of the news media organisation (Coomes 2010, interview), interviewees spoke of how amateur photographs are incorporated into the news, and how news media workers dissociate themselves from amateur photographs. As several interviewees expressed it, pictures by “our photographers” stand in contrast to “supplied” photographs. However, at other times this distinction was not made, as I discuss in Chapter 3.3. This reinforces the special position of amateur eyewitness photographs in the professional news media. The distinction between “supplied” photographs and “our photographers” can be understood as a part of the “rhetorics of professionalism” (Morieson 2012, p. 87). It also elevates the different processes for photographs produced by staff photographers on assignment and reinforces the authority of professional news media.

Interviewee Belinda Mackowski, editor of the *Manningham Leader*, said:

“We will usually make a distinction, like I would put a caption if there is a gallery of storm photos, we will have some of our photographers and then the next one might come and I put a caption on that says: ‘Reader so and

so from Doncaster sent in this photo of his house'. So, usually I do make a distinction or sometimes we might do separate galleries, one of our photographer's images and another one of our reader's images" (2010, interview).

*Leader* group news editor Nick Richardson said that from his point of view, bystanders "will provide [...] a corner of that larger event, whereas our people—our photographers—hopefully will take the larger picture," which from his point of view could be understood as "the summary of the story" (2010, interview). This distinction—between component parts and the summary, as well as the differentiation between "our photographers" and "people out there"—reinforces that news media workers understand amateur photographs as complements to stories (Corless 2010, interview). It also demonstrates their conception of themselves as gatekeepers of the news, and the applicability to amateur eyewitness photographs of the concept of the visual quote.

The practice of distancing also becomes apparent when amateur photographers are not credited.

Interviewee Bryan Allchin, editor of the *Maroondah Leader*, said:

"And quite often the people who supply the photo don't ask you to credit it. If they do ask I will note 'supplied' and the person's name. It's also that a lot of people don't actually expect to be named for it, they just give us the photo and say 'don't worry about it'. They don't value it or often it's a case of they were photographing anyway, and we run it as that. They are happy to get whatever it is in the paper" (2010, interview).

This statement suggests that the practice of crediting is perceived as obsolete among people who use cameras as note-taking devices. Others may not (or may not want to) be credited for safety or other reasons (Coomes 2010, interview), an issue of source anonymity (Bush Kimball 2011) that I discuss further in Chapters 3.3 and 3.4. While the idea that people are always "happy to get whatever it is in the paper" must be challenged, and if the approach of not asking to be named justifies the practice of not crediting amateurs, news media workers do identify authors and quote people by name to convey prestige, authority and credibility

(Conrad 1999, p. 292). The act of attribution in professional news media is reserved for selected sources that news media workers perceive as important. Therefore the anonymity of amateur photographs could be interpreted as a sign of the powerlessness of the amateur in the context of professional news. Other research confirms “a tendency towards non-attribution” (Lorenzo-Dus & Bryan 2011, p. 23). For example, Lorenzo-Dus and Bryan show that out of 12 verbal mentions of amateurs whose recordings were shown on British TV, only two amateurs were identified. The same tendency was also found in relation to written material (Lorenzo-Dus & Bryan 2011, pp. 34-35). This practice appears to confirm that more than 30 years after Herbert Gans’ 1979 research, ordinary people (and thus amateurs) still fall under the category of unknown people (Gans 2004, p. 13). The practice of not crediting amateur material can also be seen as “symptomatic of the decreasing value attributed to authorship in the era of digital communication” (Lorenzo-Dus & Bryan 2011, p. 36).

### ***Further distancing***

As described above, interviewees in my research did not generally understand the attempts of amateurs as a form, but rather as an element of news content-making. One reason given was that amateur photographs “haven’t been designed from the ground up to be an integral part of the story,” as *Leader* online journalist Jon Burton said (2010, interview). His observation implies a distinction between the individual ambition of amateur photographers and the professional intentions of news media workers, as detailed earlier (Griffin 2012, p. 174; see Chapter 1.2).

An example that illustrates this issue is one of the most famous pictures of the Victorian bushfires in 2009—the footage of Australian fire fighter Dave Tree, who gave a dehydrated koala water from a bottle, an image captured on a mobile phone by Russell Vickery (Vincent 2009). According to an article on *The Sydney Morning Herald* website, the footage was captured simply because Tree wanted to share the moment with his family. According to the article, Tree said he sent the pictures to some people “to cheer them up.” From there the images escaped Tree’s control, as did control over whom to share them with and what to do with this testimony (Vincent 2009). Once uploaded onto YouTube, the story of Sam

the koala reached various audiences including news media workers, who used it for their own purposes.

Referring to this picture, Burton said:

“Yes, can you call that photojournalism? That is probably the most famous image of the bushfires. I don’t think it is. It’s an incredibly valuable photo in terms of news value, in terms of zeitgeist; it’s incredibly impactful. Yes, it is all of that. Definitely. Does it have a lot of news value? Yes, but so has a quote. Is it actually photojournalism? [...] I really don’t think that it is” (2010, interview).

Like other interviewees (Lensch 2010, interview; Munthe 2010, interview), Burton believed that there is “intentionality around the notion of photojournalism.” The picture of the water-drinking koala had not “been designed from the ground up to be an integral part of this story,” and had been taken for personal purposes. According to Burton, these are reasons why the picture does not count as photojournalism. “It’s a minimal... it’s an unpredictable element that can make the story,” Burton said (2010, interview).

Similarly, amateur photographs of the London bombings (Reading 2011, p. 304; Dear 2006) or Abu Ghraib prison (Adatto 2008, p. 4) reveal the difference between the intent of people who captured the events, and the aims of professional news media in sourcing and publishing such pictures. According to a *BBC* online article on the London bombings, Stacey, the subject in one of the pictures from the London underground, said that he had asked his friend to take a picture of him: “My thought was that it would just be something to show my friends, say ‘look what happened to us’” (Stacey, cited in Dear 2006). In relation to the Abu Ghraib torture photographs, Adatto writes: “What started as the sharing of private picture files among friends was soon magnified on multiple screens imprinting the images over and over again” (Adatto 2008, p. 4). Being published in a professional news medium transformed the snapshots into photographs recognised as journalism (Becker 1998, p. 84).

Interviewee Turi Munthe, Chief Executive Officer of the London-based photo agency *Demotix*, also defended the concept of intention in professional news media practice: “It’s not journalism, nor is it photojournalism,” Munthe said about

amateur eyewitness accounts such as the photograph of Henry Louis Gates that *Demotix* distributed (2010, interview). The amateur photograph shows the black Harvard Professor, who was arrested in front of his home in July 2009 on suspicion of being a thief who wanted to break in. Bill Carter, a neighbour, saw the arrest and took a picture, not knowing that he had captured an image of Gates. "It started as a passing snapshot. But it became the essential image of a story that everyone seems to have an opinion about," Jack Nicas, correspondent of the *Boston Globe*, writes (2009).

While Munthe described such amateur photographs as a "sort of witnessing" (2010, interview), Volker Lensch, picture editor at *Der Stern*, preferred to talk about "documents" (2010, interview), while Burton called the footage of the water-drinking Koala an "expression of the story" or an "element within a story" (2010, interview). Such language reinforces the view that interviewees perceived amateur photographs of news events as story elements that can be compared with statements made by sources outside the professional news media, and which become visual quotes if selected for publication. It is also possible that interviewees used these arguments to justify the authority and relevance of the professional approach to news content-making and professional photojournalism. Nevertheless, this concept of the different intentions of amateurs and professionals throws into question whether people become journalists, as some scholars suggest (Allan 2009, p. 18), or sources, as this thesis argues. We also need to investigate whether audiences distinguish between professional and non-professional intentions, and what this lack of awareness may say about professional news practice.

### ***Visual news tips***

The usefulness of framing the presence of amateur photographs in the professional news media as a form of sourcing is also illustrated by the decisions news media workers make about whether to use amateur photographs as news tips (Allchin 2010, interview; Henningham 2010, interview; Mackowski 2010, interview). Research participants valued them for the same reasons identified in relation to sources: to take up a subject, to research a story, or to check the facts (see also Nicholas & Martin 2007, pp. 44-45).

Interviewee Allchin said that if somebody rang him and asked if he had heard about a house fire the previous night, he would not only request information about the aftermath of the fire but would also ask if the witness had a photograph of the house burning (2010, interview). Allchin pointed out the eye-catching character of photographs (see Chapter 1.3), suggesting the usefulness of amateur photographs as stimuli for stories (cf. Nicholas & Martin 2007, p. 45). “Often the supplied photos trigger us to get the stories behind them. Some of the supplied stuff will prompt us to go there and investigate,” Allchin said (Allchin 2010, interview).

Similarly, Mackowski said:

“They [people] are starting to send a photo now as well. Whereas in the past a lot of people might have just emailed in, last night I saw this and that, whereas now there would usually be a photo with it, attached to what they saw. I mean readers have always given tips. That’s how *Leader* papers have found out about news [...]. But now they would not only send you a tip or ring you up, they would also send you a photo. [...] Especially young people; they just do it. And I guess they are used to it. They are out and about, see something and send a photo to their friends. So yeah, I think [...] it’s becoming an addition to communication” (2010, interview).

Mackowski continued:

“I think now we are also encouraging people more because it is so easy. But all media are encouraging people more to be involved and be out there and let us know when they see things. We’ve always encouraged them to let us know, but now we are encouraging them to send us photos as well” (2010, interview).

Hence in addition to people spontaneously providing media with images, amateur photography has also become part of the targeted practice of information seeking. Also relevant to the news process is that in cases like this, the visual evidence exists before news media workers develop an idea. An example that illustrates this in the context of the *Leader Community Newspapers* is a photograph submitted to the *Heidelberg Leader* in 2010. The photograph showed a car parked on a footpath in a suburb in Melbourne. A woman who went for a

walk with her child and dog every night was forced onto a busy road by people parking their cars across the footpath. On one of her walks she took a photo with her mobile phone. The photograph clearly showed the problem and was perceived as evidence for the truthfulness of what she said. Nevertheless the photograph was not published, but prompted the newspaper to send a staff photographer. The amateur photograph was perceived as too specific, legally problematic and not adding context to the story.

Interviewee Blair Corless, editor at the *Heidelberg Leader*, said:

“Rather than highlighting one car to identify people who are responsible, I wanted the photo of her walking with the dog. Because that is an issue a whole lot of people should be reminded of” (2010, interview).

The amateur photograph therefore was not perceived as valuable enough for publication purposes. Nevertheless, it was beneficial as information. The photograph helped to get the attention of the editor, provided evidence of the facts and was perceived as useful to understanding and investigating the story.

Interviewee Allchin said:

“With the supplied photos you often have to backwards-engineer. But yeah, instead of going out there trying to find the guy and get his story, it’s us going out with the aim to find that photo” (2010, interview).

This use of amateur photographs as news tips once again demonstrates the relevance of cameras as note-taking devices and the value of the visual in getting people’s attention (see Chapter 1.2). It also shows the resistance of news media workers to publishing non-professional material, and reinforces the value of amateur photographs as resources in the creation of news content in the professional sphere (cf. Kurpius 2002, p. 856).

One interviewee in this project—*Leader* online journalist Burton—expressed concern over encouraging people to send photographs to deliver visual information, as in his experience, he is more likely to get an explanation about what happened if he asks for text rather than images. “[If you ask for text] you can understand what the story is about and then decide whether you want to take

it further,” Burton said. Through text, Burton believes that it is possible to separate “what’s a piece of news that is of interest for the wider audience and what’s someone’s individual notion of a piece of news.” He said: “If we want to chase it up further, we will chase it up further.” If so, he would ask for pictures anyway. “The first question I would ask is ‘Do you have photos?’ Because the pictures make the story.” However, when it comes to things that he is not aware of, Burton wants to know if it is worth the time following it up before delving into it more. Burton thus believes that “text is a little bit cleaner”. He does not want to encourage people to take images of anything and everything, as this can be ethically problematic or may cause legal problems (Burton 2010, interview; see also Chapter 3.4).

While this echoes old notions of rivalry between words and images (see Chapter 1.2), it also shows the suspicion with which photographs are perceived, and reflects the challenges involved in sourcing amateur photographs, especially those that lack “contextual information” (Griffin 2012, p. 177; see also Chapter 3.4). Nevertheless, the matter-of-fact manner with which people integrate photography into their daily life, and with which news media workers use amateur photographs in sourcing information, suggests that images (both still and moving) are now an inherent part of everyday conversation. As such, photographs that witnesses have taken can be understood as notes or visual news tips and therefore as visual quotes when used as news media content.

### ***Conclusion***

This chapter has introduced the concept of amateur photographs as visual quotes, which are used as potential or additional elements of news in a similar manner to written or spoken quotes from non-elite or non-official sources. The practice of quoting elite sources has often been discussed in terms of the power of those who are allowed to speak through the media, in contrast to the silence of other sources. Although the increased use of amateur photographs after sudden news events speaks for the greater presence of people in the news and the influence of the fifth estate, the news-making behaviour of non-attribution and rhetorical distance give the impression that the marginal status of non-elite sources in professional news media has not yet been overcome. The analogy

between verbal quotes and eyewitness photographs has limitations. Nevertheless, it illustrates the role and meaning of amateur eyewitness photographs in professional news media, and shifts the understanding of amateur photographs (and other recordings of news events) in the news from being a form of journalism to being one of the elements, components or building blocks that were always needed to create news media content. Thus the sourcing of amateur photographs is not explicitly disruptive, but blends into the processes and practices of professional news-making that up until now have not changed radically. The next chapter considers this in relation to the concept of news values and shows where the sourcing of amateur photographs stands in relation to high and low newsworthiness.

### 3.2 News values of amateur photographs

*“The best supplied photos that we want to get are of something that happened when we weren’t there; you know, if there was something on fire and we weren’t there or there was a huge pile-up and someone took photos and we can’t go back and get that. So they are the supplied photos that we like, people being somewhere we are not” (Mackowski 2010, interview).*

In the last chapter I introduced the concept of the visual quote, which helps illustrate how amateur eyewitness photographs can be understood in the professional news media context. Chapter 3.2 turns to the decision-making concerning the content criteria of amateur photographs. The concept of news values gives an insight into this practice. News values have been used to explain the relationship between news media and sources (Miller 1993, pp. 395-400), the selection of news media content, the presence and absence of issues and themes, as well as the location and the length of stories (Kepplinger & Ehmig 2006, p. 26). In this chapter I use news values as “working rules” (Golding & Elliot 1999, p. 118) that influence whether or not news media workers source amateur photographs, and if so, what kinds are they seeking. I ask what content criteria amateur photographs convey that news media workers perceive as valuable and which additional process-related characteristics are important. The findings show that the sourcing of amateur photographs follows largely traditional news values such as unpredictability, amplitude, conflict or negativity, and uncover the importance of additional factors such as access and the proximity of amateurs to a location. The chapter also considers the relationship between the idea of high and low newsworthiness and the sourcing of amateur photographs, and shows in which areas amateur photographs do not get used. This important insight could be one of the keys to understanding how the professional news media adapt in the face of significant media change and where the professional approach of assigning photographers is still relevant.

## **Preferences**

Interviewees in my research perceived amateur photographs as occasional and coincidental resources that are mainly sourced when something has happened (Gambarini 2010, interview; Lensch 2010, interview; Henningham 2010, interview; Peled 2011, interview; Town 2011, interview). They predominantly referred to significant news events when talking about the sourcing of amateur photographs. They spoke about “major events” (Borg 2011), “large events” (Geraghty 2011), “big breaking news” or “big events” (Peled 2010). These findings suggest that amateur photographs are perceived as valuable when the witnessed events and the moments they capture are perceived as especially relevant (Sjøvaag 2011, p. 93). This reinforces news factors such as importance (Galtung & Ruge 1965), relevance (Schulz 1976) and reach (Eilders 1997; see also below).

Other interviewees said that amateur photographs are also sourced at the other end of the spectrum (see also Northrup 2006, p. 37); that is, if a subject is considered less newsworthy or is given less of a news priority (Borg 2011, interview). Statements about weather events demonstrate this ambivalence. On the one hand, amateur photographs of disasters such as floods or storms caused by extreme weather conditions or other natural phenomena can be of high news value, depending on the impact of the event or the spectacular visual content (see also below). On the other, amateur photographs of less severe weather stories are perceived as “‘innocent’ and ‘romantic’ and of little journalistic relevance” (Pantti & Bakker 2009, p. 479). This contradiction suggests that the usefulness of amateur photographs for content exists at two extremes: they are either of very high or very low news value. Thus there are events or stories that are considered important enough to include amateur photographs, but not important enough to assign a professional photographer or to buy professional material.

Lesser news value is also indicated when a story is given low priority by a news outlet. Referring to floods in Victoria in March 2011, which occurred in the days following the earthquake and tsunami in Japan, *The Age* assistant picture editor Borg said that the tsunami was perceived as more important, with the story on the flooding consequently ending up on page two. Borg said: “Because we gave it

less of a news priority than the Japan story, we were quite happy to get people with phones sending in stuff" (2011, interview). Likewise, staff members at the Melbourne-based Leader Community Newspapers chain referred to the relationship between the lower news value and the sourcing of amateur photographs. Mark Stewart, photographer at Leader Community Newspapers, said that "[...] quite often these are things we wouldn't have done anyway" (2010, interview).

Interviewee *Maroondah Leader* editor Bryan Allchin said:

"[...] a member of the public sent in photos of the crushed-up truck. It ran on page 11 or something, but you know we still ran it; it was still a news photo" (2010, interview).

Further links were drawn between the sourcing of amateur photographs and events, perceived as less newsworthy, such as local street festivals (Corless 2010, interview) or "a marching band walking down the street at the Maroondah Festival parade" (Allchin 2010, interview). Although these amateur photographs have been considered as "less important photos" (Harris 2010, interview), they have commonly had a role in the professional news media, where pictures have become almost essential to selling a story. While interviewees across several news media mentioned the use of less-newsworthy amateur photographs, the research suggests that they were particularly relevant for local and tabloid news media. In the *Leader* they were understood as useful for publication in the back of the weekly newspaper. *Manningham Leader* editor Belinda Mackowski said: "We don't get too many [amateur photographs] and if we do, they definitely get put further back down in the paper" (2010, interview). These examples demonstrate the perceived lower value of amateur photographs in professional news media. At the same time they confirm the desirability of less-important material. The use of amateur photographs for content considered less relevant contrasts with the examples provided above of amateur photographs being used for news events that are considered of special importance, reinforcing the theory that amateur photographs get used at the "extreme ends of the news spectrum" (Northrup 2006, p. 37).

Interviewees also spoke of the distinction between the large numbers of photographs that are offered to professional news media and are shared online, and the small number that, according to them, finally get selected for the creation of professional news media content (Peled 2011, interview; Seewald 2010, interview; Sonntag 2010, interview).

Mackowski said:

“The best supplied photos that we want to get are of something that happened and we weren’t there; you know, if there was something on fire and we weren’t there or there was a huge pile-up and someone took photos and we can’t go back and get that. So they are the supplied photos that we like, people being somewhere we are not” (2010, interview).

Thus there are amateur photographs that are desired and others that are less welcome, which is not a new phenomenon. This is demonstrated by the contrast between “the broader range” of photographs captured by photographers on assignment and the “much narrower range” of photographs in the news (Griffin 2012, p. 171). Is the rise of the amateur in the professional news media mainly accepted wherever it reinforces the professional news media system? The relationship between news values and the sourcing of amateur photographs, as I will discuss below, suggests that this is indeed the case.

### ***News factors and news value***

In his book *Public Opinion*, the American author Walter Lippmann addressed the issue of news value, outlining that journalists decide the selection and creation of news with reference to specific characteristics and through assessment of the value of these characteristics (1922, p. 348). In 1965 Galtung and Ruge examined the selection criteria for journalists and the conditions that an event should satisfy to make the transition from a random episode to a news event. To enable this, they analysed the content produced on three crises in four Norwegian newspapers and focused on 12 factors, including frequency, threshold, unambiguity, meaningfulness, consonance, unexpectedness, continuity, composition, as well as reference to elite nations, personification and negativity.

These criteria arrest the attention of news media workers and therefore shape what news is (Galtung & Ruge 1965, pp. 81-83). When frequently repeated, criticised and modified (Eilders 1997; Kepplinger & Ehmig 2006<sup>33</sup>; Ruhrmann et al. 2003; Schulz 1976; Staab 1990), these factors are the foundations for a large number of news value studies, as reviewed by academics such as German media scholar Christiane Eilders in 2006 (see also Braun 2009).

Additionally, news values do not only refer to content such as people or events covered by the news, but also to the appearance of certain material, as well as to the processes of news content-making (Bell 1991, pp. 155-160; Caple 2013, pp. 23-54). The former includes the aesthetic of photographs (Caple 2013, pp. 50-54; see Chapters 3.3; 3.5), while the latter involves aspects such as “availability of space, the amount of news occurring on a particular day, a balance or mix of types of news [...], the time to deadline [...], day of the week [...], the audience or readership [...] and the focus [...] of the news outlet” (Cotter 2010, p. 80; Cotter, cited in Caple 2012, p. 25). Some scholars (including me) discuss such themes under the umbrella term of news values. Others differentiate between news values, “news writing objectives” and “news cycle/market factors” (Bednarek & Caple 2012a, pp. 41-42).

The understanding of news values as a strictly-definable list is questionable (Hetherington 1985, p. 7). Nevertheless, news values are broadly shared among news media workers (Hall et al. 1978, p. 54) and also apply to photographs (Bednarek & Caple 2012b; Caple 2013; Craig 1994; Hall 1973; Rössler et al.

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<sup>33</sup> For example, Kepplinger and Ehmig stress the difference between news factors and news values, arguing that news factors do not have “a specific relevance or value per se.” They define news factors as qualities of news stories, outline the relevance of these qualities for the selection of news values and define newsworthiness as “the likelihood of a news story to be selected for publication.” (2006, p. 27). Thus, news factors “correspond to respective selection criteria of journalists” and determine the value of news stories (Eilders 2006, p. 6). Kepplinger and Ehmig apply this “two component theory” (2006, p. 27) to find out if it is possible to predict the newsworthiness and to test whether news factors “have different news values for different media outlets.” They are able to confirm both hypotheses (2006, p. 29). In a third hypothesis, Kepplinger and Ehmig assume that it is possible to predict the newsworthiness of a story more precisely based on specific information about news values in specific media outlets. The hypothesis was not confirmed. (Kepplinger & Ehmig 2006)

2011). They are discussed as a “mental checklist” (Hetherington 1985, p. 7), or a “deep structure” (Hall 1973, p. 181) that is surrounded by obscurity and mysticism (Golding & Elliot 1999, p. 118). One of the controversies is whether the decisions of news media workers lead to a false image of the world (Eilders 2006, p. 5). Thus the issue of news value is largely discussed in terms of power, gatekeeping, and control of the professional news media.

Yet the scholarly focus on news values largely ignores the psychological aspects of human perception to which the news value research originally referred (Eilders 2006, p. 13; Galtung & Ruge 1965, p. 65). Preferences over news are not reduced to news media workers, but could be understood as “general relevance indicators in human perception” (Eilders 2006, p. 13) applicable to the material that news media workers source as well as to the processing of media content among audiences (Eilders 2006, p. 5). Theories of information storage and retrieval as well as assumptions about selective attention are used to demonstrate that news values have relevance beyond the selection process of news media workers (Eilders 2006, p. 13).<sup>34</sup> While this challenges the usefulness of news values as a means of demonstrating the power and control of news media workers, the concept is still beneficial for my research, as it helps to understand the selection criteria and decisions over amateur photographs in the professional news media. In contrast to many researchers I do not apply the concept of news values to content published in the media, but to what interviewees in this research said about the sourcing of amateur photographs, which revealed when amateur photographs are perceived as useful, but also when they are considered less important.

### ***Unpredictable news events***

Interviewees spoke of the absence of the professional photographer during unpredictable, highly-newsworthy events as one of the main rationales for sourcing amateur photographs (Burton 2010, interview; Allchin 2010, interview; Seewald 2010, interview;). They usually associated amateur photographs with

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<sup>34</sup> This reference reinforces the importance of trans-disciplinary knowledge in research attempting to understand today’s changing professional news media system (see also Part 2).

terror attacks, fires and accidents (Allchin 2010, interview; Baker 2011, interview; Borg 2011, interview; Burton 2010, interview; Coomes 2010, interview; Cortless 2010, interview; Henningham 2010, interview; Lensch 2010, interview; Levy 2010, email; Mackowski 2010, interview; Peled 2011, interview; Town 2011, interview). According to such sudden events, the news factor of unexpectedness can be considered an important reason for decisions concerning the sourcing of amateur photographs in the professional news media arena.

Interviewee Volker Lensch, picture editor of the German magazine *Der Stern*, said:

“We do not work with amateurs specifically. But if an amateur was at the right place at the right time and sends us a picture and we say, ‘It is a topic and a good photo for us,’ we would [pre] select the picture. Whether it would be printed will then be decided, but we would certainly work with it” (2010, interview).

Ellen Dietrich, picture editor at the weekly German newspaper *Die Zeit*, said that amateur photographs are rarely published. The few times in recent years that Dietrich said she had chosen amateur photographs, for example in the case of the torture at Abu Ghraib prison and the violent riots in Syria, were because there were no pictures taken by professional photographers at the time (2011, interview). So for her to source an amateur photograph it needs to be a specific picture (Dietrich 2010, interview), which is the case when photographs are used for evidential purposes and serve to “guarantee the objectivity and truth-value of news reporting” (Andén-Papadopoulos 2008, p. 7). From another perspective, it is questionable how much more truth amateur photographs are able to inject, especially when they conform to conventional news values that are still in place, and depict common visual content such as human suffering that is deep-seated in the history of news and of art (Griffin 2012, p. 175; see also Eisenman 2007).

According to Galtung and Ruge: “The more unexpected the signal, the more probable that it will be recorded as worth listening to” (1965, p. 65). By ‘unexpectedness’ they meant the unforeseen or rare. “Thus, what is regular and institutionalised, continuing and repetitive at regular and short intervals does not attract nearly so much attention, *ceteris paribus*, as the unexpected and ad hoc

[...]” Therefore unexpected or rare events and especially incidents that imply both characteristics are considered as useful for professional news content-making (Galtung & Ruge 1965, p. 67). My research confirms this regarding the sourcing of amateur photographs that capture sudden news events.

To better understand the relevance of amateur photographs in relation to the factor of unexpectedness, it is important to return to the historical trajectories of taking news photographs. Traditionally, a press photographer would get an assignment from a news media company and would rush to the scene to capture an event, trying to win the race against time. Whether a moment was captured well or captured at all was believed to depend on professional skills (Moments in Time 1999, p. VIII). Among these skills was the ability to be at a location of a news event or to get into an environment, which was just as relevant as the ability to take good photographs, as Evans notes in his textbook on photojournalism (Evans 1978, p. 33).

A historical example that demonstrates the importance of presence is the fatal explosion of the Hindenburg on May 6, 1937 (Szarkowski 1973; Faber 1978). Former photography curator and author John Szarkowski points out that the only reason photographers captured the disaster and captured it so well was that they were already on location to document the arrival of the German airship. More than 20 news photographers were witnessing the catastrophe while their cameras were focused and ready to capture the arrival of the passengers (Szarkowski 1973, p. 3). Professional photographers might have received information about an unforeseen event like this earlier than the larger public, yet if they were not informed prior, if they were not on a long-term assignment or if they were not coincidental eyewitnesses, as during the Hindenburg disaster, they would only have received this information *after* the incident had happened (cf. Szarkowski 1973, p. 3). Hence, the absence of the photographer in emerging or sudden events was always problematic, which explains why such amateur photographs are used in professional news media. Amateur recordings fill a gap that has always existed when news media aim to cover sudden events that were not witnessed by professional photographers. Today, amateurs fill this gap much more reliably, which is why amateur photographs of unpredictable news events have become an integral part of news coverage.

The value of amateur photographs of sudden events is also displayed in the priority that some amateur photographs are given in news outlets. A historical example of the privileged use of an amateur photograph is a front-page article in the Australian newspaper *The Sun News Pictorial* on October 16, 1970. As stated by the author of the front-page article of *The Sun News Pictorial* Udo Rockman, a 10-year-old Australian schoolboy was with his classmates on an excursion when the partly-built West Gate Bridge in Melbourne collapsed on October 15, 1970. The author explains that the child was taking a photo of the building site when he heard an explosion. So he put his camera up again and took another photo (Smith 1970, p. 1). *The Sun News Pictorial* on October 16, 1970 published the amateur photograph on the cover page along with a smaller portrait that showed the boy with a camera. Thus what became news was not just the collapse of the bridge, but also the fact that a child had captured the accident. The article demonstrates the historical trajectories of using amateur photographs that capture unexpected events as well as the rarity of such pictures before the digital age.

Perhaps the most well-known amateur footage of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is that which captured the assassination of John F. Kennedy in 1963, which signalled a “more immediate journalism in the U.S.” (Griffin 2012, p. 163). It was filmed by dressmaker and amateur cameraman Abraham Zapruder on 8mm Kodachrome II Safety film (Newton 2009, p. 235; see also Shackelford & Conway 2003), and consisted of 486 single frames (Wrone 2003). Even though professional photographers and cameramen were in position to capture Kennedy’s visit to Dallas that day, Zapruder’s film remained the only document of the assassination (Organ 2000), and has been frequently singled out as an example of the use of amateur material before the digital age (Becker 2011; Gye 2008; Sjøvaag 2011). Zapruder sold the film to *Life* magazine, which published the amateur footage as a series of still images in November 1963 and in several further retrospective issues in the following years. The film has also been shown on television (Wrone 2003).<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Another frequently-mentioned example is the video footage of Rodney King, an African-American who was beaten by police officers in the streets of Los Angeles on March 3, 1991 (Gooding-Williams 1993). A further example is the picture of the burning Concorde taken on 25 July 2000.

The awarding of amateur photographs in prestigious contests reinforces the relevance of the random witness in today's news media culture as well as in the historical context. In 1947, the American photo enthusiast Arnold Hardy, for example, was the first non-professional photographer to win the Pulitzer Prize (Powell 2007). The photograph that Hardy took shows a victim who fell from a window of the burning Winecoff Hotel in Atlanta, where more than 100 people died on December 7, 1946 (Powell 2007; Hubbard 2009). In 1953, Virginia Schau was the first female amateur winner of the Pulitzer Prize (Hubbard 2009; Van Riper 2000). According to *Washington Post* journalist Frank Van Riper, Schau was with her father and husband on the way to a fishing trip when she witnessed a dramatic road accident. Her photograph captured with a Kodak box camera of a truck on a bridge with the cab hanging down shows the dramatic rescue of the two passengers (Hubbard 2009; Van Riper 2000).<sup>1</sup>

Several awards in more recent years have promoted the significance of amateurs in situations that are either rare and/or unpredictable. The jury of the World Press Photo, one of the most important international photography awards, for example, made a Special Mention in 2010 recognising an amateur video showing the death of the Iranian girl Neda Agha-Soltan, shot in the streets of Teheran in June 2009, "as it has played an essential role in the news reporting of the year worldwide and could not have been made by a professional photographer" (World Press Photo, 2010).

### ***Amplitude and multiplicity***

Interviewees spoke about the use of amateur photographs that capture large area events, such as natural disasters, including earthquakes, bushfires, floods or storms (Baker 2011, interview; Borg 2011, interview; Burton 2010, interview; Peled 2010, interview; Town 2011, interview). Examples are the coverage of natural disasters such as the tsunami in South-East Asia in 2004 or the tsunami in Japan in 2011, which affected a large number of people, happened in large geographic regions and could not be captured to their full extent by a small number of professionals (Rosen, cited in Handwerk 2005). Thus amateur photographs of large-area events are perceived as useful for professional news

media, since a single camera or a single point of view is not sufficient to capture the often-continuing incident. A multiplied view is especially important to create a more complete picture of what has happened.

Large-area incidents refer to the news factor of amplitude, suggesting: “The stronger the signal, the greater the amplitude, the more probable that it will be recorded as worth listening to” (Galtung & Ruge 1965, p. 65). Galtung and Ruge use examples such as murder cases or the dimensions of a dam to illustrate their argument. The more brutal the murder case or the higher the dam, the greater the media coverage, they suggest. Thus an event must be of a certain size in order to be recognised. Although this is common knowledge, it is important to understand why some things become news and others do not (Galtung & Ruge 1965, p. 66).

Amplitude can mean importance or meaningfulness and reflects on the prominence and significance of events. At the same time it can also be associated with time and space, in that the sourcing of amateur photographs also indicates geographical priorities and longer time spans that favour the accommodation of amateur photographs. Leader online journalist Burton explained: “Many people can take lots of photos of the same event and those photos can all be unique.” A large-area event would be one of the “few times” when he would run professional images and would also ask people to submit their photographs (Burton 2010, interview). According to Burton, the question is whether one can tell more of the story by getting images from the wider public. “If we can, we will ask for it,” Burton said (2010, interview).

Large-area incidents can include weather events (Borg 2011, interview; Burton 2010, interview; Gambarini 2010, interview; Henningham 2010, interview; Town 2010), which can fulfil the necessary criteria for amateur contributions: people’s desire to take pictures, the demand of the media for sourcing them, as well as audiences’ need to search and view such photographs.

Interviewee Leigh Henningham, picture editor at *The Age*, said:

“Things we get the most pictures from are extreme weather events [...] like a couple of weeks ago this massive downpour, all the streets around

here were flooded, everyone just jumped out with their little digital camera, took a picture and then sent it in" (2010, interview).

Interviewee Jon Burton, *Leader* online journalist said:

"When you get something like a hailstorm which affects people quite literally and quite physically, one of the first things that we find is that anyone wants to go on and find out how it affects other people. How does it affect my local area [...] Oh my God, I just witnessed this news event. Who else witnessed this news event, how is this news event played out, how does my small part of this news event relate to the news event as a whole. [...] My wife and I were walking home from the market at the time. We were taking our cameras out and were taking photos. Everyone did. So, if you give them the opportunity [...] to share this experience they will take it" (2010, interview).

Likewise, Maurizio Gambarini, photographer and picture editor of the German Press agency *DPA*, and Dan Peled, picture editor of *AAP*, referred to weather events as incidents that attract collaboration with the public and as occasions that represent the usefulness of such amateur photographs for the news media industry. Peled mentioned the Queensland floods of 2010 to illustrate the issue (2011, interview), and Gambarini spoke about a storm on the North Frisian island of Sylt, where a whole campground was flooded, and said that tourists took the photographs that *DPA* distributed to its customers (2010, interview). Such data demonstrates the value of amateur photographs for weather coverage and reinforces Pantti and Bakker's findings that weather events are one of the most popular categories of amateur photographs in news media outlets (2009, p. 479).

### ***The value of proximity***

Sending a professional photographer to remote locations implies high costs and travel times, both of which have been reduced in the news industry. In addition, digital technology and the internet allow photographs to be distributed quickly and cheaply. As a consequence, the practice of assigning photographers has shifted largely to working with people close to the location of a news event (Arnott 2010, interview; Lensch 2010, interview; Munthe 2010, interview). Interviewees said

they first try to contact professional photographers such as freelancers, portrait and wedding photographers. Nevertheless, they might also collaborate with amateurs. The reason for this is that professionals are not always available, or can still be too distant from the location of an incident. Thus the proximity of eyewitnesses to a specific place at a specific time can be considered an important rationale for sourcing amateur photographs. Ian Baker, assistant picture editor at the Melbourne-based newspaper *Herald Sun*, for example, referred to the story of a couple who were charged with child pornography offences and were hiding at a camp ground near Dimboola, more than 300 kilometres northwest of Melbourne, before being captured by police in 2011.

Baker said:

“I phoned the local Dimboola paper and they don’t have a photographer. They share a photographer. Anyway, they said, ‘look there is a girl up here that has a blog page or whatever it is and she is quite an accomplished photographer.’ So the guy gave me her number, I rang her” (2011, interview).

Staff members of news agencies also spoke about the relationship between the distance to an event and the sourcing of amateur photographs. Gambarini, photographer and picture editor at *DPA*, said that in the case of the storm on the German island of Sylt mentioned above, he called guesthouses and asked if they knew of someone who had taken images (2010, interview). Peled, picture editor at *AAP*, said that in a case like the Queensland floods he would get in contact with local institutions such as fire departments or the State Emergency Service to source amateur footage (2010, interview):

“You constantly have to think outside the square on how to get photos. So yeah, we would call around and try to get in contact with somebody who has any photos” (Peled 2011, interview).

The Australian bushfires were mentioned as another example of the sourcing of photographs taken by people who were close to a news event (Allchin 2010, interview; Henningham 2010, interview).

In the academic literature the news value of proximity usually refers to the timely, geographical (DeWerth-Pallmeyer 1997, p. 43), political or cultural (Galtung & Ruge 1965, p. 67) closeness between audiences and news events. Galtung and Ruge see cultural proximity as subordinate to meaningfulness, assuming that “the event-scanner will pay particular attention to the familiar, to the culturally similar, and the culturally distant will be passed by more easily and not be noticed.” The researchers recognise also that “an event may happen in a culturally distant place but still be loaded with meaning in terms of what it may imply for the reader or listener” (Galtung & Ruge 1965, p. 67).

In contrast, I used the concept of proximity to explain the value of closeness for the newsgathering process and demonstrated that in the decision-making of sourcing amateur photographs, proximity plays a role for great geographical distances between the event and news media workers. Accordingly, it can be assumed that the use of some amateur photographs, the remoteness of an area, and the closeness of people with cameras are correlated. This finding indicates that the concept of news values could also be applied to the decisions of amateur photographers, who choose to capture events or decide not to depending on the circumstances.

Additionally, the interviews demonstrated that the value of proximity could also be relevant in the immediate environment. *DPA* photographer and photo editor Gambarini spoke of the Love Parade disaster in Germany in 2010, where more than 20 young people were crushed to death in a tunnel. According to him, though *DPA* photographers were in the festival area, they were not close to the scene where the disaster happened, which meant that they relied on amateur photographs. The photograph that the news agency eventually bought and distributed captured how people were trying to escape the crowded area (Gambarini 2010, interview). “These pictures are taken about 20 minutes before the first people died. I didn’t witness the actual catastrophe, but only the first signs of an event going wrong,” Wiffers, the author of the picture, clarified (2010; see Chapter 3.3). While the amateur photograph did not show the actual moment of the disaster, the amateur was close enough in time and place. His photograph fulfilled the requirements of a news picture, delivering an impression of what happened. Inherent in this impression are the actual and emotional proximity of

random eyewitnesses and the authentic look of some eyewitness pictures, as I discuss in Chapter 3.5. Therefore the familiarity and cultural similarity (Galtung & Ruge 1965, p. 67) not only stems from the captured event itself, but rather the imagery of amateur photographs with which audiences are able to identify (see Chapter 3.5).

### ***The advantage of access***

Another rationale for sourcing amateur photographs is, according to interviewees in this project, the privileged or exclusive access that amateurs may possess. While access is not covered in conventional news factor catalogues, news media workers, media commentators and academics use the concept of access to highlight the relevance of amateur material for professional news media and beyond (Mortensen 2011b, p. 68; Pantti & Andén-Papadopoulos 2011, p. 12). Although it has been said that journalism is about giving and receiving access, people's access to professional news media is traditionally largely blocked (Hartley 2002, p. 2). At the same time the news media workers' privilege of access is sometimes circumscribed, as illustrated by the example of the Iranian elections in 2009 (Mortensen 2011a). News media workers have always relied on people's access to get insider information. This information has partly become visual, as I discussed in Chapter 3.1.

Access may be achieved through professions that allow people to capture subjects that might be hidden from the professional eye. A widely-known amateur photograph that illustrates this is a photograph of coffins covered with American flags taken by cargo worker Tami Silicio and published in 2004 by *The Seattle Times* (Bernton 2004). Due to policy, it was forbidden to photograph the coffins of American soldiers from 1991 to 2009. Although the photograph was not taken in protest against this policy, the amateur perspective allowed the professional news media to get around the regulations and obtain access through the lens of the person who, due to her job, was able to witness what happened (Mortensen 2011b, p. 67). Accordingly, amateur photographs are perceived as useful when news media workers are excluded from a space or environment.

Some perspectives on the attacks on September 11, 2001 are further examples that support the correlation between the lack of access of news media workers and the sourcing of amateur photographs.<sup>36</sup> In the case of the Iranian elections in 2009 news media workers were prohibited from covering what was happening in the streets of Tehran, which is why the only eyewitnesses were members of the public. Apparently coincidental eyewitnesses could in fact have been “on-site activists” participating in the conflict as well as documenting it (Mortensen 2011b, p. 68). This closeness to a particular political view, as well as the difficulties of verifying amateur pictures, challenges the journalistic goal of providing “independent, reliable, accurate and comprehensive information” (Kovach & Rosentiel 2007, p. 3). It raises a number of ethical and safety issues, as well as uncertainty about the credibility and accuracy of amateur pictures (Mortensen 2011b, p. 72; see Chapter 3.4). Human rights organisations such as Witness (2014) take a specific role in this regard, aiming to attract, validate and protect the creators of insightful videos and photographs. In spite of the challenges, my research suggests that amateur photographs that provide access are perceived as valuable, as amateur photographs can play an evidential role not only after unexpected events, but also in investigative journalism and activism, providing a gateway to a sphere that is not exposed to news media workers (Adatto 2008, p. 4).

This may not only reflect the key function that eye-witnessing has (Zelitzer 2007). It may also suggest a change in the ideas and strategies about how news content should be made. Postmodernists have criticised the outside view of the professional photographer for many years. For example, representatives of the participatory photography movement believe that those who belong to a community know best which issues are important, should be communicated or changed (Wang & Burris 1994; 1997). They see professional photographers as outsiders who often know little about the individuals they photograph (Fallon

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<sup>36</sup> Other known examples of access through the eyes of insiders was the video of Saddam Hussein’s hanging captured by a security guard in 2006, which, according to Mortensen, told “a powerful counter-narrative to the official video of the event” (Mortensen 2011b, p. 67) or the infamous pictures of the Abu Ghraib prison captured by American soldiers as trophies or some kind of holiday pictures providing access to a space that was not accessible to media professionals (Adatto 2008, p. 4; see also Andén-Papadopoulos 2008).

2009). Correspondingly, people are understood as insiders (Fallon 2009) who should be recognised as “experts on their own lives” (Wang et al. 2004, p. 911). Although news media workers have personal connections to certain communities, the history of 20<sup>th</sup>-century photojournalism is a history of professional outsiders who maintained a distance to be able to create the notion of objectivism and credibility (see Chapters 3.1; 3.4). Several interviewees said that this practice is changing, partly due to the technological possibilities and economic challenges that I mentioned above. It could also be assumed that it is changing due to the ideological shift anticipated by postmodernist criticism. While the closeness of the insider has been perceived as ethically problematic among academics and news media workers (see Chapter 3.4), the combination of outside and inside views, both amateur and professional, may be the way out of the dilemma of professional news content-making that has traditionally excluded most people.

### ***Negativity and conflict***

Many of the aforementioned events (including natural disasters, fires, terror attacks and accidents) fall into the category of negativity, which is a relevant news factor for the selection of stories (Galtung & Ruge 1965, p. 71).<sup>37</sup> Galtung and Ruge claim: “The more negative the event in its consequences, the more probable that it will become a news item” (1965, p. 68). According to them, negative events suit the frequency and continuity of news formats, the content characteristic of unexpectedness and the need for professional news media to deliver simple and unambiguous interpretations. Negative news also fulfils people’s need for information, which, for example, may be used to safeguard them. Psychological theories such as cognitive dissonance have been used to emphasise the relevance of negativity for the preferencing of some news media content over other content (Galtung & Ruge 1965, pp. 69-70). Closely associated with negative content are factors such as damage, conflict, delinquency (Schulz 1976), controversy and aggression (Staab 1990). Such factors can be found in the coverage of wars, in which amateur photographers have always played a role, as the literature shows (Allan 2011; Guerin 2012; Marien 2002; Rodger 1988; Sontag 2003; Struk 2011).

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<sup>37</sup> Other researchers replace this factor and perceive damage or failure as significant indicators (Schulz 1976; Eilders 1997).

British media scholar Stuart Allan, for example, identifies several wars since the introduction of photography, in which amateurs became “Volunteers for Photographic Service in the Field” (Allan 2011, p. 48). Photography critic Sontag points out that until World War I photographs were taken by “combat itself” and that nearly all war photographs published between 1914 and 1918 were published anonymously (Sontag 2003, p. 20), suggesting that they were taken either by amateurs or by photographers performing military service. Kodak had developed and advertised a camera specifically for soldiers in World War I to “bring back a priceless picture record of your share in the Great War” (Kodak advertisement, cited in Allan 2011, p. 55). Nurses and ambulance staff were also encouraged to carry cameras (Marien 2002, p. 228). The local press was typically more open towards amateur war photographs than national newspapers (Allan 2011, p. 56). They were often perceived as too offensive and thus not suitable for widespread distribution (Marien 2002, p. 228; see Chapter 3.4).

In contrast, it has been found that Canadian soldier photographs communicated the officially-accepted perception of the war (Rodger 1988, p. 164). Once soldiers were overseas, newspapers in Canada depended on the work of amateur photographers (Rodger 1988, p. 163).<sup>38</sup> While these contrasting insights might indicate different cultural practices in different parts of the world, they all show the relevance of amateur photographs in the context of war, as well as the early attempts of military and/or governmental authorities to control the production, distribution and publication of photographs (Rodger 1988, p. 163), also reflected in the employment of official photographers (Marien 2002, p. 228). The term ‘professional’ in the context of conflict could therefore also signify the more official perspective.

According to Sontag, the Spanish Civil War was photographed for the first time “in the modern sense,” which means by “professional photographers at the lines

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<sup>38</sup> It has been suggested that many if not most of the war photographs taken by amateur eyewitnesses in the 20<sup>th</sup> century were either destroyed (Rodger 1988, p. 167) or collected in private albums (Gedrovich 2007), some later on stored for archival purposes (Rodger 1988, p. 164). As the body of literature on the role of amateurs in the history of news is limited, they will require further research.

of military engagement” (2003, p. 21). She notes that the “creation of star witnesses, renowned for their bravery and zeal” was used to optimise the distribution of images (Sontag 2003, p. 33) and hence to maximise the revenue of the news media industry. Although thousands of amateurs documented World War II (Griffin 2012, p. 163), amateur eyewitnesses became less recognised with the rise of award-winning war photographers.

Today’s professional news media use amateur visuals during armed conflicts, partly as they are the only existing documents, and partly as they allow access to a space that news media workers might not have (see above). They accommodate photographs to “establish journalism’s authority as witness to the truth of the event” (Andén-Papadopoulos 2013, p. 342), as discussed in Chapter 3.1. Amateur photographs also illustrate the ongoing character of war and are used to keep the public’s attention, as Pantti writes (2013b). Therefore amateur photographs can be useful for the continuity of news that may generate further news once they reached the attention of news media workers (Bell 1991, p. 159).

### ***Human-interest and elitism***

Some interviewees also spoke of the relevance of amateur photographs for human-interest stories and photographs of elite people, confirming findings of other research (McNamara 2011; Pantti & Bakker 2009). Meg King, picture editor at the Sydney-based *Sun-Herald*, raised the relevance of paparazzi photography for the news industry and its accessibility for amateurs:

“As more people want it, people have risen out of this demand to supply pictures of celebrities going to the shops buying potatoes, buying whatever. [...] So who cares if Elle Macpherson bought potatoes today, you know? [...] But it’s voyeuristic. What does she eat? I wonder what she eats. It’s this need to know about people who you think are celebrities. [...] It’s a human interest. [...] Light and dark like the shades in the newspaper. It can’t all be heavy news. You need a little bit of light. And sometimes this type of picture is a light. It might have the caption: ‘Elle was shopping in Bondi as seen today and tomorrow she will be launching her new bikini line.’ So it’s a lead into a particular story. But really it’s

nothing in it. It's decoration of the page. Does it devalue photography? Yes, definitely. It's open to anybody who can carry a long lens" (2011, interview).

Interviewee Lensch similarly stated: "If some celebrity buys an ice-cream or picks his nose, a fan might see it, take an image and send it to the German tabloid newspaper *Bild* or some news agency" (2010, interview). Thus fandom and with it the "deep, positive emotional conviction about someone or something famous" (Duffett 2013 p. 49) can be another reason why amateurs capture photographs and send them to the media.

The relevance of some amateur celebrity photographs in the news is debatable.<sup>39</sup> Nevertheless, the usage of such images reflects the "symbiotic relationship between powerful corporations and individual fans" (Person 2010, p. 84) who, according to Pearson, have always been at the forefront of media industry transformations" (2010, p. 84). Jenkins claims that now in a culture of convergence "fans are central to how culture operates" (Jenkins 2006a, p. 1).

While my study shows that the accommodation of amateur photographs benefits professional news media (and thus arguably reinforces above positions), it also demonstrates that the use of images depicting famous people follows traditional ideas of professional news content making. News is commonly "elite-centered, in terms of nations or in terms of people" (Galtung & Ruge 1965, p. 68). As such, elitism, which is also called prominence (Eilders 1997; Ruhrmann et al. 2003; Schulz 1976; Staab 1990), has been perceived as a relevant news value in professional news content making. Celebrities can be seen as part of the elite, partly serving "as objects of general identification" (Galtung & Ruge 1965, p. 68).<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Photographs of random scenes depicting celebrities stand for what traditionally has been called soft news content (Belt & Just 2008, p. 196). They include stories that focus on features, non-policy or human-interest topics (Scott & Gobetz 1992, p. 406)

<sup>40</sup> Additionally, the above examples refer to news factors such as personification (see Chapter 3.3) and unexpectedness (Galtung & Ruge 1965). Others may refer to rareness or negativity, depending on the subject matter.

Several interviewees in my project dissociated themselves from the hunting for pictures that capture celebrities, whether taken by fans or professional photographers. Lensch, for example, made an explicit value judgment about the example of a randomly-present amateur and the assignment of a photographer raising the ethical considerations that are essential for the professional understanding of news content-making. Hence, he represented the view that the paparazzi approach is less highly regarded than the more exclusive approach to photojournalism (Mendelson 2007, p. 170) and that there exists a clear distinction between the two. However, interviewee Meg King challenged the strict differentiation between photojournalism and paparazzi photography. She saw the sourcing of amateur paparazzi photographs as part of the demand for such photographs, which according to her point of view defines what photojournalism is (see Chapter 1.2). Authors also recognised the growing demand for paparazzi photographs among professional news media of all kinds and noted the migration of this genre of photography into the political sphere of news making (McNamara 2011, p. 518).

Paparazzi photography foregrounds the prevalent desire to gossip, the celebrities' need for public attention as well as the use of portraits of known persons in a wide range of media outlets (McNamara 2011). It has been said that in professional news media, in which elitism is valued, people without elite status consequently are less represented (Galtung & Ruge 1965, p. 68). It could be asked whether the amateur photographs submitted to professional news media are an attempt by people to overcome this lack of presence - whether amateur contributions fill the "access gap" (Lee 2011, p. 1137) and how this influences the practice of professional photographers.

### ***The domain of professional photography***

Earlier in this chapter I discussed the relevance of amateur photographs for the coverage of unforeseen news events. The news value of unpredictability raises the inverse issue of predictability, which is an integral part of professional news media practice (Bell 1991, p. 159). Bell assumes: "if an event can be prescheduled for journalists it is more likely to be covered, than if it turns up unheralded". Presumably assumptions about the news value of predictability

should contradict news value theories of unpredictability (Bell 1991, p. 159). In practice both news values coexist in the professional news media and are both inherent parts of the news. A component of predictability is that news media create stories and send photographers to take images that go well with these stories (Geragthy 2010, interview). Assignments, in which an editor briefs a photographer to deliver high-quality pictures on an everyday basis, can therefore be understood as the least-accessible approach to photography in the professional news media.

Interviewees in my project spoke about the absence of the amateur in the context of prescheduled news and stressed the close relationship between professionally-produced photographs and predictable events.

Interviewee Jay Town, picture editor at the *Herald Sun*, said:

“There is no sense in an amateur photographer going and photographing the world tour of president Obama coming to town, because we will have 20 people covering that, the same for sports like the Melbourne Cup or any football event, but if they go and photograph a local AFL game in which someone takes the best mark you have ever seen or turns into a news event because one of the players gets his neck broken and gets killed and they have pictures of it, we run it, we will buy it. That sort of thing [...] They’ve got to go for things where we are absent” (2010, interview).

Interviewee David Geragthy, photographer at *The Australian*, said:

“And it’s very rare when something public happens, that this might happen, because the media pretty much get lenses on every important person anyway. So it has to be one of those not media-monitored events [...], because otherwise a lot of people will just take a picture of the same stuff that we are doing anyway” (2010, interview).

Geragthy added:

“If you were to look at a newspaper that we published in the last week and you went through it for every single day, you would find that nearly every picture is professionally done in accordance to the story that we are

working on or they are just standard media pictures as in agencies. [...] The amateur portion of it is very small, absolutely, very small [...]. They are all photos of people that we interviewed or had spoken to and because they are quoted, we go out and make the effort to get good pictures of them” (2010, interview).

Terms such as “lucky shots” or “happy snaps” that interviewees frequently used to speak about amateur photographs signal that they were not perceived as reliable material. Thus it can be suggested that the professional approach to picture production dominates the predictable practice of professional news content-making, whereas the amateur is primarily relevant for the coverage of unpredictable news events. In addition, the statements could be interpreted as an attempt to defend conventional processes as well as the control of news media workers. However, first and foremost they indicate the absence of the amateur in some parts of the professional news media. While anyone can take snapshots of a conflict in the street, my research demonstrates that the prescheduled production of photographs is still restricted to news media workers characterised by photographic and news media skills, industry experience, and reputation as well as institutional connections. This is a significant insight, as most news content is based on press releases or prescheduled themes (Deuze 2007, p. 161) and therefore is barely influenced by amateurs.

### ***Conclusion***

Amateur photographs play a decisive role in the coverage of sudden, highly-newsworthy events, especially when they happen in inaccessible spheres, remote areas or cover large geographical regions and time spans. Furthermore, amateur photographs are sourced at the “extreme ends of the news spectrum” (Northrup 2006, p. 37), which means that they are not only used for news recognised as significant, but also for content that is considered less important. This indicates that the sourcing of amateur photographs does not play a substantial role in the content production that happens in between, the majority of which makes up the bread and butter business of professional news content-making. Is the rise of the amateur in the professional news media accepted wherever it reinforces the professional news media system? The relationship

between the concept of news values and the sourcing of amateur photographs suggests that this is indeed the case. From another perspective it must be asked which news values also apply to the decisions of amateurs to capture and share photographs and if, why and when pictures that do not conform to established news values push into the news media environment (see Chapter 3.3). The sourcing of amateur photographs largely follows news values, including unpredictability, amplitude, meaningfulness, negativity, and human interest. Additionally, access to a certain space and the proximity of amateurs to an event are perceived as advantages for the newsgathering process.

In the next chapter I will show that personalisation and beauty are further reasons for sourcing amateur photographs in the professional news media. In accordance with the understanding of news values in terms of power and control, such findings demonstrate that the influence of news media workers is still strong. Although people take photographs, of which some make it into the news, decision-making over such material remains largely in the hands of news media workers, at least inside the system in which they are used (see also Sjøvaag 2011, pp. 79-95). It can be concluded that up until now amateurs have not been the “primary definers” (Hall et al. 1978, p. 59) of the professionally-produced news.

### **3.3 The sourcing of amateur photographs from personal online archives**

*“Especially places of interest or special buildings [...]. No agency in the world can have all of them. In this case amateurs are really good, because they travel the world and put their images on some website” (Krug & Wellnitz 2010, interview).*

In Chapter 3.2 I examined which news values prompt news media workers to source amateur photographs. In this chapter I discuss the value of personalisation and investigate the practice of sourcing amateur photographs in personal online archives. Personal archives have been a resource for journalists since photography became a regular component of professional news media practice. However, as personal archives migrated to the online environment, more amateur photographs became accessible, increasing their presence within established sourcing practices. This chapter investigates why news media workers search for photographs in personal online archives and what value such photographs can add. While interviewees stressed that they search in personal online archives due to a lack of professional photographs, it can also be suggested that the missing part—the personal perspective on a story—has become an essential part of the news. Although this illustrates the relevance of amateur photographs, the chapter shows that certain amateur photographs, although present in the professional news media, to some extent remain imperceptible in that they can blend into the professionally-produced news media content. News and picture agencies play a crucial role in this process, as they provide a professionalised version of amateur photographs.

#### ***Personal archives***

For interviewees, searching in personal online archives was, at the time of data collection for this project, still relatively new and was usually perceived with suspicion regarding rights, ethics and accuracy (see also Cision 2010; see Chapter 3.4). This perception expresses what Kaplan calls a “deep ambivalence” in the way the internet (Kaplan 2008, p. 154) and especially amateur material (as

shown throughout this thesis) is perceived by news media workers. Interviewees said personal archives were included when sourcing photographs of unexpected events (see Chapters 3.1; 3.2). Additionally, they were used because of the demand for portraits of dead or missing people, the need for photographs of specific places and buildings, for rare or entertaining photographs and for illustrative (stock) images. They spoke of Google, Flickr, Facebook and Twitter as useful for finding amateur photographs in personal online archives.<sup>41</sup> Motivations for sourcing amateur photographs in personal online archives can be seen as a logical consequence of using additional sources that are accessible and available (Calcutt & Hammond 2011, p. 8; Northrup 2006, p. 37). However, interviewees repeatedly understated their significance, saying that amateur photographs online are gathered rather infrequently, are selected for small, less important spaces or often do not suit demands and standards of the professional news media, such as quality, ethics or legalities.

The close relationship between the concepts of the amateur and the personal has been acknowledged in the literature throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The personal includes the individual relationships between photographers and subjects (Chalfen 1998), the individual intentions of taking, keeping and sharing photographs such as memory (Barthes 1981) and rituals that are part of family events like birthday parties (Newton 2009) or holidays (Chalfen 1980; 1981; 1987). The personal has also been recognised in relation to the domestic and familial, commonly represented in the content of amateur photography (Rose 2003; Spence & Holland 1991; Slater & Lister 1995). Furthermore, the domestic space is where amateur photographs have traditionally been stored and shared (Batchen 2004; Walker & Kimball Moulton 1989), some in personal archives such as shoeboxes, others in family albums. These preliminary forms of today's self-made photo books and online archives go back to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century (Orvell 2003, p. 144). While such forms of archiving and story creation were disseminated widely throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, they were largely part of the personal sphere, and consequently part of the private sphere, which is why

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<sup>41</sup> According to a survey conducted in the US in 2009, all news media workers use Google to research stories. Blogs (89%), social media sites including LinkedIn and Facebook (65%), Wikipedia (61%) and microblogging services including Twitter (52%) were also remarked as relevant for researching stories (Cision 2010).

amateur photography has been “both ubiquitous and hidden”, as Rubinstein and Sluis note (2008, p. 10). In other words, although amateur photographs constitute the greatest portion of photographs that have ever been produced, they were only accessible to a limited number of people and had a marginal status in the public presence of, and debate on, photography (Rubinstein & Sluis 2008, p. 10).

These personal archives have now partly moved into the online environment, within digital databases that are able to store large numbers of images (Rubinstein & Sluis 2008, p. 17; p. 21). Such databases elevate the accessibility and visibility of amateur photographs and have an impact on the control over photographs produced in the personal context. As opposed to picture boxes or photo albums, the internet exposes personal archives potentially to anyone (Van House 2011, p. 128). In particular, tagging systems that unite photographs and other pictures fundamentally change the way amateur photographs can be accessed and used (Rubinstein & Sluis 2008, p. 19). The greater public availability, accessibility and connectivity are some of the most important changes to personal photography at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Rubinstein & Sluis 2008; Van House 2011). It prompted the idea that personal archives have become a “public resource” (Van House 2011, p. 128) for a wide range of people, among them news media workers. “If an amateur has taken only one good photo in his life, but you can find it, why not use it?” Shirky asks (2008, p. 75).

Nevertheless, it could be claimed that amateur photographs have only partly overcome their “paradoxical condition” of being at the same time “ubiquitous and hidden” (Rubinstein & Sluis 2008, p. 10). Although they are now more accessible to the public, news media workers need to search for particular material to be able to find and ‘dig out’ amateur photographs. Thus amateur photographs must meet the needs of news workers for specific visual content in order to gain exposure in the professional news media context. According to my research those needs correlate with the news values described in Chapter 3.2, as well as with the attempt to personalise or illustrate news stories with images.

### ***Portraits of dead or missing people***

Interviewees spoke of the sourcing of amateur photographs of previously-unknown people who make the news through unfortunate events, such as when they are missing, murdered or killed in accidents, disasters, crimes or other high-impact incidents (see also Becker 2011, pp. 28-29). *Heidelberg Leader* editor Blair Corless said: “We use Facebook occasionally; someone might have died in a car crash,” (2010, interview). *Manningham Leader* editor Belinda Mackowski said: “I remember once we used one of a mountain climber who died overseas and we took a photo from his Facebook and used it,” (2010, interview). Likewise, *Maroondah Leader* editor Bryan Allchin said that the one time he remembered using Facebook was when he was searching for a portrait of a person killed in a car crash:

“We contacted the family, the family sent us a photo; the photo wasn’t up to date. And Facebook had a better photo so we used that. We contacted the person who had posted it and said, ‘Oh by the way we want to use this’ and they said, ‘Oh no worries’. So in that regard we have done so” (2010, interview).

Participants at other news media outlets such as the *BBC*, *The Age* and the *Herald Sun* spoke of the use of photographs posted on Facebook with reference to fatalities (Borg 2011, interview; Coomes 2010, interview; Town 2011, interview).

Interviewees from these news outlets experienced the search for personal portraits of dead or missing people as a relatively new practice. However, statements by other research participants, as well as the literature, show that the practice is only new with regard to the infrastructure, public nature and access to personal online archives, as discussed above.

Interviewee Phil Coomes, picture editor at the *BBC*, said:

“In the past the local newspaper or the agency would go around to that family’s house. They knock on the neighbours’ houses, they knock on the cousins or grandparents house—somebody who is removed enough to talk to the press but has pictures—and then they will copy those

photographs. In these cases, they got permission from the person who took the picture. Today they will go to Facebook and lift those photographs. And then sometimes they might get permission, sometimes they will syndicate them. Sometimes they syndicate them saying we have no rights. If you pay us [...] you pay us for the delivery of this material, we are not giving you the rights; we are just giving you the delivery of that photograph” (2010, interview).

A historical example that illustrates the use of personal portraits in newspapers of the earlier 20<sup>th</sup> century is the portrait of Eleanor Sarah Smith and her child that appeared in several newspapers after the Titanic disaster in 1912 (Becker 2011, pp. 25-26). While there were no photographs of the sinking ship (as would likely be the case today), newspapers depicted the drama with drawings, photographs of the aftermath and personal portraits. One of these portraits—not an amateur photograph, but taken for personal purposes by a professional studio photographer—was the picture of Captain Edward John Smith’s widow and his daughter. This early example demonstrates the desire to visualise news events, which at the time of the Titanic disaster was especially evident in news outlets that had a tendency towards sensationalism, contrasting with the comparatively rare use of photographs in newspapers that produced what was considered to be more serious journalism (Becker 2011, pp. 25-26).

The relationship between the use of personal portraits and sensational news is demonstrated in the literature. For example, Wardle analysed the press coverage of child murders in broadsheet and tabloid newspapers in the US and UK between 1930 and 2000. These photographs were usually family portraits or photographs of important moments in the child’s life (Wardle 2007, p. 276) and were printed in juxtaposition with photographs of grieving family members (Wardle 2007, p. 275). News media workers would get these photographs from family members, driven by the aim “to keep the story in the public consciousness,” especially until the criminal had been identified and arrested. Wardle found that in comparison with the earlier decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the attention paid to the children’s families was much greater in the 1990s, demonstrating an affinity towards the visual, but also towards the personal and towards the use of amateur photographs (Wardle 2007, p. 263). Similarly, a content analysis of news sources

in the TV coverage of international terrorism shows that hostages and relatives were the most common sources in a hijacking story in 1985, used to personalise news on international terrorism (Atwater & Green 1988, p. 967). The focus on the personal, ordinary and private has also been recognised in Reality TV programs as well as talk shows (O'Shaughnessy 1997, p. 85). The sourcing of amateur photographs from personal online archives is perhaps a resumption of this trend. Personal photographs can be also found among professionally-taken images in the news. An example of this is when people hold a framed image of a deceased relative, common in the news after disasters and other tragedies.

All the above examples demonstrate a relationship between the sourcing of amateur photographs in personal archives and topics concerning memory, absence, loss and death, common themes in a number of writings on photography (Murray 2008, pp. 153-154). Every single photograph shows a moment in the past that is irretrievably gone, Barthes states (1985, p. 356). This steady loss of life, which people experience over and over again, is perceived as an "enormous trauma for humanity" (Barthes 1985, p. 356). The search for personal portraits of dead and missing people can accordingly be seen as an attempt to bring people "back to life". It also demonstrates the fascination with looking into the eyes of those who died, as described by Sontag with reference to the portraits of Cambodian people taken shortly before they were killed during the Pol Pot regime between 1975 and 1979 (cf. Sontag 2003, p. 60).

Commonly-known photographs have also been used to capture death in a more direct sense. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, for example, it was common to take portraits of people who had recently passed away, a practice more popular than the production of wedding or birthday pictures (West 2000, p. 138). Some of the most famous war photographs show men in the moment they were hit by a bullet, including the shooting of the Vietcong in the streets of Saigon in 1968 (Sontag 2003, p. 59) or the falling soldier photographed by Robert Capa in 1936 (Whelan 1994, p. 96). Portraits of dead or missing people sourced from personal online archives can be seen as a substitute for those photographs that either have never been captured or, if they have, may not have been perceived as useful for publication purposes, due to concerns about ethics, privacy or taste.

Accordingly, another reason for the sourcing of personal portraits of dead or missing people is the desire for visualisation and beautification of news media content, as suggested by Australian scholars John Hartley and Catharine Lumby (2003). The authors note that portraits of young girls are usually published in professional news media when they are missing or dead. According to them, the publication depends on what they called the “beauty quotient.” The more attractive young women look in photographs, the more likely it is that their photographs and their story will be published (Hartley & Lumby 2003, p. 55). Thus beauty can be identified as another factor of newsworthiness and as a reason for sourcing amateur photographs from personal online archives, indicating not just the desire for the visual, but also for the especially-strong photograph that can attract the attention of readers and sell a story and/or a news media outlet (see also Caple 2013, pp. 50-54; see Chapter 3.5).

In 2012, the Australian news media published the story of Irish woman Jill Meagher, who was raped and murdered in Melbourne, Australia in September of that year. The personal portrait that was selected for the story visualised the victim as a “celebrity news-saint” (Hartley & Lumby 2003, p. 57) and became the main photograph and symbol of the story, repeatedly published on front pages by a number of news media outlets, and used to remember the incident in the following months. The Melbourne-based tabloid newspaper *Herald Sun* created a gallery of her personal photographs on the Herald Sun website. These photographs showed the young woman during holidays and in her spare time, with her husband and friends—largely taken from her Facebook page.

Not only crime victims but also perpetrators are depicted with photographs found in personal online archives. Picture editor Coomes, for example, spoke of the news about a gunman in Northumberland who was hunted and killed by the police in 2010. According to Coomes, agencies supplied personal photographs of the man as a child, photographs of him with his family, as well as photographs of his victims (Coomes 2010, interview). While such amateur photographs have commonly been seen as innocent records (Zakia 2007, p. 349), they are also tools of self-representation and self-expression (Van House 2011, p. 125). This use of amateur photographs is one of the reasons why they must be interpreted

with caution and need to be subject to ethical considerations (Coomes 2010, interview).

Several interviewees also expressed concerns about the sourcing of photographs from personal online archives and spoke about the lack of clarity regarding legalities and rights. They said the high news value of some crimes and accidents outrates doubts on searching for photographs in personal online archives. Nevertheless, the sourcing practice remains problematic regarding those who cannot or do not know how to prevent their exposure, but also regarding the self-presentation of people who may seek publicity. These conflicting factors show the complex ethical issues that are involved in the sourcing of amateur photographs in personal archives that once were largely private but have now moved into the public sphere of the networked society. Therefore the ethical considerations are part of the struggle between the private, personal and public, relevant for the sourcing of amateur photographs in professional news media.

Another ethical concern is the possible anonymity of authors who took the photographs stored in personal online archives, as well as the lack of clarity about the original context of photographs (Rubinstein & Sluis 2008, p. 22; see also Griffin 2012, 173), which I discuss further in Chapter 3.4. Several interviewees also admitted that amateur photographs found in personal archives and used in the context of news media remain unnamed, as I discussed in Chapter 3.1. The detachedness and anonymity of independently-uploaded amateur photographs online represents a lack of significance, authors claim (Rubinstein & Sluis 2008, p. 23). In the context of my research it could be said that the detachedness and anonymity of amateur photographs reinforce the partly-hidden status of the amateur in the professional news media sphere and the power of news media workers over the photographs that amateurs take, and that get used in the news.

### ***Photographs of places and buildings***

Interviewees also spoke about the usefulness of amateur photographs in personal online archives that show places and buildings. The picture-sharing site

Flickr was frequently referred to in this context, confirming the understanding of Flickr as a “visual resource centre” (Le Clerc 2009). Matthias Krug, picture editor at *Der Spiegel*, responsible for picture research and assignments, said he uses all available sources, including photo and news agencies, freelance photographers and amateur photographers, including those who post their photographs online. According to Krug, the first time that he searched a photograph via Flickr was when he had to find a famous hot dog stall in Philadelphia. “No agency had a picture, but I found it on Flickr,” Krug said (2010, interview).

His colleague Anke Wellnitz, picture editor at *Spiegel Wissen*, pointed out that she sourced Flickr photographs for the first time in 2009 when she was looking for a photograph of a particular castle. She was surprised to find that no picture agency had a photograph of it. Wellnitz said that the picture she finally used was an amateur photograph she had found on Flickr (2010, interview). Another example that Wellnitz spoke of was the publication of a story about a club in Berlin, where it is considered part of the mystique of the club that it does not allow people to take pictures. While the club owners are able to demand that professional photographers abide by the prohibition, they are unable to control every visitor. “Of course we found people on Flickr who had photos of party guests before or after the visit,” Wellnitz said (2010, interview).

Although professional photographers also use photo-sharing sites such as Flickr to advertise their work, both *Spiegel* picture editors referred to the site in relation to the sourcing of amateur photographs.

Interviewee Krug said:

“Especially places of interest or special buildings [...]. No agency in the world can have all of them. In this case amateurs are really good, because they travel the world and put their images on some website” (2010, interview).

Interviewees also spoke of the small size of an image as one reason for sourcing amateur photographs in personal online archives (King 2011, interview; Krug & Wellnitz 2010, interview; Seewald 2010, interview). Referring to the

aforementioned picture of the castle Wellnitz, picture editor at *Der Spiegel*, said that for a “dime-sized picture” she would not assign a photographer (2010, interview), a more costly and elaborate approach to producing photographs (see Chapter 3.8). Hence, the purpose of the photograph and its importance in an outlet determine which resources are used, how much is paid for a picture and when amateur photographs are identified as sufficient or “just fine” (Capps 2009). The perceived usefulness of amateur photographs for small spaces reinforces the hidden presence of some amateur photographs in the professional news media.

Paul Frosh points out that photography scholars are mainly interested in the presence of photographs and in notions of strong, spellbinding photographs that catch people’s eye. However, they are less interested in how photographs are neglected and remain unseen. Frosh claims that stock photographs are almost invisible, as they firstly need to be sought and found, and secondly are repetitive, trivial and not compelling (Frosh 2002, p. 172). It can be assumed that the largest portion of all photographs taken are not noticed by others, either because they are “unremarkable and inconspicuous” (Frosh 2002, p. 172), have not been consciously looked at, have been looked at and forgotten or have not been seen at all. As discussed above, the small size of an image on a printed page can also indicate the minor status of amateur photographs in the context of professional news.

Interviewee Marcus Seewald<sup>42</sup> said that he only works with professionals. However, in the services section at the back of the outlet, where editors give tips about places such as museums, shops or restaurants, he might use amateur photographs. While picture agencies distribute images of places of special interest, he said that, for example, photographs of a particular café are sometimes difficult to find (Seewald 2010, interview). An example of a photograph like this might be the door of a café with its name. “In a case like this it might happen that I get in contact with an amateur who has taken an image of the place” (Seewald 2010, interview). While in this instance it is, according to him, “not essential that a great photographer has taken a great picture”, the idea of

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<sup>42</sup> At the time of data collection Seewald worked at the magazine *Geo*. He is one of the experts in this project that represent media more generally (see Part 2).

using the photograph is simply to show the door and “the atmosphere that a visitor would find when one would get to the place” Seewald said (2010, interview). From this perspective, the sourcing of photographs from personal online archives refers not only to the conventions of professional news media practice, but also acknowledges the audience who may use the visual information, for example, to find a specific place. According to Seewald, an amateur photograph like the one of the café door would not be printed on a double-page spread, but would appear on the pages of the services section in the back of the magazine to convey information about a place, which makes them “good enough and important enough” to be published. “We say, it’s an evidence picture” Seewald said (2010, interview). This insight confirms that the value of amateur photographs lies in the notion of authenticity (see Chapter 3.5) as well as the visual information they are able to convey (Pantti & Bakker 2009).

Amateur photographers do not need to focus on the requirements and conventions of professional news content-making, and can choose their subjects and decide when and why they take photographs. The freedom that amateurs possess stands in contrast to the lack of autonomy of professional photographers who are constrained by workflows and hierarchies. Interviewees saw this as a reason why amateur photographs are often not perceived as useful for the professional news media. Yet the example shows that the independence of amateur photography from commercial and editorial processes has also proven useful and in some cases can also be understood as valuable.

### ***The influence of writers and editors***

Interviewees also noted the changing influence of text journalists on amateur photographs in the news. As part of the process of newsgathering, journalists may find pictures, and for that reason can potentially contribute to the sourcing of amateur photographs (Borg 2011, interview; Coomes 2010, interview; Dietrich 2010, interview). While picture editors in my project said this in reference to transgressions of competencies, it also demonstrates the merging roles and changing sourcing practices since photography became digital around the turn of the century (see Chapter 1.2).

As long as photography was analogue, the picture department had a key position in relation to amateur photographs, as photographers were commonly responsible for developing film rolls from amateurs and hence had the power to control incoming material.

An interviewee who wished to remain anonymous said:

“I have often witnessed some bully grab a film and pull it out of the cassette and expose it [...] just as a bit of job protection [...]. That’s the wrong thing to do, so now there is a lot more reader-submitted photographs and there has been a big change of position there and I think the threat of job loss is not as real as it was once imagined. I mean people were really worried that if we start processing all these submitted photographs and they start publishing them all they are not going to need as many photographers” (interview 2010).

It is not clear whether this was common practice or an exceptional case. Nevertheless, gatekeeping practices in the time of analogue photography by staff members of pictorial departments constitute one of several reasons why amateur and professional photography were largely sealed from each other during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Academics often apply the gatekeeper theory to editorial professionals (Dimmick 1974, p. 1).<sup>43</sup> Yet the influence and position of staff photographers usually goes unmentioned in academic media and journalism literature. Amateur photographs can now bypass the pictorial department and consequently are subject to other news media workers. Editors have always influenced the final decisions over photographs in news media; today they can be involved earlier and more actively in the sourcing process, creating different conditions for the sourcing of amateur photographs. Additionally, it can be assumed that the practice of sourcing photographs moves from a specialised task of photo editors towards one of several functions of multitasking news media workers. This shift in news media practice refers to the necessity for visual skills and image-related knowledge beyond staff members of picture departments, especially as this research suggests that journalists are commonly not visual experts (Allchin 2010, interview; Burton 2010, interview; Mackowski 2010, interview). They may judge photographs from a text-based rather than pictorial perspective (Richardson 2010,

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<sup>43</sup> Other researchers include managers and media owners (Hartley 2002, p. 94).

interview), and may be unaware of the legal and ethical issues involved in the sourcing of amateur photographs (Dietrich 2010, interview).

### ***The role of news agencies***

Although several interviewees said they rarely source amateur photographs (Dietrich 2010, interview; Sonntag 2010, interview) or use amateurs only as additional sources (Krug & Wellnitz 2010, interview), the research revealed that they do not include amateur photographs that come through picture and news agencies. For example Krug, picture editor at the German magazine *Der Spiegel*, said that the first source for him would be picture or news agencies, because he trusts that the image from an agency will satisfy the quality standards of the magazine (2010, interview). A news agency such as the German press agency *DPA* is a legitimate source for him, while an amateur photographer is not necessarily (Krug & Wellnitz 2010, interview). Coomes, picture editor for the *BBC*, also said: “I wouldn’t regularly search Flickr. I always search all the agencies first or our internal archives before going to Flickr” (2010, interview).

Such interview statements confirm that news media workers prefer channels that can be routinely used (Sigal 1973, p. 119). Although Sigal did not use the term “routine channel” to write about agencies (1973, p. 120), he demonstrated that news media workers at the two American newspapers analysed relied on news agencies to report certain news (1973, p. 121). Such agencies are an “important node in circuits of news communication across the world” (Boyer 2011, p. 6). Agencies act as an intermediary between professional news media and amateurs.

Referring to the Love Parade disaster in Germany in 2010, *DPA* photographer and picture editor Gambarini said that *DPA*’s main image of the tragedy was found on Flickr (2010, interview; see Chapter 3.1). Erik Wiffers, a visitor to Love Parade and member of the photo-sharing site, had uploaded a series of photographs on his Flickr site. Gambarini said that a *DPA* colleague got in contact with Wiffers through the photo-sharing site and a short time later bought and delivered his picture to other professional news media, who used it in the following days on several cover pages. “Especially when something like this happens, we look into those networks,” Gambarini said (2010, interview).

Similarly, Dan Peled at the Sydney-based news wire *AAP* (2010, interview) and Turi Munthe at the London-based agency *Demotix* (2010, interview) spoke about the relevance of personal online archives for sourcing of amateur eyewitness photographs (see Chapter 3.1).

One of the advantages of this approach is that news media workers can be independent from a specific physical space, which enables a wider search and reduces the necessity for direct personal contact before a photograph can be found, which increases the accessibility of amateur photography. However, even though amateur photographs may be more accessible, according to the efforts of agencies such as *DPA*, to search, find and put them in context is a professional activity, and valuable for those news media outlets that are customers of news agencies.

Agencies also play a role in the way amateur photographs are edited and professionalised and whether they reach news media outlets. While Wiffers' Love Parade photograph on Flickr looked like a snapshot taken by an amateur, when provided by a news agency it gave a professional impression, not necessarily in the technical or aesthetic quality of the raw photograph (see Chapter 3.5), but in the editorial intervention and the seriousness and standing of the news agencies that distributed the photograph to other news media. This process transforms the amateur photograph into an apparently cleaner or more professional version, which makes the amateurish origin less visible to news media workers who buy such photographs from agencies. "As in any commercial transaction, the sellers attempt to make their wares as attractive as possible" states Langton (2009, p. 97) with reference to Gans' description of the process of selecting stories (1980, pp. 90-93). This is also true for the distribution of amateur photographs via agencies. Agencies not only do legal checks, quality checks and ethical clearances, but also create a distance between professionals and amateurs, which suits the demands and established principles of professional news media, as I argue in Chapters 3.1 and 3.4.

### ***The value of a lucky shot***

Gambarini said that staff members at the German press agency *DPA* mainly search the internet for amateur photographs after hard news events such as the Love Parade tragedy. However, the sourcing of amateur photographs in personal online archives is not restricted to disasters or accidents. Referring to a photograph that went viral online, Gambarini said: “There are people at *DPA* who search the internet for pictures like these” (2010, interview).

The photograph shows a squirrel that was apparently attracted by the sound of the shutter release and looked straight into the lens when the image was taken. Melissa and Jackson Brandts, the couple in the background of the picture, said on NBC News Today that they were on vacation at Lake Minnewanka in Banff National Park, Canada, when they saw an opportunity to take a portrait of themselves. Using a small tripod they set up the camera on some rocks and posed in front of it, a ritual that is widely known and can be observed at panoramic sites and tourist locations all over the world.

Amateur photographer Melissa Brandts said:

“The camera was on timer, but we used a remote. So, we snapped a couple of photos of just us and while we were doing that a little squirrel was running all over” (NBC News Today 2009).

In this way, they captured a funny, unusual and memorable moment that they shared with each other, later with friends and family members and finally with a large online audience. While the interviewees’ expression “pictures like these” (Gambarini 2010, interview) can refer to the news value of the rarity, personalisation and human interest of the snapshot, it can also refer to the large number of viewers that the photograph attracted. Thus the news value of the photograph cannot only be explained by the captured moment, as what made it newsworthy was only partly the unlikelihood, rarity and unusualness of the snapshot. It was also the significant attention that the photograph stimulated and the potential influence of non-elite sources in certain moments.

As I argue throughout this thesis, the power over amateur photographs remains largely in the hands of news media workers as they source photographs

according to their professional needs and standards (see Chapters 3.1; 3.2; see also Sjøvaag 2011, p. 79-95). Yet the snapshot of the squirrel shows that this need can be provoked and influenced by external forces such as a crowd of people who *like* particular pictures. However, it must be noted that the life span of attention for such photographs is often short and vanishes quickly (Griffin 2012, p. 176).

Further examples that strengthen the latter argument are ‘selfies’ of known people that go viral online and are then reported in the professional news. This online impact suggests that amateurs occasionally gain influence in professional news media through the gateway of online impact measured by click rates. It also reinforces that the decisions of news media workers cannot always be explained by analysing news media content alone (see Part 2). The approach of news workers to respond to the attraction of photographs in personal online archives also highlights the relevance of the “journalist-source relationship” (Carlson 2009a, p. 526) to understand the role of amateur photographs in professional news media. Furthermore, the example illustrates the position and role of agencies in the search for and distribution of amateur photographs.

A news agency, in Gambarini’s experience, must offer a broad range of images—from a photograph of a full moon above a church captured beautifully by a skilled photographer to an amateur photograph snapped during or after an unforeseen event (Gambarini 2010, interview). According to Gambarini, it is a form of professionalism to gather and provide amateur photographs and to provide them quickly. Gambarini said a staff member contacts the author of a photograph that is considered valuable and asks if he/she is willing to sell the picture. If so, the photograph migrates from the personal into the professional archives (Gambarini 2010, interview). Thus agencies are also an “important node” (Boyer 2011, p. 6) for amateur photographs that can be found online and blend into the professional news media content.

### ***Stock agencies and news media***

Stock photographs form an inherent element in professional news media content, used to illustrate abstract themes such as financial crisis or economic challenges.

Several interviewees observed that news media outlets have become more illustrative in recent years (Borg 2011, interview; Gambarini 2010, interview; Sonntag 2010, interview). Agencies such as *Getty* and *Corbis* offer large numbers of photographs to their customers, among them professional news media organisations (Frosh 2002, p. 174). While this speaks for the relevance of stock photography as a research field, most communication and media scholars ignore the position and role of stock agencies (Frosh 2002, p. 171; p. 174). They not only overlook a whole branch of the media industry, but also neglect the ubiquity of large numbers of ordinary images that continuously surround people but remain largely unnoticed (Frosh 2002, p. 171).

Traditionally, stock photographs are post-produced, staged, “slick and very glossy” studio images (Patalong 2008), sold several times to a number of clients (Frosh 2002, p. 175).

Frosh writes:

“[...] the stock photography industry encourages conservatism and the constant reproduction of stereotypical and formulaic ‘generic’ images [...] designed to be reused in diverse contexts and to promote different products” (2002, p. 175).

Hence, stock photography has been labelled as “deliberately organized noise” (Frosh 2002, p. 191) or “the wallpaper of consumer culture” (Frosh 2002, p. 172), “repeatedly produced and performed as ordinarily familiar and ordinarily desirable” (Frosh 2002, p. 191). In contrast to the above sections that showed that news media workers source amateur photographs to represent the notion of reality and the personal, photographs in the context of stock use “realistic codes” but are “flagrantly theatrical” (Frosh 2002, p. 177), which means that they are used purely for illustrative purposes.

Several stock photo agencies in recent years have recognised the potential of amateurs as sources, and especially acknowledged the capabilities of photo enthusiasts who aim for high standards, although they practice photography outside the professional context (see Chapter 1.1). The German stock photo agency *Plainpicture*, for example, was one of the first stock agencies in the new

millennium to recognise the value of amateur photography. Roman Haerer and Astrid Herrmann, directors and founding members of the photo agency, attributed the inclusive approach to the demand for more personal-looking photographs, which can be used for illustrative and creative purposes (Haerer & Herrmann 2010, interview; see also Patalong 2008). The “slick and very glossy,” led to the desire for more authenticity (Patalong 2008; Haerer & Herrmann 2010; see Chapter 3.5), which is also being incorporated by professionals in the meantime.

Interviewees Haerer and Herrmann said that in the earlier days of the photo agency they approached people with slogans such as “We like to browse through your photo albums” or “Let your family work for you” (2010, interview). While the first slogan refers to the search for photographs in personal archives, the latter appeals to photo enthusiasts invited to earn money with photographs taken in a personal context. The ritual nature of amateur photography arguably suits the demands of stock photography. In fact, amateur photographs in personal archives could also be perceived as stock photographs. While Haerer and Herrmann stressed the commitment to professional standards to be able to sell photographs, they also said they usually do not distinguish between professional and amateur. However, they stressed that they do differentiate between high and low picture quality (see Chapter 3.5). Thus the amateur partly blends into the large pool of standardised stock photographs and becomes almost invisible (cf. Frosh 2002, p. 171).

Getty is another example of a picture agency that opened its doors for amateurs. In 2008 Getty initiated an agreement with the picture sharing site Flickr, which allows the agency to search for photographs and contract people who use the site for their personal purposes (Patalong 2008). This approach partly merged two areas that were once strictly separated—the personal archives of amateurs and the professional libraries of stock photography. Microstock photographs are also produced by amateurs and professionals alike, cost very little and can be of very high quality (Sonntag 2010, interview; see also Patalong 2008). German freelance picture editor Claudia said in 2010 that she had used microstock agencies for the previous 18 months and had experienced the practice in close relation to cost-cutting strategies (see Chapter 3.8). Sonntag said she found the

collaboration with such agencies problematic, while emphasising that this is not because of quality (see Chapter 3.5).

From Sonntag's point of view there are themes in microstock libraries that are well photographed, for example plants, fruits, animals, and especially pets (Sonntag 2010, interview), stereotypical content of photographs captured by photo enthusiasts interested in beautiful images. Sonntag admitted that, for example, for a story on pets, she used *iStock*. (an agency that is owned by Getty Images), even though she could have used more expensive photographs. At the same time, Sonntag expressed reservations with respect to the sourcing of photographs in archives of microstock agencies and spoke out against the use of stock amateur photographs. To create a special photograph or reportage, she explained, freelance photographers traditionally need to be able to sell stock photographs as well. For example, when a photographer produces a story on drug users in Barcelona, she/he would also take travel and stock photographs, such as a cup of coffee, a church or a park, to ensure financial independence. Sonntag suggested that if media organisations do not buy such stock photographs from professional photographers, as they source them from agencies or personal online archives, professional assignment photography must consequently get more expensive. (2010, interview) In saying this, Sonntag, like other photo editors in my research, showed a strong collegiality towards fellow photographers and distanced herself from the inclusiveness of online sourcing practices and related cost-cutting strategies (see also Northrup 2006, p. 37; see Chapter 3.8).

### **Conclusion**

News media workers source amateur photographs in personal online archives according to their professional needs, partly to personalise news, partly to find rare striking images, or to fill a small space at a low cost. Such photographs include portraits of unknown people who make it into the news—either due to accident, crime or other newsworthy circumstances (see also Becker 2011, p. 28-29). News media workers also source amateur photographs because of the demand for pleasing-looking content reinforcing the news value of aesthetics in the professional news media (Caple 2013, p. 50-54; see also Chapter 3.5). In

addition, news media workers source amateur photographs that attract attention online, photographs that can be used for illustrative purposes, as well as photographs of sudden newsworthy events that people share on social media sites (see Chapter 3.2). This reflects the variety of amateur photographs in the news, which is mostly reduced to eyewitness photographs in the literature (see Chapter 1.3).

This chapter has also demonstrated that different types of amateur photographs are integrated in the news in different ways. While I have shown that professional news media tend to flag eyewitness photographs of news events as amateur content (see Chapter 3.1), amateur photographs used for illustrative purposes have a more hidden presence in the news, meaning that their amateur origin may not be particularly highlighted or may even be concealed. That implies, that some (if not most) amateur photographs in the professional news media blend into the pool of potentially-usable picture files and remain almost invisible (cf. Frosh 2002, p. 171) in terms of their origin. News and picture agencies play an important role in this respect. They infiltrate the professional news media arena with amateur photographs, provide a cleaner version of such material, and for that reason partly blur the differences between professional and amateur content. News media workers prefer channels that can be routinely used (Sigal 1973, p. 119), largely because they trust the professional source.

In the next chapter, I focus on the issue of trust. I ask why news media workers tend not to trust amateur photographs and explain the methods that professional news media use to verify the credibility of such photographs.

### 3.4 Trust and mistrust in amateur photographs

*“The problem is when you dip your toe into the water of the complex topic of ethics [...], you end up with more questions than answers. I was thinking about this relationship between reader/contributor/yourself and the only word that kept coming up was ‘trust’—but is trust ethics?” (Bush, cited in Kingston 2003, p. 163)*

In the previous chapters I examined why news media workers source amateur photographs, how some of those photographs are integrated as quotes and how others blend into the production of news and are not identified as amateur photographs. In this chapter, I discuss why news media workers tend not to trust amateur photographs. Reasons for this include the ambiguity and manipulability of photography, the potential anonymity of amateurs and the lack of relationships between news media workers and unknown photographers. The distrust is often related to general preconceptions and reservations about photography and the amateur, and less to negative experiences of news media workers with sourcing amateur photographs. In addition, I investigate the methods that are adopted to validate amateur material and ask if, when and how standards of control are adjusted when incorporating amateur photographs. Regardless of any adjustments, the chapter reflects that the sourcing of amateur photographs is largely subordinate to established routines, attitudes and practices, and concludes that a certain degree of distrust and control is perhaps necessary in order to use amateur photographs as part of professionally-produced news.

#### ***The importance of credibility and trust***

Interviewees challenged the trustworthiness of amateur photographs and discussed how amateur photographs can be integrated into professional news media content without abandoning professional standards (see also Pantti & Andén-Papadopoulos 2011; Allan 2006; Baradell & Stack 2008; Pantti & Bakker 2009; Perlmutter & Hatley Major 2004; Williams, Wardle & Wahl-Jorgensen 2011). Distrust in amateur photographs involves the questioning of specific content and sources, as well as the intentions of amateurs when taking photographs,

uploading them online and/or offering them to professional news media organisations.

Trust has been described as the expectation “that a message received is true and reliable” (Renn & Levine 1991, p. 179). It holds a key position in interpersonal relationships and human communication, and plays an important role in news content-making (Brewer & Ley 2013, p. 115). There are two main factors of trust specific to the practice of sourcing amateur photographs that are relevant for this project. Firstly, trust in the reliability of news media, including the responsibility of news media workers to inform people in an accurate and timely manner, and secondly, the trust between news media workers and their sources, which is necessary to access relevant information or to develop new stories (Furlan 2012, pp. 104-105). News media workers depend on credibility and trust in order create content, to reach people, and at best, to influence their lives (cf. Renn & Levine 1991, p. 175).

### ***The manipulability of digital photography***

One reason given by interviewees for distrust in amateur photography was the possibility that the images had been digitally manipulated. Distrust in amateur material therefore reflects a broader scepticism towards photography in the news. Since the adoption of digital technology, this scepticism has been discussed in relation to the application of photo-editing software, which can potentially be used to distort visual content (Perlmutter 2006; Perlmutter & Hatley Major 2004; Ricchiardi 2007; Roberts & Webber 1999).

For example, in 2006 the Lebanese freelance photographer Adnan Hajj took photographs of the Lebanon-Israel-conflict. Hajj manipulated the photographs apparently intentionally. He thereby threatened the credibility of the news agency. As a result he lost the trust of the professional news media in his own credibility. (Reuters 2007) The incident sparked wide-scale public attention about what Cooper calls “fauxtography,” referring to digitally-altered photographs that communicate a false impression of reality (2007, p. 2). It also prompted discussions about the boundaries of the editing process, and caused professional news media to adjust the codes of conduct of picture editing (Mäenpää &

Seppänen 2010). The rules at Reuters state that it is not acceptable to perform “additions or deletions to the subject matter of the original image,” to use “excessive lightening, darkening or blurring of the image” or to implement “excessive colour manipulation” (Schlesinger 2007). Such rules largely follow traditional darkroom standards and are open to interpretation depending on the specific case and circumstances (Mäenpää & Seppänen 2010, p. 454).

Amateurs do not have to commit to the codes of ethics of professional news media and may not even know them, which is why news media workers believe that amateur photographs must be accommodated with particular caution (Baradell & Stack 2008, p. 48). Interviewees raised the topic of picture manipulation regularly. Yet most research participants said that they did not receive manipulated photographs frequently, if at all. One of the few interviewees who spoke about a first-hand experience was Leigh Henningham, picture editor at *The Age*. He mentioned a meeting with an amateur photographer offering a photograph of a Tasmanian tiger, an extinct species in Australia.

Henningham, said:

“An amateur came to us and said: Look I’ve got this picture of a Tasmanian tiger. This man was an Austrian tourist. He seemed very legit, a genuine person and he had this picture and it was sort of out of focus and it was half behind a bush and he took it on a lonely road in Tasmania. We looked at it and thought, it can’t be true, but he seemed so legit and so we got the head of RMIT photography unit and he totally pulled the picture apart and put it back together and said, no, this is a fake” (2010, interview).

The interviewee admitted that the case of the Tasmanian tiger is an extreme example of an issue that does not arise on a day-to-day basis (Henningham 2010, interview). Likewise, other interviewees said they rarely experienced picture manipulation first hand (Coomes 2010, interview; Burton 2010, interview; Gambarini 2010, interview).

Jon Burton, online journalist at the *Leader*, said:

“And luckily we are not in the situation where we get doctored photos. The sort of people who doctor photos generally are not coming to our website. On the few occasions that I have seen it, they have been such bad jobs. And for the sort of stuff we ask people for it’s not really an issue. The few times that I have seen it have largely been something where they copied in the head of a cartoon character. It’s been a joke more than something that has been trying to bastardise the news process” (2010, interview).

Coomes, picture editor at the BBC said:

“When you get sent in pictures, then primarily if someone is trying to fool you they don’t tend to photoshop, they just tend to use an event from another place and pass it off as something else” (2010, interview).

“Especially with disaster pictures, they are rarely manipulated,” Maurizio Gambarini, photographer at the *DPA* said (2010, interview). The emphasis on extreme picture manipulation scandals amongst news media workers demonstrates less the general limitations of sourcing amateur photographs than it does the general distrust in amateurs. The latter interview statement also indicates different levels of trust in different areas of professional news content-making (Brewer & Ley 2013, p. 118; Liu & Priest 2009, p. 709). Thus distrust or trust in amateur photographs depends on several factors including the topic, the people involved and circumstances (see also below).

### ***The ambiguity of photography***

Interviewees also considered the ambiguity of photography as a reason for the distrust in amateur photographs, which (just like manipulability) is an inherent characteristic of photography rather than specific to amateur material. Without context, photographs are comparable to optical illusions such as the “gestalt duck-rabbit” and consequently open to a wide range of interpretations, while at the same time giving the impression that the viewer knows what he or she sees (Morris 2011, p. 92). “Photographs provide evidence, but no shortcut to reality,” Morris writes, stressing that what we see is not independent of beliefs (Morris 2011, p. 93). Photographs “create the illusion of consensus,” Sontag states (2003,

p. 6). Some interviewees said that people occasionally provide photographs and pretend that the photograph is what they say it is (Coomes 2010, interview; Henningham 2010, interview).

Henningham said:

“So for instance the big downpour in Melbourne. I might have a picture that was taken five years ago in Brisbane, but you can’t really tell that it is Brisbane. We had people doing that in the past” (2010, interview).

Another interviewee spoke of the infamous Pauline Hanson case of 2009 to illustrate the ambiguous nature of photography (Geraghty 2011, interview). In March 2009 News Limited’s Australian papers ran photographs of a woman posing in front of the camera, claiming that it was the politician Pauline Hanson at a younger age. The story was initiated by the Sydney-based newspaper *The Sunday Telegraph*, whose news media workers trusted that the similarity to Hanson of the woman photographed was enough evidence to make the claim. However, not long after publication they were forced to correct the allegation, accusing Jack Johnston, a former soldier who supposedly took the photographs, of deception. Although Johnston’s actions in providing false evidence cannot be denied, it was found that news media workers at *The Sunday Telegraph* did not check their source sufficiently and as a result did not hold to the standards of professional news content-making (Holmes 2009; Simons 2009).

Further known examples of false testimony in professional news media include claims about the identity of the hooded man in one of the photographs taken at the Abu Ghraib prison (Morris 2011, pp. 75-95), and the Iranian English teacher Neda Soltani, whose portrait was confused by news media workers with the portrait of Neda Agha-Sotan, the young woman who was killed during the demonstrations in the streets of Teheran after the Iranian elections in 2009. In the latter case news media workers followed an anonymous source without further research and published the wrong portrait in connection with the murder case, which had serious consequences. The Iranian English teacher, Neda Soltani, had to leave her home country and seek asylum in Germany (Herbaut & Sager 2010, p. 40-45).

According to Errol Morris,

“The failure to look at certain kinds of evidence may be explained by the belief that a proof had already been offered, that there was already enough evidence to make the case” (2011, p. 92).

My research suggests that news media workers have a tendency to blame amateurs when mistakes occur—a finger-pointing exercise that can be seen as symptomatic of the crisis in the professional news media sphere (Pauwels & Picone 2012, p. 542). However, the examples also illustrate that a degree of mistrust in sources and their photographs acts as a safeguard and is acceptable (Cook, Hardin & Levi 2007, p. 62) as a means of avoiding false claims. It also shows that trust and distrust are not opposing concepts, but rather coexist in the practice of sourcing depending on the specific case (cf. Furlan 2012, p. 112; Lewicki, McAllister & Bies 1998). Hence the suspicion towards amateur photography does not necessarily need to be seen in opposition to trust, but rather as a crucial element of it (Pauwels & Picone 2012, p. 543) and as an indication of the need to renegotiate what trust is (Pauwels & Picone 2012, p. 548).

### ***Source bias and anonymity***

Suspicion towards amateur photographs can also stem from uncertainty regarding whose photographs can be trusted (Pantti & Andén-Papadopoulos 2011, p. 111; see also Ashuri & Pinchevski 2009), as trustworthiness depends not only on the photographic material, but also on the people involved and on the reasons why photographs are taken and distributed (Mortensen 2011b, p. 72).

The concept of source-bias (Hackett 1985) is used to express the position of the professional news media towards sources (Kline, cited in Hackett 1985, p. 256). This position is generally dominated by a preference for official sources such as leaders of organisations, government spokespersons and politicians (Hackett 1985, p. 256; see Chapter 3.1). It is believed that “official sources add a sense of legitimacy to a story” (Hickerson, Moy & Dunsmore 2011, p. 791) and “maintain the illusion of objectivity” (McLeod & Hertog, cited in Hickerson, Moy & Dunsmore 2011, p. 791). In contrast, when news media quote non-official sources, they may

be accused of being biased or supportive towards individual perspectives (Hickerson, Moy & Dunsmore 2011, p. 791). The accommodation of amateur photographs brings a comparable risk to the use of quotes from non-official sources, and is thus considered as similarly problematic for the credibility of professional news media. While this demonstrates the challenging nature of the amateur in professional news media, it also reinforces the usefulness of the visual quote concept as introduced in Chapter 3.1.

Interviewee Phil Coomes, picture editor at the BBC, said:

“And obviously if it’s just a plane in the Hudson River, they [...] just thought, ‘wow, they have survived’. If it would be a picture from a conflict, they would have an agenda and you have to be careful about what you do” (2010, interview).

Several interviewees also spoke of the potential anonymity of people as a reason for the distrust towards amateur photographs and the challenge for sourcing them, as already mentioned in Chapter 3.3. They said that they usually do not know the amateurs who contribute photographs to professional news media (Krug & Wellnitz 2010, interview; Peled 2011, interview). According to them, this is not only problematic for the credibility of professional news media, but also for the efficient production of news media content (see Chapter 3.8). Henningham asked: “What is the background of the person. Are they ethical? [...] What rules do they break and do they not break?” (2010, interview).

Anonymity can be understood as “privacy in ‘public’” (Austin 2013, p. 209), which is an important convention of online communication (Mortensen 2011b, p. 72). In the journalism literature the issue of anonymity is often discussed in reference to the right of news media workers to protect sources providing confidential information (Bush Kimball 2011, p. 36). However, while the right to grant sources anonymity is seen as part of the news media’s professional integrity and ethical behaviour (Bush Kimball 2011, p. 36), interviewees doubted the usefulness of anonymity for their practice of sourcing amateur material. It can be assumed that people’s lack of trust in professional news media, which may or may not grant anonymity to sources, led to the desire to control this decision. Security issues

constitute another reason for the attempt to withhold identity information (Mortensen 2011b, p. 72).

One issue raised by interviewees concerning the issue of anonymity was that they did not always get photographs from the original source. For example, some spoke of people forwarding photographs they had received via email or had found on a website (Coomes 2010, interview; Dietrich 2010, interview; Henningham 2010, interview; Perkin 2011, interview). “People think they are doing me a favour, but actually they are not,” Coomes, picture editor at the BBC, said (2010, interview).

Similarly, Henningham, picture editor at *The Age*, said:

“[...] we have people who send us photographs of extreme weather. But they were sent to a friend and from a friend to a friend. Often you don’t get it from the original source. And then we get the picture published online and the person who originally has taken the picture says: “How did you get my picture? I wasn’t supposed to have taken it. I am at work today”. So we had to take it down. So you are getting these complicated situations not because of your own doing. So people push pictures around that aren’t theirs. You don’t know where the email has come from” (2010, interview).

Another concern with amateur photographs is the lack of relationship between news media workers and amateurs, which differs from the traditionally-strong ties between editors and staff photographers and the professional relationship between news media workers and routinely-used channels such as picture and news agencies.

Matthias Krug, picture editor at the news magazine *Der Spiegel*, said:

“They [news and picture agencies] have photographers who have worked for them for years. If they say, ‘I was at this place,’ that is for me a credible source. But online at Flickr they have fantasy names. I don’t even know who it is in reality. Was he really in Shanghai? Did he really photograph this place?” (2010, interview)

To illustrate this, Lutz Fischmann, director of the German association *Freelens*, referred to the photograph of Bruno, a bear that for several weeks roamed around in the Bavarian-Austrian border land, was hunted and later shot in southern Germany in 2006 (Clark 2008, pp. 764-765). Fischmann said that a blurry amateur photograph was published that gave the impression of showing the last moments of the hunted animal, adding that soon after publication it was discovered that it was not a photograph of this bear. Referring to the example, he said that he does not recall the name of the amateur. "If it had been a professional photographer, I would have remembered it, because I wouldn't trust him anymore. The reputation is quickly gone" (Fischmann 2010, interview).

Such insights demonstrate that interviewees were highly protective about the professional approach to news content-making and generally perceived professional photographers as more credible than amateurs. In contrast with amateurs, professionals depend on the perception of being trustworthy. Their name, competence and skills stand behind their photographs. From this perspective, trust could also mean "that the communicator demonstrates competence and honesty by conveying accurate, objective and complete information," as Renn and Lewine write as part of their attempt to describe what trust means (1991, p. 179). The terminologies are debatable in the context of photography, especially as concepts such as objectivity and completeness must be considered problematic. It may also suggest that the presumed lack of competence of amateurs supports the perception that amateur photographs are not trustworthy.

While professional demands for accuracy and credibility can lead to the rejection of amateur photographs, they can also lead to the decision to source them (Krug & Wellnitz 2010, interview; Seewald 2010, interview). Picture editor Marcus Seewald spoke of a story on a species of salmon in the French river Seine published in the magazine *Geo*. He was not able to find a photograph of the salmon when searching in professional picture archives. While he could have taken any photograph of a salmon to illustrate the story, the practice of the magazine is to publish only photographs of the specific content, which in this context was the species of salmon that was actually caught in the Seine. "At *Geo* it is about authenticity," Seewald said (2010, interview). This search for

authenticity and the ability to show and explain content with images was the reason he chose an amateur photograph for publication. Although the magazine that Seewald referred to is not a news magazine that deals with current affairs, the anecdote illustrates that the sourcing of amateur photographs can also be seen in relation to high standards of credibility that some professional news media outlets, such as the German news magazine *Der Spiegel*, apply. Interviewees Krug and Wellnitz mentioned similar practices of selecting images (2010, interview). The example stands in contrast to the assumption that amateur photographs are not trustworthy, and indicates that amateur photographs can also be used to advance the credibility of the professional news media.

A study by Puustinen and Seppaenen (2011) suggests that audiences do not necessarily distinguish between professional and amateur content as being more or less trustworthy. Through interviews with 30 newspaper readers conducted in Finland, they demonstrate that viewers perceive amateur material used in professional news media not just as “equally trustworthy,” but even as “more trustworthy than photos taken by professional photographers” (Pustinen & Seppaenen 2011, p. 189). Amateur quality (see Chapter 3.5), spontaneity (see below) and non-professionalism (see Chapter 1.1) were included to bolster the credibility of amateur photographs used in the professional news media (Pustinen & Seppaenen 2011, p. 190). Thus amateur photographs can also be considered as useful in improving responsible, ethical and trustworthy relationships with audiences (Puustinen & Seppaenen 2011, p. 178; see also Hermida & Thurman 2008; Bowman & Willis 2003; see also Chapter 1.3).

### ***Methods of verifying amateur photographs***

“Truth, proof and belief: the trinity of photographic experience” (Faust 2007, p. 32) cannot be reduced to the amateur or the photographic image itself. These values also apply to the system and the people involved, referring to the credibility and responsibility of professional news media, professional standards (Baradell & Stack 2008, p. 6) and trust or distrust in respective messengers (Pantti & Andén-Papadopoulos 2011, p. 111; see also Ashuri & Pinchevski 2009), as mentioned above. To maintain this trust in the distribution of credible information, news media workers have developed a number of control

mechanisms. For example, several interviewees said they would not use amateur photographs without being able to check the source, get in contact with amateurs, and clear the rights, which can be challenging with amateur material (Dietrich 2010, interview; Krug & Wellnitz 2010, interview; Lucy 2010, interview). Ellen Dietrich, picture editor of the German weekly paper *Die Zeit*, for example, referred to a picture of a supermarket found online. According to her it was not possible to identify the source, which was the reason the picture was not selected for publication. In an urgent case, Dietrich said that she would write an email to the person and offer a royalty. "Therefore, we at least have the ability to say that we tried to get in contact." Only very rarely, she said, would she publish a picture by a person who did not get back to her (Dietrich 2010, interview). While statements like these must be critically scrutinised, they indicate that standards of tight control and high ethical principles are not just a matter of trust in sources, but also of trust in professional news media essential to protect the brand of high-quality news media outlets (Dietrich 2010, interview).

The production manager of the Melbourne-based magazine *The Monthly*, Michael Lucy, spoke of a "solid effort to contact people." Referring to a landscape photograph captured in Papua New Guinea, he said that he contacted the author of the picture via email and through this conversation "had the impression" that it was a reliable source. Lucy said: "Generally we take people's word for it, that it was taken where it was taken" (2010, interview). His statements show that control mechanisms are in place. Comparable to the above interviewee, they also demonstrate the challenges of verifying the credibility of unknown sources, the need for a certain degree of trust and the limits of email conversation.

Some professional news workers also apply digital forensics to the sourcing of amateur photographs, a field that has emerged in recent years "to help restore some trust to digital images" (Farid 2009, p. 16). For example, photographs at the *BBC* are generally checked to find if image-editing software has been used, as picture editor Coomes explained (2010, interview). Other interviewees said that photographs would only occasionally be examined, depending on the case, the circumstances and the content (Gambarini 2010, interview; Henningham 2010, interview). While the reasons for the latter were either resources or need (Burton 2010, interview; Henningham 2010, interview), interviewees also spoke of the

lack of capacity of such technologies (Coomes 2010, interview; Henningham 2010, interview). The ability of photo manipulation software to determine the truthfulness of amateur photographs was challenged by some interviewees. “You kind of get an idea if it’s an original picture at least,” Coomes said (2010, interview). Hence the use of anti-manipulation software to verify the credibility of amateur photographs is only seen as an addition that needs to be combined with other methods. Interviewees said that beside the effort to contact people (see above), these methods include checking the meta-information of digital pictures such as date, time, location and camera type, cross-referencing facts and information, or using reference photographs (Coomes 2010, interview; Dietrich 2010, interview; Krug & Wellnitz, interview, 2010; Lucy 2011, interview; Munthe 2010, interview; Peled 2011, interview; Seewald 2010, interview). Concerning the latter, interviewees referred to the possible large number of existing amateur photographs that can strengthen the credibility of a photograph. One interviewee observed that while additional photographs might also not be verifiable, having a number of related photographs would increase the reliability (Fischmann 2010, interview).

### ***Speed and the appearance of authenticity***

Interviewees also believed that photographs were likely to be trustworthy on the basis of promptness and appearance. When people distribute photographs immediately after they are taken, and when such pictures convey certain content criteria, they are used without the application of extensive control mechanisms.

Henningham, picture editor at *The Age*, stated:

“With a car accident or weather picture you wouldn’t be bothered. You would look at it and think: That looks pretty legit, because you can often tell by the look of the photo” (2010, interview).

His colleague, assistant picture editor Mario Borg, said:

“With the flooding—I didn’t even think that I had to check the pictures because it looked authentic. And it’s so close to the event. It would have been difficult to Photoshop any details there” (2011, interview).

Speaking about the London bombings, Coomes, picture editor at the *BBC*, said: “After a short period it became very obvious what it was” (2010, interview). News agency worker, *DPA* photographer and photo editor Gambarini said that if something happens and he gets amateur photographs immediately, he knows from experience that it is raw material (2010, interview, see Chapter 3.1). Such amateur photographs and other visuals paradoxically appear authentic and are at the same time difficult to verify (Kristensen & Mortensen 2013, p. 356). As news media workers can never be totally sure about the motives of amateurs (cf. Furlan 2012, p. 111), and whether the appearance, content and timeliness of photographs ensure credibility, the conflict is settled by trusting witnesses (Mortensen 2011b, p. 72).

Mette Mortensen writes:

“Even though many methods have been developed for testing and securing the truthfulness of the witness, from calling in more witnesses, to swearing on the Bible, to polygraphs, the disrupted reality is often settled by putting faith in one particular witness” (2011b, p. 72).

Mortensen challenges whether such truth claims are still appropriate at a time when anyone can take and deliver eyewitness images (Mortensen 2011b, p. 72). Yet interviewees repeatedly cited positive experiences with sourcing amateur photographs after significant events such as catastrophes or accidents, and believe that people generally just want to share what has happened. The trust in certain amateur photographs shows that news media workers “have confidence in a source if their prior investment of trust in that source has not been disappointing over a longer period of time” (Renn & Levine 1991, p. 179).<sup>44</sup>

Renn and Levine write:

“If many persons share such a confidence in a communication source, they assign credibility to this source. So we can define credibility as the degree of shared and generalized confidence in a person or institution based on their perceived performance record of trustworthiness” (1991, p. 179).

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<sup>44</sup> Renn and Levine distinguish between confidence and trust, concepts that are widely used synonymously rather than separately, as the authors find (1991, p. 179).

Comparable instances of trusting amateurs can be found in audience studies. Researchers found spontaneity, the lack of skill and the coincidental character of amateur eyewitness photographs as reasons why audiences perceive amateur photographs as trustworthy (Puustinen & Seppaenen 2011, p. 190).

The understanding of amateur eyewitness photographs as visual quotes (see Chapter 3.1) suggests why some news media workers in some cases will not use methods of control. Traditionally, sources in news media have been used to be able to quote people without additional efforts to investigate, as well as to emphasise the credibility of what has been said (Ericson, Baranak & Chan 1989, p. 4). Trust in this case helps to make the processing of information more efficient (Lee, Scheufele & Lewenstein 2005, p. 246). While Lee and colleagues make this statement with reference to “the management of technology-related risks” (Lee, Scheufele & Lewenstein 2005, p. 246), it relates to research, as trust helps news media workers to integrate amateur photographs, and to integrate them more quickly.

### ***Dealing with the consequences... later***

Deadlines, especially the 24-hour deadlines of online publications, undermine high professional standards of control, which may be one reason why some news media in some circumstances publish amateur photographs without following conventional sourcing and publishing processes. Interviewees said that such standards could be challenging to maintain if, for instance, there is a time difference of several hours. For example, an online outlet may want to run a story immediately rather than on the following day (Coomes 2010, interview). One way of dealing with this is to source the photographs first and deal with the consequences later (Borg 2011, interview; Coomes 2010, interview; Dietrich 2010, interview).

Referring to a story on a theme park in China, of which no photograph could be found in a professional picture library, Coomes, picture editor at the *BBC*, said that there was a Flickr member who had a photograph of it:

“So obviously there is a time difference. We wanted to run it now. We didn’t want to run it in 12 hours time. The guy seemed OK. So we took the

picture, credited him, but linked back to his site, emailed him saying we want to use this picture. If you are not happy, we knock it down, if you want payment we pay you. So we do it that way. It doesn't happen very often" (2010, interview).

It could be claimed that practices like these carry the risk of exploitation and can have a negative impact on the trust that audiences might have in professional news media. However, interviewees said they have not usually faced serious consequences, a finding that Singer and colleagues made in relation to user contributions in online newspapers (Singer 2011b, p. 131). Borg, assistant picture editor at *The Age*, said: "It's usually not: 'You used the picture, I want \$1000.' It's usually: '\$100 or nothing.' Obviously the consequences are not that dramatic" (2011, interview). Although the approach of dealing with the consequences later may work with regard to payment, it is controversial whether the approach can or should be applied to the credibility of information. It is questionable whether such methods can truly sustain quality standards in professional news media.

Nevertheless, a fluid approach is required in outlets in which news is expected to be available immediately (see Chapter 3.6). One way of dealing with the requirement for speediness is what Kristensen and Mortensen call "metasourcing." In reference to the breaking news of Gaddafi's arrest and death on 20 October 2011, the researchers show that news media workers include elite sources in the news coverage of sudden events "to comment on, validate and grant legitimacy" to amateur content (Kristensen & Mortensen 2013, p. 353). By combining them with amateur sources, they once again reinforce the interests and routines of the professional news media (Kristensen & Mortensen 2013, p. 365).

### ***Transparency and distance***

Among the methods of using amateur photographs without verifying their truthfulness are the "rituals of transparency" (Karlsson 2010, title), which several authors in recent years have discussed in terms of ethics (Allen 2008; Craft & Heim 2009; Phillips 2010; Plaisance 2007), and which are considered necessary to reinforce the trustworthiness and credibility of journalism (Allan 2006, p. 169;

Pantti & Andén-Papadopoulos 2011, p. 101). According to an analysis of the coverage of the Iranian protests in 2009, news media workers at CNN distinguished between amateur and professional coverage by labelling amateur videos as “unverified material” (Pantti & Andén-Papadopoulos 2011, p. 103). By showing where information comes from and not holding back uncertainties (Pantti & Andén-Papadopoulos 2011, p. 109), professional news media attempt to reduce the risk of lost credibility and inaccuracy. With this they attempt to enhance the ethical principles in the professional news media (Pantti & Andén-Papadopoulos 2011, p. 110), and possibly increase the trust between news media workers and their audiences.

Australian journalist Margo Kingston claims that codes of ethics contribute “little or nothing” to strengthening the relationship between news media workers and audiences, as such documents are not easily accessible or people do not know that codes of ethics exist at all, as I discussed above (2003 p. 163). Surprisingly, several interviewees in my project said either they did not know where to look for the codes of ethics document, or admitted they did not know the wording of it. In starting a web diary that allows instant feedback, Kingston writes that she developed “an honest, open, transparent relationship” with people, and most interestingly also started to trust her readership (2003 p. 163).

Another way to deal with unverified material is the practice of “rhetorical distancing” (Pantti & Andén-Papadopoulos 2011, p. 110), as discussed in Chapter 3.1. It allows the inclusion of unverified material and at the same time reinforces old hierarchies between professionals and amateurs. News media workers clearly have a dominant stance in the context in which they work to decide what or who is credible and what or who is not (Pantti & Andén-Papadopoulos 2011, p. 111). Coomes, picture editor at the BBC, said that rhetorical distance is a common way to use amateur photographs: “You could say Reuters is reporting it or person XY is reporting it, not the BBC is saying it. It’s something we and everyone else does or breaking news situations” (2010, interview). Online publications, especially, allow such distance, as one can link to content rather than include it on a news website (Geraghty 2011).

Transparency and distance indicate an attempt at responsible news content-making. However, from another perspective it could be claimed that transparency and distance also signal the desire to avoid responsibility, as professional news media pass on and circumvent liabilities. In doing so, they shift to their audiences the task of evaluating the value of amateur photographs, and the responsibility for assessing the truth from the professional news media (Pantti & Andén-Papadopoulos 2011, pp. 110-111). While this could be seen as another way to open professional news media practice to a wider range of people, it removes responsibility from news media workers in terms of checking sources and assessing the authenticity of amateur material. Pantti and Andén-Papadopoulos believe that media professionals should be conscious of their position, and hence feel responsible for the critical interpretation of amateur content (2011, p. 111).

### ***What should be shown, what should not***

Trust has been understood in relation to the responsibility of news media workers to inform their audiences truthfully (Coleman, Anthony & Morrison 2009). Accordingly, trust also applies to graphic (confronting or disturbing) photographs, and to the decisions over what content should be selected and shown and what should not. Several interviewees in my research tended to distance themselves from graphic images and spoke of the challenge of using disturbing content in the same breath as the challenges of sourcing amateur photographs. They referred to photographs of violence and moments of death, as well as to pictures considered in bad taste (Coomes 2010, interview; Dietrich 2010, interview; Peled 2011, interview; Richardson 2010, interview). In providing examples, such as the photographs of abuse at the Abu Ghraib prison (Griffin 2012, p. 174), and the photograph of the murdered Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh, academics have also recognised the ethically-questionable nature of amateur photographs and the difficulties in dealing with them (Becker 2011, p. 34; Griffin 2012, p. 174; Pantti & Bakker 2009, p. 472).

Authors perceived the closeness to the event of some amateur material in opposition to the distance that is a characteristic of professional news content-making (Allan 2006, p. 109; see also Matheson & Allan 2006; see Chapter 3.1). As “detached observers” (Rubinstein & Sluis 2008, p. 11), professional news

photographers are believed to have incorporated the notion of distance into their praxis. In particular, the use of heavy camera equipment and long lenses creates “a physical separation between subject and object” (Rubinstein & Sluis 2008, p. 11). Amateur photographs are believed to violate this distance (Becker 2011, p. 27), as they either know their subjects or simply do not follow conventions of professional news media practice. Therefore amateur photographs are characterised by a certain closeness (Pantti & Bakker 2009, p. 478), which is also a quality for which professional news media strive (Becker 2011, p. 28; see Chapter 3.2). However, the border between ‘too close’ and ‘proper distance’ is an ethical consideration that must be re-negotiated each time new content is created (Becker 2011, p. 28). The potentially-graphic content of amateur photographs both serves and contradicts the same content characteristics that professional news media value in photographs.

Referring to this issue, interviewee Coomes, said:

“Obviously, those pictures have always been out there on the web. You can go out and look for them, but it becomes a different matter when you publish them on a mainstream website, as we are obviously publishing it as the BBC putting its weight behind it” (2010, interview).

Similarly, picture editor Dietrich defended the high ethical standards that the German weekly newspaper *Die Zeit* applies (2010, interview). Other interviewees justified the sourcing of amateur photographs if they had already been published elsewhere or if they are considered as especially newsworthy. Furthermore, it was noted that ethical standards are lower if the subject is more foreign (Dietrich 2010, interview; see also Sontag 2003, p. 62). Above examples, such as the widely-cited pictures of the Abu Ghraib prison, confirm the latter claim. They also suggest that graphic amateur photographs come through the back door of the online environment into professional news media and thus lower the barriers of what is ethically acceptable. The debate is over whether graphic amateur photographs should be used because they are available (Pantti & Bakker 2009, p. 472) or should be rejected, as they might not meet the standards of professional news media. However, at the same time this question is peculiar, since news photographers have always captured the horrors of the world. The “iconography of suffering” has long trajectories in visual art (Sontag 2003, p.

40) that move far beyond the history of photography and the professional news media. Pictures of death or the moment when someone is “about to die” (Zelizer 2010, cover), such as the photograph of the shooting of a Vietcong in the streets of Saigon, are among the most famous and most published photographs of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Sontag 2003, p. 59). Graphic photographs are considered important (Zelizer 2010, pp. 28-75) to gain people’s attention (Sontag 2003, p. 18) or to influence public opinion (Hoy 2005, p. 145). They are believed to sell news (Belt & Just 2008, p. 194; Sontag 2003, p. 18; see also Kerbel 2000), as people are thought to have a desire to look at graphic photographs (Sontag 2003, p. 41). News photography has also been criticised for its distressing content (Hoy 2005, p. 145). For example, Sontag challenges the capture and publication of graphic photographs, and asks if they are truly necessary and helpful in understanding what happened (Sontag 2003, p. 91). Authors also point out that “concerned photography has done at least as much to deaden conscience as to arouse it,” (Sontag 1977, p. 21) and note that photographs in professional news media and beyond “contribute to ‘compassion fatigue’ in a media-saturated world” (Hoy 2005, p. 145). Although media scholars revive such complex ethical issues in relation to the sourcing of amateur photographs, they often do not acknowledge that this applies to photography more generally.

A number of interviewees also spoke of legal restrictions and security issues involved in the sourcing amateur photographs (Burton 2010, interview; Richardson 2010, interview). Nick Richardson, group news editor at the *Leader Community Newspapers*, for example, mentioned a picture that was taken out of a moving car. According to him, a cyclist went through a red light. A driver who witnessed this incident drove alongside the cyclist, wound down the window and pointed out to the cyclist that he had actually gone through a red light. The photograph, captured by the driver with his mobile phone, showed a cyclist with raised middle finger. Richardson said: “I was shown this photograph and was asked what I thought of that, whether we should publish it online or not. My view was that it was not helpful” (2010, interview). His reason for not publishing the photograph was that the person who took and sent in the photograph was breaking the road rules and putting both himself and others in a dangerous situation. “In fact, the mobile phone, the very thing that he used to capture the image, was the thing that actually invalidated the use of the photograph”

Richardson said (2010, interview). While according to him amateur photographs like this do not come in often, he said that legal and safety issues are some of the factors that editors consider when using or rejecting amateur photographs (Richardson 2010, interview). His statement illustrates once again the distrust in amateurs and the unwillingness of news media workers to take responsibility for them.

In the context of such ethical concerns, several interviewees said that they actually do not want to encourage people, or they want to encourage people only at specific times and in specific areas of news content-making. This can be understood as another attempt by news media workers to keep control over amateur photographs and to defend professional territory. *Leader* online journalist Burton spoke about this issue with reference to a stabbing in Melbourne in April 2010. Burton said: "We don't want to necessarily encourage people getting photographs of this event and sending it to everyone" (2010, interview).

Interviewee Coomes admitted:

"It's a quite tight line. We are quite careful with what we do, partly for rights, partly for people's safety. And the last thing you want is people going off taking these pictures, partly because journalists can do this job" (2010, interview).

Once again these statements demonstrate the concerns involved in sourcing amateur photographs, the value placed on the professional approach and the importance attributed to the skills, knowledge and expertise of trained photographers.

## **Conclusion**

The professional news media is inclined to trust certain amateur photographs that capture unforeseen incidents, such as accidents, that are submitted in a timely manner. Nevertheless, there is a general mistrust in amateur photographs, and a preconception that amateurs do not conform to the standards of the news industry. In fact, concerns and reservations were expressed louder and more frequently, including distrust in relation to the ambiguity and manipulability of photography. Several methods, from the application of picture manipulation software to communication with sources, were used within newsrooms to evaluate the trustworthiness of amateur material. However, the least time-consuming and elaborate method is trust in non-official sources, and in the material they provide to professional news media. Thus the chapter has also shown that news media workers renegotiate whether and when to trust amateurs and when they believe it is possible to lower control mechanisms.

As this research was conducted at the time of a rapidly-changing media landscape, the unsettled and partly-contradictory views and practices demonstrate that news media workers are still trying to figure out how to deal with amateur photographs. A certain degree of distrust and control might be necessary. The articulation of distrust could also be read as an attempt to defend professional territory and to legitimate the professional news media system, as scholars such as Brown and colleagues note with reference to the limited diversity of news sources in journalism (Brown et al. 1987, p. 53).

In the next chapter, I discuss how the preconception with picture quality reinforces professional structures and standards, and counteracts the rise of amateur photography in the professional news media.

### **3.5 The importance of quality for the sourcing of amateur photographs**

*“Not anyone can produce a photo that involves you in an issue emotionally or that captures your attention and makes you want to look at it again, stare at it. That’s the benefit of having someone with a very specific skill set; you can elicit emotions from people and capture them on film or digital media. And in very brief space be able to bring out a story that they might not be able to do themselves in that amount of room. That’s why you need a professional doing it,” (Crossthwaite 2010, interview).*

Part of the sourcing practice is the attempt to control the quality of news media content (Singer 2010). For sourcing of amateur photographs this means that photographs must fulfil specific standards if they are to be used in professional news media. These standards include news value, credibility and ethics, as described in previous chapters of this thesis (see Chapters 3.2; 3.3; 3.4). Standards also relate to the quality of images and thus to the technical and artistic aspects of photography. In this chapter I will explore the value of poor-quality photographs in certain parts of the professional news and the view that such images can be good enough for some purposes. At the same time, news media workers expressed strong reservations towards incorporating poor-quality photographs, reinforcing the persistence of the distinction between amateur (=poor quality) and professional (=high quality) photography. It should be questioned whether such findings manifest necessary quality standards or if they are claims to defend the “privileged position” (Rennie 2006, p. 89) of professional news media.

#### ***Poor versus high quality***

Interviewees in my research spoke of the significance of content such as unpredictable newsworthy events in deciding which amateur photographs are relevant for professional news media (see Chapters 3.2; 3.3). At the same time, they repeatedly addressed the relevance of technical parameters and good-

looking images, suggesting that aesthetic quality<sup>45</sup> plays a major role in the valuation, selection and rejection of amateur photographs. By 'good' they mean that photographs must fulfil technical standards, which partly originated in the requirements of the printing process and in the use of certain camera equipment. Griffin shows that the photographic manufacturers (such as Eastman Kodak), camera clubs and amateur associations "have worked to shape mainstream notions of what constitutes 'good' photography" (Griffin 1987, abstract). 'Good' in an aesthetic sense describes photographs that are pleasing to look at (Datta et al. 2006, p. 288).

Alongside the subjective factors that define what this means, there exist principles commonly identified as essential to producing appealing photographs (Eric de Mare, cited in Evans 1978, p. 88), and to telling the stories better, as some news media workers claim (Evans 1978, p. 130). Participants in photography workshops and online forums discuss technical and artistic features extensively, and a wide range of textbooks, photo catalogues and exhibitions present prizewinning photographs to illustrate what a good photograph is.

Interviewees mostly discussed the quality of amateur photographs in contrast with such ideas. They frequently referred to the low quality of amateur photographs while talking about professionally-produced photographs. Generally professional photographs were praised and described as having "a magical, mystical quality that is impossible to fully grasp," as Cuddy expresses (2012, p. 95). In contrast, amateur photographs are usually described as aesthetically poor and "in terms of what it is not—not sophisticated, not technically adept, not pretty or polished [...]" (Fox 2004, p. 5). Interviewees either noted the lack of technical standards (Harris 2010, interview; Lensch 2010, interview; Peled 2011, interview)

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<sup>45</sup> Quality is a highly "subjective term for which each person or sector has its own definition" (ASQ, Quality Glossary 2013). According to ASQ, the American Society of Quality, quality means: "1. the characteristics of a product or service that bear on its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs; 2. a product or service free of deficiencies" (ASQ Quality Glossary 2013). Juran, author of several books on quality and quality management, writes that quality means "fitness for use" (cited in Davidson 1995, p. 102; see also ASQ Quality Glossary 2013). Crosby, another representative of this field, uses the term 'quality' in terms of "conformance to requirements" (cited in Davidson 1995, p. 102; ASQ Quality Glossary 2013).

or spoke of the unaesthetic appearance of amateur photographs (Levy 2010, email; Sonntag 2010, interview; Seewald 2010, interview). Technical effects such as noise, fuzziness or blurring, red eyes or distortions were considered to be errors that require correction (see also Long & Currie 2006, p. 102) and were pointed out as reasons for rejecting amateur photographs. Thus different aesthetics and variations from professional news media standards led to the exclusion of amateur photographs (cf. Rennie 2006, p. 88).

Some interviewees also acknowledged the competence of professional amateurs who share with professional photographers the enthusiasm for photography and the aim for high quality (see Chapter 1.1; see below). Others spoke of increasing picture quality due to improvements in digital cameras. However, none of the interviewees questioned whether professional photographs are generally better or whether they may not be clearly distinguishable from amateur photographs. “You immediately see the difference,” picture editor Volker Lensch at the magazine *Der Stern* said (2010, interview).

Interviewee *Leader* editor Belinda Mackowski said:

“These professional photos look better than some supplied photos. [...] I mean they are always better quality and we have control over what is in the image and matching it with the story the reporter is working on. They know what it’s going to look like and who’s in it, as well as the quality of the actual image in reproduction. They never look as good in the paper as when taken with the equipment that our photographers have. And I guess they are trained to know the specifications needed for newsprint, whereas in your general point and shoot it never looks as good” (2010, interview).

Likewise, former *UPI* staff member Jim Hubbard referred to the poor quality of amateur photographs when talking about the sourcing of amateur photographs from a historical perspective. To explain this he referred to the coverage of a plane that crashed while landing during a storm in St Louis, *Missouri*, in the United States in the early 1970s.

Hubbard remembered:

“Dozens of passengers were killed and when I arrived at the scene, I took photographs and looked for other photographers who may have arrived moments after the crash. I found one who happened to be driving by when the plane crashed. He gave me a roll of film and I took it with me back to the office and processed his along with mine. His were mostly out of focus and not compositionally acceptable. This wasn't always the case with amateurs but not unusual. As it turned out, even though I arrived later than the amateur to the scene, my images showed the death and destruction necessary to convey the essence of the story” (2011, email).

With demoting the quality of amateur photographs, interviewees heightened the professional approach (see also Rennie 2006, pp. 88-89). To distinguish amateur from professional, academic literature also refers to the poor quality of amateur content (Luo & Tang 2008; Niekamp 2010; 2011; Niu & Liu 2012). Niekamp, for example, points out that the quality of amateur videos is “far below the standards that viewers are used to” (2011, p. 125). Referring to public service broadcasting, Rennie suggests that professional media should not have a privileged position due to some “preconceived associations with quality, democracy and citizenship.” Rather, Rennie states that it “should be seen in the context of the media ecology within which it exists” (2006, p. 89).

While there is a body of research on content quality in the professional news media,<sup>46</sup> only a few studies (Niekamp 2010; 2011; Roberts & Dickson 1984<sup>47</sup>) address the subject of picture quality (Niekamp 2011, p. 117). This gap suggests that media scholars either attach less significance to the aesthetic quality of photographs and other pictures or have not really found a way to frame it as a relevant component of professional news media content. Research on sources and sourcing practices also largely ignores how information is provided, despite

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<sup>46</sup> For example, journalism researchers consider the relationship between low quality and media consolidation (Alger 1998) and low quality and profit-making (Hamilton 2004) claiming that “soft news and critical journalism are shrinking the news audience and weakening democracy” (Patterson 2000, thesis title). Others point out the importance of quality in order to sustain the professional news media content (Smith 2008; Belt & Just 2008).

<sup>47</sup> Roberts and Dickson (1984) assess the quality of local TV news. Niekamp (2011) analyses the quality of amateur eyewitness videos.

the fact that sources are not only quoted for the information they convey, but also for the ability to do this in an interesting and articulate way (Ethical issues related to sources 2013).

In recent years subject areas such as engineering and computer science have shown interest in the theme of picture quality, attempting to find automatic ways to distinguish “between aesthetically pleasing and displeasing images” (Datta et al. 2006, p. 288). For example, it is possible to define visual parameters that influence whether a picture is generally perceived as “aesthetically beautiful” (Datta et al. 2006, p. 288; see below). Another project focuses on visual properties to automatically distinguish between professional and amateur photography (Luo & Tang 2008; Niu & Liu 2012; Xue et al. 2012; Yeh et al. 2009;), referring to the “discriminating power” of features such as colour histograms, spatial edge distribution, and repetition (Xue et al. 2012). Niu and Liu investigated “What makes a professional video?” and in an experimental setup measured image features (concerning the frames) and temporal features (concerning the motion of a video) to grasp what ‘professional’ means. The researchers use these features based on the conventions of photography and cinematography as well as on the assumption of high (=professional) and poor (=amateur) quality. As a result Niu and Liu are able to classify more than 90% of videos correctly (Niu & Liu 2012, p. 1037). Such findings demonstrate that the distinction between professional and amateur is still relevant and challenges assumptions about the blurring of those categories. They reinforce the relevance of professional conventions and the power of beautiful images.

The perception of poor quality applies not only to amateur photographs, but is symptomatic of attitudes towards amateur content more generally. For example, according to Manosevitch, editors in Israel see user contributions such as comments “as a necessary evil” and expressed “negative assessments of the quality of comments found in Israeli major newspaper websites,” (Manosevitch 2011, p. 427). A questionnaire-based analysis demonstrated that journalists in the UK and Ireland understood the quality of amateur content generally as lower than the content that professionals are able to produce (Singer 2010, p. 133). News media workers usually spoke of the lack of expertise as a reason for this. More than 96% of participants in Singer’s research agreed that journalists have

competencies that people outside the professional news media do not (Singer 2010, p. 137).

Similarly, interviewees in my project made assumptions about ordinary people having insufficient skills to be able to meet the standards of professional news media, and spoke of poor quality due to the lack of skills and/or inadequate camera equipment as major reasons for rejecting amateur photographs (Borg 2011, interview; Fischmann 2010, interview; Lensch 2010, interview; Sonntag 2010, interview). However, the issue of quality relates not only to images, technologies and skills, but also to the service provided by professional photographers. This service includes the ability to meet the expectations of editors to guarantee the delivery of photographs (Sedge 2004 p. 172). Authors who discussed the blurring between professional and amateur in recent years widely ignore the relevance of service, which is an important component of professional news content production.

### ***Good enough quality***

While poor quality is understood as one of the rationales for the rejection of amateur photographs statements by interviewees show that in some cases news media workers considered the aesthetics of amateur photographs as less relevant (Coomes 2010, interview; Borg 2011, interview; Burton 2010, interview). If, for example, something happens that is perceived as especially newsworthy (see Chapter 3.2), quality standards are pushed into the background. “There are times when news value overrides picture quality,” Phil Coomes, picture editor at the *BBC*, said (2010, interview). *Leader* online editor Jon Burton said: “I don’t care about the quality of the photo if the place and time is good enough” (2010, interview).

Photographs of news events such as terrorist attacks are, according to Burton, representative examples of the correlation between high news value and the acceptance of poor-quality amateur photographs in professional news media (Burton 2010, interview). In particular, the uniqueness and rarity of amateur photographs can determine value, reducing the requirement for aesthetic picture quality. Mario Borg, assistant picture editor at *The Age*, stated: “Quality is the

major challenge. If it is the only picture of a very important newsworthy event then it doesn't matter" (2011, interview). "It's not about quality, it's about a big story," Coomes said (2010, interview). This is surely not a new phenomenon, as many examples show throughout the history of news photography.<sup>48</sup> Relatively new is the idea that quality standards traditionally applied to individual photographs are not or not always suitable given the desire for larger numbers of photographs and immediate news (Geraghty 2011, interview; see Chapter 3.6).

In a 2009 article on technology trends, author Robert Capps notes that the majority of today's customers preferred simple and cheap over high quality:

"We now favor flexibility over high fidelity, convenience over features, quick and dirty over slow and polished. Having it here and now is more important than having it perfect. These changes run so deep and wide, they're actually altering what we mean when we describe a product as 'high-quality'" (2009).

Although it is questionable whether we are truly witnessing a general shift from high to low quality, the "good enough" (Capps 2009) notion is demonstrated in the sourcing of amateur photographs in professional news media, valued not necessarily for their technical or aesthetic quality but for their speed, proximity, newsworthiness or rarity (Niekamp 2011, pp. 117-118). Which quality features are important depends on several overlapping factors, such as the role and purpose of amateur photographs, the availability of better photographs, and the context, space and media in which they are published (see Chapters 3.6; 3.7).

While talking about picture quality, many interviewees referred not just to aesthetic elements such as composition, colour and style, but also to the technical parameters of amateur photographs, especially important for the printing process and thus for the selection for specific media outlets (see Chapter 3.6). Some interviewees saw problems in the limited resolution or pre-settings of some consumer-grade cameras. Others referred to the automatic settings of

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<sup>48</sup> Some of the most famous low-quality photographs show the landing of the American soldiers in France in 1944, captured by war photographer Robert Capa (for example Rudner 1981). They were valued because of the significance of the moment they captured.

some email programs that resize photographs when an email is sent. Others spoke more generally about the lack of knowledge of the processing of digital images (Harris 2010, interview; Peled 2010, interview). All emphasised these technique-related concerns as among the challenges of working with amateur photographs. Although digital technology is widely accessible and the general resolution of cameras high, the degree of automation and the lack of knowledge about the processing of digital photographs raises the barriers of entry once again, and limits the usefulness of amateur photographs in the professional news media.

For example, referring to a snapshot of a whale jumping above a sailing vessel (see Chapter 3.6), Lensch, picture editor of the German magazine *Der Stern*, traditionally known for high-quality photojournalism, spoke about the poor technical quality of the amateur photograph, manifested in the low resolution of the digital file. “That’s just bad quality. But it is a document and sometimes a document is good, too,” Lensch said (2010, interview). According to him, the photograph of the jumping whale was not finally selected for publication in *Der Stern*, partly because of quality reasons, and partly because it had already been shown on a diverse range of media outlets before the weekly magazine was published. Lensch said that otherwise he possibly would have tried to work with the file. Nevertheless, he added “[...] eventually we probably would have dropped it due to the quality” (2010, interview).

This ambivalence is typical of the sourcing of amateur photographs in professional news media, which is characterised by a general perception that amateur photographs are of poor quality, as well as by contradictory statements about what this means for the selection or rejection of amateur photographs. The example also points to different quality standards in print and online media, as further discussed in Chapter 3.6. Additionally, it indicates that the gatekeeping role of news media workers is still in place to control quality, as suggested by Singer in the context of online journalism (Singer 2005). However, the shift from print to digital, the demand for more photographs (see Chapter 3.6), the changes in who is processing pictures (see Chapter 3.3) and audience perceptions can overturn the impact of such attitudes and practices.

### ***Quite decent photographs***

As shown above, amateur photographs were commonly identified as being of poor-quality images. Other interviewees admitted that this perception is not necessarily right (Allchin 2010, interview; Corless 2010, interview). *Leader* editor Blair Corless said: “You are obviously aware of the quality of these photos because some of them aren’t as good, but some are quite decent photos,” (2010, interview). Media scholar Niekamp notes in her investigations on amateur video that though the quality of amateur photographs is largely low, the quality varies widely between nearly professional and “home movie feel” (2011, pp. 115-116).

One reason for this contrasting perception is the wide scope of the concept, which includes professional amateurs as well as random snappers with very different prerequisites for taking images, as well as in the unintentional nature of snapshot photography, which under some circumstances can lead to quite decent or even iconic photographs (see Chapter 1.1). A further reason is in the improvement of camera technology, which, in contrast to claims about the celebration of imperfection (Ritzenhoff 2008, p. 139; see below), is usually seen in relation to better picture quality (Murray 2008, p. 160; see Chapter 1.1). Thirdly, the varying perspectives of different news media workers must be taken into account (see Chapter 3.3). While photo editors and photographers showed strong interest in the technical and artistic sides of photographs, interviewees who did not specialise in photography generally spoke of content-related themes such as news value and spoke less expertly about the aesthetics of photographs. Thus individual competencies and priorities influence the valuation of amateur photographs (see also Datta et al. 2006). The presence and visibility of photographs taken carelessly and/or with a simple camera also suggests a growing acceptance of poor-quality amateur photographs by the professional news media.

Interviewee *Panos Pictures* editor David Arnott said:

“Maybe because we are used to seeing video grabs and mobile phone pictures being published over two pages in a magazine, we are used to seeing technically poor-quality, blurry, out of focus—what we could call bad pictures. I think the audience is more used to technically bad images” (2010, interview).

Hence the quality properties of amateur photographs relate not only to professional standards of picture publishing, but also to the needs, wishes and expectations of audiences. Audiences are believed to consist largely of people who worry less about how photographs look and more about the content they convey and the personal value they possess (Walker & Kimball Moulton 1989, p. 157). Apart from the group of professional amateurs, their photographs are commonly not “a statement about technical competence and artistic sensibility, but rather to document and preserve a moment and a feeling, to embody a memory” (Walker & Kimball Moulton 1989, p. 157). Authors also suggest a shift in the understanding of good photographs (Cooley 2004; Murray 2008). For example, Murray shows that the ability to comment on photographs on photo-sharing and social networking sites influences what is recognised as good photography (2008, p. 158). Looking at the case of Flickr, Murray notes that people reward each other for their photographs regardless of professional standards. According to her analysis, mobile phone pictures “can be just as valued—or sometimes even more so—than one taken with a professional quality camera” (Murray 2008, p. 159). Photographs are picked out for being unique, funny, quirky or beautiful, but may also be praised for less-visible reasons. Even when photographs appear mundane they can still be valued, perhaps for their very ordinariness (Murray 2008, pp. 158-159). Photographs that are uploaded onto the internet invite us to rethink expectations of photographs in the professional news. Informed by the aesthetics of printed publications, they are now strongly influenced by the ephemeral nature of online content (Cooley 2004, p. 66). Thus it must be examined whether the practice of sharing and commenting on photographs online generates a different aesthetic and shifts old limits of judgment (Murray 2008, p. 158), consequently changing the way we see the world through media over time.

Referring to the low digital video quality in Michael Haneke’s film *Hidden*, media scholar Karen Ritzenhoff writes: “Instead of celebrating perfection, as a society we are celebrating amateurishness and imperfection” (2008, p. 139; see also Niekamp 2011, p. 118). According to Ritzenhoff, this points to a paradigm shift, not just in terms of how we use camera technology, but also in the aesthetics of imagery (2008, p. 136; see also Niekamp 2011, p. 118). If so, it can be assumed that in the context of professional news media, we will see increasing openness

towards photographs that do not meet traditional standards and hence to more openness towards the sourcing of amateur photographs.

### ***The value of authenticity***

Low-quality photographs such as the blurry, low-resolution photographs of the London bombings in 2005 were valued because of their rarity. It could be assumed that if there had been better-quality photographs taken by professionals, they would likely have been chosen instead of these poor-quality amateur photographs. However, the poor quality of eyewitness photographs has become a feature that in itself projects the idea of authenticity anchored in the history of amateur photography (Berger 2009; Pantti & Bakker 2009), and appealing to the news media professional's aim for credibility (Singer & Ashman 2009, p. 235).

Authenticity is concerned with a range of complex and partly-conflicting topics including authorship and subjectivity, originality and self-expression, notions of folklore, truthfulness, as well as autonomy and independence (Weisethaunet & Lindberg 2010). For example, amateur photographs such as those taken in German concentration camps by anonymous witnesses in 1945 were understood as more convincing and legitimate than the "better" pictures taken by professional photographers (Sontag 2003, p. 77). One reason given was the material itself, since it is believed that an "amateurish snapshot-like quality" gives amateur photographs a level of credibility that professional pictures would not have had (Berger 2009, p. 35; see Chapter 3.4). Sontag speaks in this context about "anti-art-style", which gives the impression that such photographs are less manipulative (Sontag 2003, p. 27).

The concept of authenticity has been used to describe the value of poor-quality pictures taken by non-professional photographers that appear in the news media (Pantti & Bakker 2009; Puustinen & Seppaenen 2011). News media workers praise amateur photographs "for being more 'authentic' than professional photography," and assume that they "offer special value to the audience" (Pantti & Baker 2009, p. 486).

Coomes said about the London underground photographs sourced by the *BBC*:

“They were atmospheric pictures. And probably if they had been pin sharp and made with flash, looking great, they wouldn't have the same power, because you would just think that it is just an evacuation that happens from time to time. These images had the kind of immediacy and fear” (2010, interview).

Media scholar Stuart Allan observes also that news media workers have started to value the “dim, grainy and shaky” aesthetic of amateur photographs (Allan 2009, p. 29) and referred to the “eerie, even claustrophobic quality” of the London underground pictures including stills and video (Allan 2006, p. 152; Allan 2009, p. 29). Others write of a “rough unpretentious look” (Lorenzo-Dus & Bryan 2011, p. 29) that presents amateur photographs as pure (Berger 2009, p. 40) and unmediated (Lorenzo-Dus & Bryan 2011, p. 29), and provides a “sense of reality effect” (Pantti & Andén-Papadopoulos 2011, p. 100). Characteristics such as the unconstructed appearance of the image, the unusual framing, the unsteadiness of the camera, and the embodied presence of amateur photographers (Pantti 2013a) all contribute to the authentic look of amateur eyewitness photographs that are used in the media to cover events such as disasters, wars or uprisings (Pantti 2013a, p. 202).

Authenticity is discussed in a number of media-affiliated research fields, including photography (Berger 2009), film (Govedić 2002), video (Dovey 1994), music (Weisethaunet & Lindberg 2010), reality TV (Aslama & Pantti 2006; Holmes 2004; Andrejevic 2002) and education (Marinell 2008), as well as art (Lloyd Jones & Lamb 2010) and marketing (Beverland 2009). Research on amateur photographs in professional news media is only rarely linked to such disciplines and historical trajectories.

The value of authenticity stems partly from the aesthetics of poor-quality photographs and the evidential purpose of photographs in professional news media. Furthermore, authors note the “experiential quality” (Weisethaunet & Lindberg 2010, p. 466) demonstrated by the “heightened emotional impact” (Niekamp 2011, p. 118) or “emotional engagement” (Williams, Wahl-Jorgensen & Wardle 2011, p. 207), believed to be caused by “looking through the eyes” of affected bystanders rather than distant news media workers (Williams, Wahl-

Jorgensen & Wardle 2011, p. 207; see also Pantti & Bakker 2009, p. 483). Audiences identify amateur photographs as “more real and less packaged than news produced solely by journalists” (Williams, Wahl-Jorgensen & Wardle 2011, p. 195) and trust amateur eyewitness photographs, as they are believed to “provide immediate and authentic testimony” (Puustinen & Seppaenen 2011, p. 189; see Chapter 3.4).

It is possible that news media workers primarily repeat what Adorno called the “jargon of authenticity” (cited in Weisethaunet & Lindberg 2010, p. 466) and that authenticity may be an excuse to source and use photographs that do not match professional quality standards, at times necessary to satisfy the demand for more images (see Chapter 3.6). However, the value of authenticity is also part of the freedom, independence and autonomy (Weisethaunet & Lindberg 2010) of amateurs who do not need to take photographs with the quality standards of professional news media in mind. While in the context of ethics this freedom has been often considered as problematic (see Chapter 3.4), in terms of aesthetics it can be understood partly as valuable.

Authors also speak about the subject of folkloric authenticity (Weisethaunet & Lindberg, p. 469) reflected in the “spirit of the people” (Herder, cited in Weisethaunet & Lindberg, p. 469) and “home-made feel” (Niekamp 2011, p. 118) of amateur photographs, which allow people to relate to and identify with professional news media. This identification is important to establish strong reader loyalty, to signal zeitgeist, to demonstrate proximity to audiences and to remain relevant. Leigh Henningham, picture editor at the newspaper *The Age*, believes that amateur photographs make a professional news media outlet “look lively” and “in touch with their readers.” Nevertheless, he insisted that such photographs must be “good” (Henningham 2010, interview). While identification is a necessary task, news media outlets also need to be attractive and inviting to look at.

### ***The separation of beauty and truth***

The authentic look of poor-quality photographs can also be seen in contrast to the artificiality of high-quality photography (cf. Weisethaunet & Lindberg 2010, p.

473). The emergence of photojournalism is closely linked with the development of amateur photography, in particular to hand-held cameras and snapshot style (see Chapters 1.1; 1.2). Yet, several authors agree that professional photographers generally tend to “strive for purity of expression” (Walker & Kimball Moulton 1989, p. 157) and embrace “the stylistic and compositional canons of the established visual arts” (Walker & Kimball Moulton 1989, p. 156; see also Bowers 2008). Hence, the concept of authenticity can be seen within the postmodernist critique of the relationship between beauty and the representation of reality (Berger 2009, p. 43), especially noted in the presentation of pain and suffering (Sontag 2003, pp. 75-76). For example, the Brazilian-born photographer Sebastião Salgado has been frequently attacked for creating beautiful photographs (Sontag 2003, p. 78).

Harold Evans observes:

“Nihilists in some American circles in the 1970s contend that ‘one news picture of an event must always be very much like another’,” arguing that the “composition can only weaken its raw honesty” (1978, p. 4).

Writer and artist Martha Rosler declares that photojournalism is “concerned with the illuminated presentation of social and historical situations and events in which the marks of the creator are secondary to the information itself” (cited in Weinberg 1986, p. 31). Kester demands “a core of authentic practice in documentary” (cited in Strauss 2005, p. 8). All these statements suggest that beauty stands in the way of social and documentary photography (Strauss 2005, pp. 3-11). “The idea that the more transformed or ‘aestheticized’ an image is, the less ‘authentic’ or politically valuable it becomes, is one that needs to be seriously questioned” Strauss writes (2005, p. 9). Thus authentic-looking photographs are not necessarily “an honest visual record” as Zakia claims in an article on snapshot photography (2007, p. 349). David Levi Strauss stresses that pictures are always a form of representation and a form of aestheticisation. Even if photographs are not consciously composed, there is no visual content without a form.

Strauss writes:

“To represent is to aestheticize; that is to transform. It presents a vast field of choices but it does not include the choice not to transform, not to change or alter whatever is being represented” (2005, p. 9).

The discussion about the aesthetic quality and authenticity of amateur photographs in professional news media is not necessarily a controversy about style, but about the belief in the modernist separation between beauty—manifested in art and entertainment—and truth—manifested in science and journalism (Hartely & Rennie 2004, p. 461). Hartely and Rennie note that photography, since its invention, has always “remained divided between aesthetics and realism,” (2004, p. 462). Although they conclude that this division has long become obsolete (Hartely & Rennie 2004, p. 477), the persistent value in the raw look of poor-quality photographs reinforces old rivalries.

### ***The need for beautiful-looking photographs***

Beauty has been closely associated with the practice of art, while visual documentation has been tied to the concept of journalism and, as part of it, to the concept of objectivism, as discussed in Chapter 1.2. However, it has been noted that news photographers are also influenced by notions of artistic aesthetics, and even make reference to specific paintings (Bowers 2008). While this influence has always existed, interviewees said that professional photographers are now not only allowed to use artistic methods, but are also expected to produce beautiful photographs. This expectation of being able to inform as well as to please the eye (Datta et al. 2006, p. 288) is the domain of professional photography. Maurizio Gambarini, photographer and picture editor at the news agency *DPA*, said that in the past it was enough for something to have been captured. Today, it is still important that something has been captured; at the same time it should be captured beautifully (Gambarini 2010, interview).

It could be claimed that the sourcing of poor-quality photographs led to the need for photographers to stand out, and to the expectation that they will produce photographs that can be clearly distinguished from photographs taken by ordinary people. While I have argued that the value of poor-quality photographs in the context of witnessing expresses old rivalries between beauty and the

representation of reality, the production of pleasing-looking photographs in the professional news media also shows that news photography has liberated itself from aesthetic doctrines. From another perspective, it could also be questioned whether professionally-produced photographs have lost their status as representing reality, which is now captured by amateur photographers.

Interviewees spoke of the importance of beauty and high technical quality on the front or cover pages of professional news media outlets. They referred to it with respect to the roles of photographs in the professional news media such as attention-seeking, design and branding (French 2010, interview; Seewald 2010, interview; Sonntag 2010, interview; see Chapter 1.2).

Interviewee David Geraghty, photographer at *The Australian*, said:

“There is still a demand that the front page picture gets taken to go with the story or the person who is the subject to the story and that it is done really well and it’s got to be good. It’s got to be the first thing when you walk into a newsagency everyday. It’s obviously different when general news is happening, but it’s very rare that an amateur photograph is used. Occasionally, yes, because it’s outstanding” (2011, interview).

Quality newspapers in Scandinavia often publish “aesthetically pleasing and enigmatic photographs that dominate the whole page” (Åker 2012, p. 325). Åker suggests that “large photographs on front pages point towards a modernist tradition in journalism where the newspaper acts as an authoritative voice, a mediator and interpreter of the outside world” (Åker 2012, p. 325). While Åker sees the otherness of such aesthetically-pleasing photographs as a reaction to tabloid media, it could also be seen as a way to distinguish the professional approach from amateur photography.

My research suggests that amateur photographs are selected for cover pages when they are considered especially important, such as in the case of Gaddafi’s death (Pollard 2011). Yet several interviewees assumed that the brand would suffer if professional news media used too many amateur photographs or used them too often. Therefore it can be argued that amateur photographs are understood as a risk that must be minimised to preserve standards in the

professional news media. Henningham, picture editor at *The Age*, said: “[...] The reputation of *The Age* is one of the most vital that *The Age* has. We are trying to protect it very hard” (2010, interview). Similarly, David Crossthwaite, editor of the *Diamond Valley Leader* in Melbourne, said that amateur photographs “are not doing anything to enhance the reputation of the paper” as they are “not showcasing the ability of a professional photographer” (2010, interview).

Quality standards in the professional news media limit the access of amateurs (Rennie 2006, p. 88), which is arguably important if the media are to fulfil their role in democratic societies. Zaller challenges the need for high quality for the role of journalism in a society, and discusses the quality standards by which news should be judged. He sees “informational needs of self-governance”, as well as “feasibility” and “critical potential” as the three general elements of news quality (Zaller 2003, pp. 111-112). With respect to the sourcing of amateur photographs, such high standards may not be necessary to the professional news media’s democratic role, but have more to do with the attempt to appear appealing, proficient and qualified. These latter characteristics are vital to protect the privileged position of once, and sometimes still, trusted news media outlets. As professional news media now need to measure up to a wide range of content and are in a state of re-invention, this suggests that they not only reluctantly open up, but are also working to strengths.

One of these strengths is the ability of certain professional photographers to produce informative, beautiful, eye-catching photographs that help to make professional news media more attractive. However, the number of photographers has fallen in recent years (Lensch 2010, interview). Furthermore, while the search for perfection and craftsmanship remains, amateur photographs offer “qualities that compensate for their apparent imperfection,” as Rubinstein and Sluis write (2008, p. 13). Accordingly, amateur photographs could be judged on the basis of qualities that do not necessarily need to correlate with the high standards of professional photography.

## ***Conclusion***

News media workers use the issue of quality to defend the position and role of the system for which they work. At the same time the aesthetics of poor-quality pictures have become increasingly valued in the attempt to produce authentic news. This suggests that quality standards in professional news media have partly dropped, most likely due to mundane aspects of professional news media practice, such as the demand for more pictures, rather than to allow access to non-professionals. The tendency to source poor-quality amateur photographs in the context of witnessing, the use of amateur photographs recognised as “good enough” and the parallel demand for high-quality photographs also show that the openness to poor-quality photographs has replaced neither the value of high picture quality nor the power of beautiful photographs in the news media. The authority of the professional news media thus remains strong (Singer 2005). In fact, it can be concluded that a certain authority is required to define what quality means (Panzer 2011, p. 50) and when it is important.

In the following chapter, I will discuss the sourcing of amateur photographs in relation to the type of media in which they are used, and demonstrate how news media workers manage content production to ensure the quality of certain sections of the news.

### **3.6 The relevance of amateur photographs for online publishing**

*“You get photos up and give everybody a chance to look at it, but it is low quality, it is fast and it is gone. We handle online different to the paper, there we really want speed while for the paper we certainly look for quality” (French 2010, interview).*

So far this thesis has discussed decisions over the use of amateur photographs in relation to concepts such as quotes, news value, trust and quality. I have shown the choices news media workers make and how they control the use of amateur photographs in the professional news media. In this chapter I examine the decisions over amateur photographs with reference to the type of media in which they are published. Thus the chapter deals with one of the most heavily-debated topics in professional news media in recent years: print versus digital. There is a close relationship between the sourcing of amateur photographs and their use in freely-accessible online news, suggesting a looser relationship between amateur photographs and their use in print media outlets. I discuss some of the characteristics of free online news that have had an impact on the sourcing of amateur photographs and consider why interviewees found amateur photographs more useful for online publications. What do these preferences say about the rise of the amateur and the state of the professional news media in times when media commentators discuss the disappearance of printed news extensively? The chapter proposes that the imbalance between the sourcing of amateur photographs in print and online, or between more exclusive and inclusive news media, indicates that news media workers maintain control over amateur photographs within specific contexts, ensuring that the idea of professionalism in the news carries on.

### ***Print versus online***

Interviewees often said that the news agenda drives if, where, and how amateur photographs are published. At the same time they stressed the close link between the sourcing of amateur photographs and free online news media content. In contrast, print media were understood as more exclusive and less open to amateur photographs, reinforcing that media forms can be a factor in the sources used (Kurpius 2002, p. 854). Some interviewees also spoke of the difference between the sourcing of amateur photographs for online and print to explain why they considered amateur photographs to be insignificant. Interviewees spoke of the authority of the printed page with reference to notions of professionalism, importance and sentiment.

The general shift from print to digital is self-evident in the professional news media. Nevertheless, it has been debated whether digital media will fully replace printed news or whether print and digital media will co-exist. Some commentators claim that printed news will soon be history as the format and schedule of polished news cannot compete with flexible, immediate and interactive online publishing models (Cole 2009). Falling newspaper readerships and advertising revenue reinforce assumptions about the end of a once-flourishing industry. For example, the Pew Research Centre shows a continuous decline in the number of people in the USA who said that they read a newspaper the day before the data was collected. According to this source, the internet has become the second-most important medium for news after TV (The State of the News Media 2013). Other authors have suggested that digital and print can exist side by side (Doudaki & Spyridou 2012; Flavián & Gurrea 2009).<sup>49</sup>

While the discourse on the substitution of print by digital (Flavián & Gurrea 2009, p. 639) will remain unsettled for some time, interviewees emphasised the higher value of printed news in spite of the general shift from print to digital (see also Chyi 2012). Although the design and timing of my project must be taken into account (see Part 2), the higher value placed on printed news also implies

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<sup>49</sup> For example, by means of content analysis it has been demonstrated that online and traditional newspapers in Greece share a symbiotic relationship. Printed outlets constitute a “representational power” (Doudaki & Spyridou 2012, p. 1) and, like their digital counterparts, are adjusting to their changing position in the news media landscape (Doudaki & Spyridou 2012, p. 11).

notions of prestige, credibility, quality and trust, in contrast with what is published quickly, in a transitory fashion and with less editorial effort (Pai 2011). If it is “the medium that shapes and controls the scale and form of human association and action,” as McLuhan writes (1994, p. 9), the preferences for amateur photographs in free online news is of great importance to understanding the meaning of amateur material in the professional news media.

Several factors play a part in the decision-making process with respect to online news: the attempt to be fast, the demand for more photographs, lower quality standards (see Chapter 3.5), cost factors (see Chapter 3.8), the flexibility of digital publishing and the interactivity of online publications (see Chapter 3.7). Although these factors are part of digital media more generally, I have deliberately left out formats such as apps for smart phones, digital outlets for tablets or news media content behind pay walls, mainly because during the period of data collection, they were either still new or in development and/or not in the area of responsibility of the research participants (see Part 2).

### ***The demand for more photographs***

Interviewees spoke of the demand for more images in relation to the sourcing of amateur photographs. More specifically, they mentioned the widespread popularity of online galleries among audiences (Burton 2010, interview; Henningham 2010, interview; see also Caple & Knox 2012, p. 208)<sup>50</sup> and pointed out the capacity of the gallery format for publication of photographs that would be rejected in the limited space of printed news. This enables professional photographers to publish more pictures, but also allows alternative forms of visual content, including amateur photographs, to be sourced and selected.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Media and journalism scholars have so far made little effort to investigate formats such as photo galleries (Caple & Knox 2012, p. 209). Among the few are Caple and Knox, who explore online photo galleries as a means of storytelling and discuss the relationship between online news galleries and traditional genres such as photo essays and pictures stories (2012).

<sup>51</sup> The German news agency *DPA*, for example, sends approximately 450 new photographs to its worldwide customers each day and stores around 7.5 million pictures in *DPA* databases (Company Facts and Figures 2011). *DPA* photographer and photo editor Maurizio Gambarini admitted that, in spite of online presentation forms, no-one needs so many pictures. However, in his experience,

Interviewee Phil Coomes, picture editor at the *BBC*, said:

“In the past newspapers would have run one big black and white picture on the front page; now online sites like us want 12, because we want a picture gallery. The demands are for more and more pictures. You might find that only two of those are great pictures so need other shots to fill it. So it has certainly changed” (2010, interview).

Photo galleries are “sequences of images” (Caple & Knox 2012, p. 208) that use a variable number of photographs and other pictures and usually display a corresponding number of captions. Early online newspapers, due to technical limitations and their imitation of the printed page, published a limited number of photographs or did not use them at all (Neuberger et al. 1998). Interviewee Coomes, picture editor at *BBC* online, remembered that apart from small low-resolution files, at the end of the 1990s *BBC* online was a text-based site (2010, interview). A decade later photo galleries were an integral part of the news media (Beyer 2006). Some galleries are just a loose collection of photographs with one theme. Others recount a narrative comparable to TV footage (Burton 2010, interview). Further formats are photo streams and image pools (Rubinstein & Sluis 2008, p. 22). Additionally, more elaborate multimedia pieces combine different forms of storytelling, different elements as well as a range of sources including amateur and professional content, moving pictures and photographs (Dunleavy 2008).

The demand for more photographs in the context of online news has expanded the opportunities (Caple & Knox 2012, p. 233) as well as the challenges for professional photographers. Before the digital revolution, to be a professional photographer meant being able to produce “singular, self-sufficient, and self-contained” photographs (Walker & Kimball Moulton 1989, p. 158), as newspapers usually published only one picture with a story (Sontag 2003, p. 32). Although photographs in magazines were also published in series, picture stories and reportages, the underlying assumption was that they “should be understandable in isolation as singularities” (Walker & Kimball Moulton 1989, p. 159).

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news media workers today not only need to source more photographs, but also expect to choose from a larger number of pictures (Gambarini 2010, interview).

Nowadays professional photographers must be able to think in the frame of gallery and multimedia formats, while they are also expected to be able to produce the one great photograph that gets the attention of audiences (Gambarini 2010, interview; Geragthy 2011, interview). David Geragthy, chief photographer at the Melbourne office of the newspaper *The Australian*, said that it was difficult for some of his fellow photographers to change their professional practice from concentrating on the production of a small number of great pictures to producing multiple images that could fill a gallery. From his point of view, the demand for more photographs means that the picture quality naturally diminishes, as in his experience it is only possible to produce a small number of high-quality photographs each day (Geragthy 2011, interview; see Chapter 3.5).

In comparison, the amateur approach suits the concept of presenting large numbers of pictures, as seen in traditional photo albums. Analysing the presentation of amateur photographs, researchers found a widespread standard of people presenting multiple photographs, suggesting “that the conjunction is an essential feature of the display” of amateur photography (Walker & Kimball Moulton 1989, p. 159). Berger, in the context of photo collections, saw the quality of amateur photography in its quantity (2009; see Chapter 3.5).

Similarly, interviewees did not always consider individual amateur photographs as useful, yet they valued them in the context of larger numbers of photographs. Burton, online journalist at the *Leader Community Newspapers*, said people sent in photographs that “you wouldn’t think of being a photo” or “a traditional piece of photojournalism.” In the case of a hailstorm in 2010 it was, as he expressed it, “basically just a balcony with a whole bunch of hail on it.” Burton said that a photograph like this “doesn’t look like much” and referred to the low perceived aesthetic quality of the photograph (see Chapter 3.5). Nevertheless, he found “it’s interesting in the context.” Therefore he would “put up most of them” (Burton 2010, interview).

This insight reinforces the idea that online galleries suit amateur photographs and therefore can be understood as one of the formats that help to foster the democratisation of the professional news media. Galleries that include a number of amateur perspectives are, according to interviewees, typical for weather

events, but are also found in the news after natural disasters or other newsworthy events. The presentation of various angles on a story could be compared to “people in the street” interviews that news media workers conduct to get a number of opinions on a certain issue (Prato 1999), known as *vox pops*. Amateur photographs in a gallery format could be understood as “quick, short [visual] bites, purportedly to convey the public's sentiments on a topic” (Prato 1999). This supports the idea of amateur eyewitness photographs as visual quotes, or as visual *vox pops* when grouped together, and thus illustrates the relevance of pictures in order to communicate the news (see Chapter 3.1).

From another perspective, amateur photographs can be seen as padding in “photographic dumping grounds” (Caple & Knox 2012, p. 208) used due to the relative ease of filling a gallery, the capacity of the internet and, last but not least, the interactive value of photography (see Chapter 3.7). In contrast, singular, aesthetic (or professional-looking) photographs tend to remain relevant on cover pages of print publications, on home pages of professional news media sites and on cover sheets of online galleries. Thus one of the functions of aesthetically-pleasing photographs in the news is to get the attention of audiences (see Chapters 1.2; 3.5).

### ***The attempt to be fast***

According to interviewees in my project, the sourcing of amateur photographs is understood as part of the attempt to produce content immediately, which is especially important for breaking news and instant online publishing (Allchin 2010, interview; Burton 2010, interview; Mackowski 2010, interview; Richardson 2010, interview). In the literature, immediacy is often discussed as part of the concept of witnessing (Zelizer 2007; see also Chapter 3.1). People at the location of a news event may capture what happens and share such pictures without further editing. In contrast to the “promise of immediacy” (Rubinstein & Sluis 2008, p. 12), some interviewees said that speed was one of the challenges of sourcing amateur photographs, because it is not always a priority for people close to a news event to capture and send photographs (Henningham 2010, interview; Peled 2010, interview). For example, referring to the Victorian bushfires in 2009 Henningham, picture editor at The Age, said he did not receive amateur

photographs in the first 24 or 36 hours, “but because it is so time sensitive we needed them 24 hours earlier, they were a bit slow for obviously good reasons” (Henningham 2010, interview).

Immediacy can refer to the potentially-fast nature of digital picture making and sharing (Rubinstein & Sluis 2008, p. 12). It can also refer to the general speed of news and to the desire of people instantly to know what has happened.

Immediacy is not an invention of new technology, as messengers have always tried to deliver information in a timely manner (Rosenberg & Feldman 2008, p. 17). Yet the ability to create, publish and consume at any time and the need to be “always connected or connectable [...]” (Hassan & Purser 2007, p. 3) has changed professional news content-making including sourcing practices (see below). It has also changed people’s and society’s “temporal dynamics” as well as their “relationship with time” (Hassan & Purser 2007, p. 2). Several commentators praise the speed of the internet and the constant availability of information that is part of it (Shirky 2008) while other authors (Rosenberg & Feldman 2008) worry that the speed of the 24/7 news cycle leaves “No Time To Think”, no time to include other sources, and no time to avoid mistakes. They criticise the “speed for speed’s sake mania” (2008, p. 18) and warn of the consequences of the increasingly-faster process of news content-making (Rosenberg & Feldman 2008).

Another quality of the 24/7 news-cycle is the need for more news media content (see above). Although new things happen constantly, Feldman claims “there isn’t really, on any given day, 24 hours of real news” worthy of being distributed (cited in Rosenberg & Feldman 2008, p. 172). This reinforces the argument that the large numbers of crowd-sourced and quickly-published amateur photographs could also be understood as fast online fillers that satisfy the desire for constant news and (in a figurative sense) help to close the gaps created by the 24/7 news cycle.

Many interviewees identified amateur photographs with eyewitness accounts of breaking news events (see Chapters 3.1; 3.2) that do not have the same relevance to professional news media outlets published less frequently, such as on a weekly or monthly basis. Although they might be used as a reference, they

are not a key part of the coverage in the context of the latter (Allchin 2010, interview).

*Maroondah Leader* editor Bryan Allchin referred to an amateur photograph of a truck explosion in Melbourne to explain this difference:

“On the website, yes, we have a picture of the exploded truck and the fire, but for the paper we’ve got to convey a different element. We have, for example, locals complaining about the noise of trucks on the highway for years. How has it affected the traders? What damage does it cause to somebody’s house? What do people think?” (2010, interview)

Interviewee Belinda Mackowski, editor of the *Manningham Leader*, explained that with online it is about “anything you can get up is better than nothing” (2010, interview):

“Even if it’s not a fantastic picture, if you’ve got something, put it up there. If we can get a reader’s photo of something they saw before the *Herald Sun* can zoom out there, we got it first and then it doesn’t matter if it’s not the best photo. Lots of the quickest stories online will be like that, with reader’s photos” (2010, interview).

Mackowski further said:

“Especially us being a weekly paper you will see the others’ first and then ours will be there a week later. You want something different then. Yeah, that’s the other consideration, wanting something that only we have got” (2010, interview).

Such insights indicate not only various needs in relation to speed. They also signal inclusiveness online versus exclusiveness on the printed page as well as in outlets that publish less frequently. Exclusivity in professional news media can be achieved with rare or special features, for example, with the one and only existing amateur photograph taken by an accidental witness (see Chapter 3.2). It can also be accomplished with outstanding pictures produced by a professional photographer. In fact, the notion of exclusivity is part to the professional approach, as photographers are tightly bound to collaboration with professional news media organisations, while amateurs, due to their more independent status, may not see

a need to stick to contracts and agreements. Thus the “end-to-end nature of the internet” (for example MacVittie 2008) correlates with the stronger link between amateur photographs and online news media outlets.

### ***A streamlined approach***

Meeting the demand for immediate news involves challenges in sourcing, editing and implementing amateur photographs. Consequently, professional news media in recent years have adopted processes to manage amateur contributions and to find ways to integrate those strategies into existing practices (Domingo 2011, pp. 76-95). Interviews suggested that this causes an accelerated, shortened and less exclusive decision-making process. Reasons for this include merging professional roles (see Chapters 3.3; 3.8), the challenges of handling large numbers of photographs (see below), as well as the attempt to be fast, as discussed above (Singer 1997; Steensen 2011; O'Sullivan 2005; Quandt et al. 2006;).

The Melbourne-based Community Newspaper chain uses a content management system which has been set up to process amateur photographs uploaded on the *Leader* website. After a person has submitted photographs Burton said, he would be notified that new files have been distributed:

“We get an email notification; there is something in the queue. We click on a button that takes us straight to the photo. We say yes or no. A lot of the time we say yes. And then just automatically it appears on the website” (2010, interview).

Although Burton had the option to select and polish the incoming photographs or change and correct captions, the editorial approach, according to him, was usually reduced to fast decision-making. Burton said: “We try to do the least amount of editing just to get it on the site quick. [...] So for us it’s a very streamlined approach” (2010, interview). The way Burton described the employment of the content management system demonstrates that the processing of photographs for online publications shifts from the approach of high control mechanisms towards the practice of moderation (Domingo 2011, p. 80), and therefore towards a process of faster and more immediate publishing.

Amateur photographs uploaded at the *Leader* website were also processed separately from photographs published in the print media and from photographs taken by staff photographers. The streamlined approach to uploading and publishing amateur photographs online was different in the way photographs were managed and controlled, who was in charge, what kind of photographs were selected, how they were edited and what quality standards were applied. I asked John French, picture editor at the *Leader Community Newspapers*, if he made decisions over amateur photographs that were published online. French answered: “No, not very much. For online it just goes straight to online” (2010, interview). Thus amateur photographs that entered the news department through the *Leader* website largely bypassed the desks of the picture department, which meant that images were published without further editing, but also that picture editors and photographers had apparently lost the influence they had before photography became digital (see Chapter 3.3).

### ***The temporality of online publishing***

Some interviewees said that some photographs online were substituted and replaced by newer photographs, content of higher quality or images of greater significance (Burton 2010, interview; French 2010, interview). Others explained that they are taken down due to cost and payment methods that allow the use of photographs for a limited time (Coomes 2010, interview; see also below). The sourcing of amateur photographs for professional online news media can therefore also be seen as facilitated by the flexibility of online publishing (cf. Stovall 2004, p. 15), which allows news media sites to be updated with incoming material constantly.

*BBC* picture editor Coomes said:

“Television is our medium. That’s why we buy pictures like [the private family pictures of Raoul Moat and his victims in July 2010] for 24 hours. So we can use them as much as we like within this 24-hour period. We will put it on our website for 24 hours, after that we might take them off. That’s just the deal with these agencies. We might eventually [buy them]

but the rights are perpetuity if the story is going to come back to the news agenda” (2010, interview).

Amateur photographs temporarily published on news media sites can therefore be understood as semi-manufactured products that make parts of the editorial process visible—parts that in print media would be hidden from the audience. For example, Mario Borg, Assistant Picture Editor at *The Age*, explained that until the first edition of the newspaper gets printed, photographs and other ingredients are constantly changing. “If good stuff happens the bad picture will be displaced by the better picture” Borg said (2011, interview). This practice suggests that the process of sourcing photographs becomes more visible and transparent online. Yet the temporal presentation forms do not reveal why some photographs are chosen, why others are taken down, or fade from view because of the relevance of newer content, which counteracts the attempt to increase transparency (see Chapter 3.4).

Scholar Anna Reading, for example, recognises a “notable absence” of one of the famous amateur photographs of the London underground bombing (the picture taken with Adam Stacey’s mobile phone) five years after the bombings in 2005. Reading asks: “What happens to mobile witnessing over time?”, and points out that professional online news media outlets used predominantly official sources to remember the attacks in 2010. In a tribute the *BBC* mainly included “copyrighted photographs from news agencies and recycled media footage” (Reading 2011, p. 307). Although online search functions allow users to find amateur photographs in personal online archives (see Chapter 3.3.) and the characteristics of the internet suggest permanence (Stovall 2004, p. 9), amateur photographs have been used “in only a few cases within digital memorial sites or commemorative assemblages” Reading writes (2011, p. 308). In the case of Abu Ghraib “sourcing patterns changed to reflect more official sources over time” (Hickerson, Moy & Dunsmore 2011, p. 790; see Chapter 3.1). The impermanent, temporary and fleeting qualities of (amateur) photographs (see also Griffin 2012, p. 176) have also been noted outside the professional news media arena (Murray 2008). For example photographs on the photo-sharing site Flickr have only a “limited time in the spotlight” (Murray 2008, p. 155).

The purpose of photojournalism has been to provide “the documents essential to

our collective memory" (Caujolle, cited in Panzer 2011, p. 50; see Chapter 1.3). Amateur photographs play a role in the prompt coverage of news events and yet are perhaps less significant for the purposes of history-making (cf. Lorenzo-Dus & Bryan 2011, p. 36). Online news media content can change over time due to the impermanence of some content, causing "temporal variations" (Reading 2011, p. 301) of what has been published.

### ***Archival issues***

Important to the idea of permanence in the news is the practice of archiving. The archive "as an institution, a construction, and a myth" has attracted a great deal of interest among many photography scholars (Panzer 2011, p. 49), including Tagg (1988), Sekula (1989; 1999) and Sontag (1977). While media and journalism scholars frequently use archives for historical investigations, the archives of news media organisations are rarely a focus in journalism research. Although the way professional news media have embraced the internet has been analysed, only a few scholars (for example Guallar & Abadal 2010) have focused on digital press archives.

Some interviewees raised the topic of archiving in order to question the usefulness of amateur photographs beyond their immediate placement. Generally, however, interviewees did not discuss archival issues in relation to amateur photographs to any great degree. This possibly suggests the low value of amateur photographs beyond their immediate use in professional online news media outlets.

*Leader* online journalist Jon Burton said:

"They may have impact, yes, but very few of them would you actually pull out and put into the paper. Even fewer have a longer-lasting archival purpose [...]. We could probably set up a script to get all these user photographs into our archive. But really the value is so low for us. The impact has been done. We got what we needed out of it. The users got what they needed out of it because their photo was up and has been shown to folk. That's about it" (2010, interview).

This statement acknowledges assumptions about the short-term value of amateur photographs. It also suggests that amateur photographs published on the *Leader* website were either not archived at all, or if filed, they were not filed in the same way as content that was printed in one of the *Leader* newspapers. In a later comment Burton said that amateur photographs were kept for some time for legal purposes, without providing further details about the associated process, method or time frame (2010, personal conversation). However, keeping amateur photographs is not the same as archiving them, reinforcing the status of amateur photographs as material for immediate use.

Amateur photographs published in one of the printed *Leader* newspapers were archived alongside professional photographs. They were usually filed under the term 'supplied,' as I pointed out in Chapters 3.1 and 2. The category included amateur photographs, but also photographs provided by members of local sporting clubs, the police, PR agencies and real estate agents (Harris 2010, interview). Only sometimes were they archived under the photographer's real name (Allchin 2010, interview; see Chapter 3.1). While the terminology was used to differentiate photographs that were produced outside the professional news media from those taken by staff photographers, it shows that amateur photographs, often not credited when published in *Leader* outlets (Allchin 2010, interview; see Chapter 3.1), could not be identified at a later stage (see Chapters 3.1; 2).

Factors such as re-use and re-sale are generating new interest in the photography archives of the professional news media. A number of interviewees said that photographs are especially valuable if they can be used more than once (Harris 2010, interview). Photographs are re-usable if they capture an event, issue or situation and at the same time reach out to other concepts (Frosh 2002, p. 176). Amateur photographs sourced and published in the context of professional news media were generally considered unsuitable for re-use and re-sale. Interviewees usually explained this unsuitability with reference to uncertain legalities and ethical aspects (Harris 2010, interview; see Chapter 3.4). Sometimes it was attributed to the content and aesthetics of amateur photographs, as discussed in Chapters 3.2 and 3.5.

In Chapter 3.1 I demonstrated why an amateur photograph was perceived as a useful news tip, but was not considered helpful for publication purposes. The photograph, taken by a staff photographer at the *Leader Community Newspapers* chain, showed a woman walking with a pram and a dog (see Chapter 3.1). This photograph did not only add to the story, but could also be re-used to illustrate other themes concerning families, children or community living. The editorial decision to use a professional photographer was partly because an amateur photograph would serve a one-off usage only. The desire to re-use photographs also opens the doors for stock photographs (see Chapter 3.3). Thus the advertising role of photography has partly displaced the evidential purposes of many photographs published in professional news media. Amateurs “have the freedom of being specific” (Saunders, cited in Frosh 2002, p. 178),<sup>52</sup> whereas professional photographers should be able to capture both the specific and the general, the definite and inexplicit, which blurs distinctions between photographic areas such as news and stock photography (see Chapter 3.3).

As mentioned above, interviewees pointed out legal and ethical considerations as reasons for the short life span and low archival value of amateur photographs (Eastgate 2010, interview; Harris 2010, interview; King 2011, interview). Meg King, photo editor at the Sydney-based newspaper Sun-Herald, said that it is not fair to archive amateur photographs in a picture library as it is not possible to control who will use that photograph within the wider company and in what context it would be re-used:

“So for me personally if I bought a picture from an amateur, I would label it ‘no archiving’, ‘one-off-use only’ and then put a bracket ‘high fees apply’. So if it goes to the library by accident people will see, ‘Oh look high fees, better not touch it’. Otherwise it’s so hard. It’s like any other copyright issue, it’s so hard to monitor who ends up using our picture” (2011, interview).

According to this statement, not archiving amateur photographs or archiving them in a specific way serves amateur photographers’ interests, as they might be

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<sup>52</sup> While a participant in research by Frosh said this about commissioned photography, in the professional news media this is not necessarily true anymore.

protected from exploitation. However, as archives mirror the interests of professional news media, they also can be understood as power and control mechanisms (cf. Panzer 2011, p. 49). Arguably, the way amateur photographs are archived serves to reinforce the professional system. The desire to inhibit the rise of the amateur calls into question the importance of most amateur photographs in the longer term and what impact they can truly have on the visual representation of our time.

### ***Protection of the printed page***

One reason for the close link between the sourcing of amateur photographs and online news has been seen in the different quality standards of print and screen-based publishing. While, for example, a low-resolution picture such as the photograph of the jumping whale can be shared online, it is challenging to print a photograph like this on a magazine page without impairing the quality standards (Lensch 2010, interview; see Chapter 3.5). The only way to publish it is to reduce such standards, which (as several interviewees explained) happens if the news value of the photograph is considered especially high (see Chapter 3.5). However, interviewees generally had a very different attitude towards print and online media and were especially protective of the quality applied to printed news outlets.

Leigh Henningham, picture editor at *The Age*, said:

“Sometimes you get a volume of pictures but the quality of the pictures may not be as great. Usually with a weather event it can be OK, it’s all right but often not good enough to reproduce them in the paper. It can easily fill a gallery online, where we just put stuff up. People love just looking at it” (2010, interview).

Picture editor French said of photographs in galleries on the *Leader* website:

“You get photos up and give everybody a chance to look at it, but it is low quality, it is fast and it is gone. We handle online different to the paper, there we really want speed, while for the paper we certainly look for quality,” (2010, interview).

*Leader* editor Mackowski believed:

“[...] people are a bit more forgiving about quality online, you don't expect to see masterful pictures because you're used to seeing all sorts of things, whereas when it's printed in the paper you've only got so much space, obviously you want to use the best as much as possible [...]” (2010, interview).

Similarly, *Leader* editor Allchin distinguished between the sourcing of amateur photographs for the printed page and a website for reasons of quality. For example, in reference to the Black Saturday bushfires in Victoria in 2009, he said that people sent in photographs that were, from his perspective, “difficult due to the dust, the smokes and the flames.” According to him, some of the photographs were “just blur.” He remembered that he put a few of them online. “[...] just because that's what people sent in. That's online. But for the paper we don't do that,” Allchin said (2010, interview).

The importance of some news events and the demand for more photographs in professional online news media lowers the barriers to publishing poor-quality photographs online. At the same time, large quantities and the combination of a “multiplicity of perspectives” (Berger 2009, p. 42) increase the perceived quality of amateur photography, as I discussed in Chapter 3.5.

While such findings demonstrate the relevance of amateur photographs in the context of immediate online publishing, they also reinforce that the relationships between amateur photographs and outlets that are printed, or are printed less frequently, are weaker.

Print media require certain technical parameters of photographs and demand a high editorial effort to produce polished content, in contrast to the streamlined approach to online publishing discussed above. The latter is identified as more cost-effective (Flavián & Gurrea 2009, p. 635; see Chapter 3.8), which is why some professional news media have already switched from print to digital (Thompson 2013).<sup>53</sup> The limited space in printed news also suggests that in print

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<sup>53</sup> Others are in the process of transition, alternating between the substitution of traditional outlets and the “dual offer” of print and digital news media (Flavián & Gurrea 2009, p. 636).

media, quality standards increase with the quantity of available photographs. Thus the more photographs in existence, the more important the “discriminating power” (Xue et al. 2012) of features that distinguish eye-catching and good-looking photographs (see Chapter 3.5).

Interviewee Borg said:

“With the cameras being everywhere now you expect that there exists less-rare footage and then amongst the less-rare footage you look for the best shot of that footage. You want the clearest picture. So you become fussier. If you get more, if everyone got this picture, we just go for the sharpest picture and the one that looks most dramatic” (2011, interview).

The protection of the limited space in print media could be read as an attempt to sustain some newspapers and magazines. The quantity of photographs, the speed, fluidity and flexibility of online publishing and the shifting sourcing patterns also demand that we rethink whether, in the end, the printed photograph of a skilled photographer is more durable and of greater historical significance than the large numbers of briefly-shared and quickly-forgotten photographs online, many of which are of amateur origin. However, it is possible that the protective attitude of news media workers is driven by conventions of news content-making, a practice that may be well out of date, at least for news media content that people want to share immediately.

### ***Conclusion***

News media workers consider amateur photographs as useful for freely-available online news. Capacity, speed and flexibility are some of the main reasons why this is the case. At the same time, they strongly protect the printed page and tend to deny the usefulness of amateur photographs in the context of print media outlets. Such discrimination when sourcing amateur photographs for print and online shows how news media workers control content production and attempt to ensure the persistence and importance of professionalism in the news. Is the protection of the printed page a sign of an outdated attitude amongst some news media workers? Or does it indicate that news workers recognise specific characteristics in print and, with the objective of sustaining certain magazines and

newspapers, have started to be more vigilant about such qualities (Flavián & Gurrea 2009, p. 635)? Another reason for the preference for amateur photographs online is interactivity, which I mentioned only briefly in the section above. The following chapter looks at the “interaction value” (Nasrallah 2006, p. 339) of amateur photographs in participatory spaces that are fenced off from the more traditional news.

### 3.7 Attempts at interaction with the audience

*“Obviously the majority are just nice pictures of countryside, or whatever our theme is that week. We give people a chance to show off their images. So it’s a kind of relationship that is going on [...]. That’s not really a news thing. That’s just a nice thing to engage with people” (Coomes 2010, interview).*

The previous chapters discussed the professional news media’s decisions about and attitudes towards using amateur photographs, which all indicate the persistence of the established functions and roles of the professional news media, but also show a certain openness towards the amateur. News media workers tend to create a distance from the amateur in the news, and expressed this in the way they talked about their decisions about amateur photographs. In this chapter I extend this insight by examining the use of amateur photographs in participatory spaces, in which amateur photographs are tools to involve people, to encourage them to be part of the news media and to relate to them on the basic level of picture sharing. Thus distancing is also accomplished by demarcating participatory spaces, which are characterised by the extensive use of amateur material and less control than in the more traditional domains of the professional news media (Domingo 2011, pp. 85-87; Hermida 2011a, p. 186). I consider the sourcing of amateur photographs for such participatory spaces, and argue that amateur photographs in this context are accommodated to create and enhance customer relations rather than to produce news media content designed to inform audiences. In addition, amateur photographs, but also photographs more generally, have found a role beyond the conventional purposes of photography in professional news media.

#### ***Failure as a basis for innovation***

The sourcing of amateur material after the London bombings in July 2005 has been understood as a turning point in the way news media interact with an audience (see Introduction; Chapter 1.3). What is less widely known is that the *BBC* had already invited the audience to submit photographs two years prior to that tragic incident. The following request was published in February 2003:

“Taken a good picture lately? Your part in the news is important to us and we’d like to see the images you are taking using the latest digital technology” (BBC News, World Edition, Taken a good picture lately? 2003). Interviewee Phil Coomes, picture editor at the *BBC*, remembered that he was unsure if people would submit a sufficient number of photographs, as picture messaging via mobile phones was still expensive in 2003. “We thought, there is no way we are going to get enough people out there to send in pictures from mobile phones” Coomes said (2010, interview). To his surprise more than 100 photographs were submitted during the first days. Ten of these photographs were published on the *BBC News* website (BBC News, In Pictures: The world from your perspective 2003). A closer look at the first series of photographs and comments that were published illustrates how people understood and responded to the request and how the *BBC* presented the photographs (see Chapter 3.6).

The selected amateur photographs were displayed in a picture gallery. On the right hand side next to the amateur photograph, the title, the name of the photographer and comments from the photographer were presented. All photographs had an aesthetic quality and hence could count as “good pictures,” as requested by the *BBC* (see also Chapter 3.5). However, some of the photographs presented did not convey news beyond the newness of the online request. For example, the cover photograph of the picture gallery showed a sunrise at Killcare Beach in NSW, Australia, “one to admire” but “not a picture of a news event,” as the *BBC* comment reads (BBC News, In Pictures: The world from your perspective 2003).

Another photograph captured a snowy landscape about which the photographer, Martin Richard, commented:

“I am not sure if you are restricting your call for photos to news or not. I have next to nothing in that category. Hoping that you are more inclusive, than exclusive, in your call for photos” (BBC News, In Pictures: The world from your perspective 2003).

Yet another photograph showed the legs of people rushing through an Underground station. The photographer, Gary Feldman, wrote: “Thought you might like this photograph I took at Kings Cross—sums up living in London to me”

(BBC News, In Pictures: The world from your perspective 2003). While such statements demonstrate uncertainty about the expectation of the *BBC*, the editor's comment suggests that the intent in inviting people to submit photographs was not to present admirable photographs.

A further example of the picture gallery captured a moment during a caesarean delivery in an operating theatre. The photograph shows the mother with a newborn child while the surgeon closes the wound. The photograph, due to its content, aesthetic quality and reference to an event, could qualify as a photograph published in traditional news media outlets. However, even though the photographer described what had happened and where the caesarean took place, he did not add additional information that would have pointed out the relevance of the photograph beyond the personal. In the comment Simon Crump, the author of the photograph, focused on aesthetics rather than the story it told.

He wrote:

"I'm very proud of this picture, which I took seconds after my son was born by caesarean section at Macclesfield General Hospital. There seem to be so many contrasting elements in the picture—the industry of the surgeon, the anaesthetist's hairy arms and the serenity of my wife and child among it all" (BBC News, In Pictures: The world from your perspective 2003).

Due to the editorial decision to present the photographs with the personal comment of the photographer rather than as part of a story or combined with a polished caption, the photograph of the operating theatre looked like a picture that one would either share with other photo enthusiasts who have the same interest in the beauty of an image, or among family members and friends for whom the birth of the child was a personal news event.

Other photographs submitted fall more into the classic categories of professional news content-making, showing street children in Nairobi, people on an anti-war demonstration in San Francisco, and the musician Toby Smith playing the guitar during a gig in a pub in Digbeth (BBC News, In Pictures: The world from your perspective 2003). Thus while some submitted photographs followed

conventional news values and presented content that has been traditionally covered by professional news media, other examples demonstrated the difference between the expectations of those who set up a request and the people who used it according to their own desires to be part of the news, their understanding of good pictures and their individual interest in and enthusiasm for photography.

This difference could be read in terms of the lack of knowledge of amateurs who are unclear what kinds of photographs professional news media might seek. From another perspective, it could be assumed that people imitated rather than misinterpreted what good photographs in professional news media are, as photographs in the news have always stretched into the personal domain as well as into areas that focus more on the beauty and aura of specific moments in time rather than on news values, truth and information (Hartley & Rennie 2004). In the context of fashion photography, Hartley and Rennie demonstrate the “convergences among some aesthetic, discursive and institutional oppositions that have been long kept carefully separated” (2004, p. 458). It can be assumed that people responded to this blurring idea in what they thought should be published in professional news media. While the described selection of photographs sent could be read as a failure in the attempt to invite people to produce news media content, it gave professional news media valuable insights and demonstrated that people are willing to provide and share photographs (cf. Hetherington 2008).

Several interviewees spoke of comparable early experiments in accommodating amateur content (Burton 2010, interview; Henningham 2010, interview; Lensch 2010, interview). In 2005, for example, the German magazine *Der Stern* established the website [www.augenzeuge.de](http://www.augenzeuge.de), for the purposes of sourcing photographs of news events. The site was taken down after a period of three years. One reason for the limited life span, as picture editor Volker Lensch saw it, was that people did not use the call “appropriately” and sent “baby photos and beautiful flowers” that were, according to Lensch, of no use to the magazine, neither concerning content and visual information, nor regarding the aesthetic quality of photographs. Another reason for the closure of the site was the additional workload in monitoring amateur photographs, an effort that was not

perceived as proportionate to the benefit gained from the small number of photographs that were finally used (Lensch 2010, interview).

“We always had someone who looked through the pictures before they got to the next stage. And if then the content or the optic was interesting, we stored them temporarily to check if they could be interesting for the printed magazine or for the website” (Lensch 2010, interview).

According to Lensch, the number of photographs that eventually were used was small and included photographs such as one of a heap of rubble after an explosion in a bakery. Although people are still welcome to submit photographs, Lensch emphasised that it is not the aim of *Der Stern* to work with “this kind of content”. Lensch said furthermore: “We want high-quality photographers and good journalism” (2010, interview).

### ***Participatory spaces***

Ten years after professional news media launched these first invitations, these and other organisations still ask for amateur photographs and other content, though the terminology has shifted from taking a “good picture” to capturing “a news event” (BBC, News in Pictures, Your news, your pictures 2010). In addition to the attempt to source eyewitness photographs, personal pictures and news tips (which I have discussed in previous chapters), professional news media have set up participatory spaces where the sourcing of amateur photographs is characterised by qualities such as otherness, playfulness and separateness.

For example, the *BBC*, under the headline “We set the theme; you take the pictures” allows people to submit photographs in participatory spaces. A statement on the site states that the *BBC* is “not just interested in news pictures,” but also would “love to see your visual interpretation of both local and global issues as well as just great pictures of your daily lives” (BBC, News in pictures, We set the theme; you take the pictures 2012). To facilitate this, the *BBC* asks for photographs under broad topics such as wood, spring, fields and postal services (BBC, News in pictures, We set the theme; you take the pictures 2012). Under the theme ‘Cooking’, the *BBC* published a picture gallery showing photographs of

food such as eggs in a frying pan, a fireplace in Botswana and a street food stand in Marrakesh (BBC, News in pictures, Your pictures collection, Your pictures: Cooking 2012). Other photo galleries show amateur photographs of animals, cars, doors or rainfall (News in pictures, In pictures, Your pictures 2014). “That’s not really a news thing. That’s just a nice thing to engage people with,” Coomes said (2010, interview).

The German magazine *Der Stern*, even though unsuccessful in its request for amateur eyewitness photographs, provides photo enthusiasts with the opportunity to present their work, and to communicate with each other in a participatory space called ‘View Fotocommunity’ (Lensch 2010, interview).<sup>54</sup> An important consideration for the site was, according to Lensch, that it must be consistent with the brand of the magazine, which is known for high-quality photography and has been frequently recognised for its award-winning photographs and prominent photojournalists (Kunde 2000, p. 108). Accordingly, the photography-dominated space is not just a service for people to upload and share photographs, but also shows visual competency, which demonstrates its relevance as a marketing tool and indicates the complexity of understanding the sourcing of amateur photographs in the professional news media.

During the period of data collection, galleries on the website of the Melbourne-based *Leader Community Newspapers* chain showed large numbers of amateur photographs, including photographs of newborn babies, cheeky pets and birthday cakes. According to information published at the time on the *Leader* website, following a request, people submitted more than 1700 birthday cake

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<sup>54</sup> At a 2004 strategy meeting of the editorial staff of *Der Stern*, it was asked why more was not made of the core competency of *Der Stern* by creating another magazine from the large pool of photographs that reach the editorial department every day. The first edition of *View* was published in October 2005 (Otto 2007, p. 77). While *View* editors select from professionally-produced photographs that otherwise would not get used, they also print “the best photos of the month from amateurs that have uploaded photographs on the *View* site” (Lensch 2010, interview). Once again, this acknowledges the relevance of the non-professional and the blurring between professional and amateur. However, amateur photographs are published in the back of the *View* magazine under the subheading ‘Fotocommunity’, and are presented in a form that illustrates the particularity of the space that is clearly distinguishable from the rest of the magazine.

photographs.<sup>55</sup> The otherness of the sourcing of amateur photographs is expressed here by the low news value (see Chapter 3.2), by the large number of sourced amateur photographs, and by the repetition and apparent banality of the subject matter, similar to content in some tabloid and lifestyle media outlets or social media platforms. Jon Burton, online journalist at the *Leader*, compared the approach to sharing such amateur photographs with sharing them on a social networking site (2010, interview).

Interviewee Nick Richardson, Group News Editor of *Leader*, said:

“It enforces this concept of us being in that community environment and being connected to communities. [...] And it means that we actually get an opportunity to built on those relationships” (2010, interview).

The differences between the *Leader* website and the above news media sites, as well as the distinct motivations of media organisations that publish such sites, must be taken into account. However, sourcing and using amateur photographs in participatory spaces can be understood as an attempt to integrate the concept of social networking into the professional news media environment (see also Franquet, Villa & Bergillos 2011).

### ***The playground approach***

Domingo calls participatory spaces comparable to the above example the “‘playground’ strategy: Journalists set up a separate space in which users were “invited to play” (2011, p. 85) He defines “Participatory journalism as playground” as a practice in specific spaces that are separated from the rest of a professional news media site. Such participatory spaces are used for “user contributions other than comments in news” and can be distinguished by “loose moderation” (Domingo 2011, p. 86). Next to it stands what Domingo calls “Participatory journalism as source” (Domingo 2011, p. 86), the practice of sourcing amateur material as part of and in addition to established sourcing practices and targeted news production (Domingo 2011, pp. 85-86), as described in previous chapters of this thesis.

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<sup>55</sup> It was no longer possible to find these galleries on the *Leader* website, which demonstrates the short-term value of many amateur photographs in the professional news media (see Chapter 3.6).

Photography in these playgrounds can be understood as a tool that enables people to engage with the professional news media in a cheap, simple and entertaining way. It allows people to produce and exhibit content either out of interest in photography or interest in an object that can be captured with the camera. At the same time, it allows professional news media to reach people and to source photographs easily and effortlessly. What started as a failure, as amateurs in 2003 sent in family photographs and landscape photographs, became a source of innovation allowing people (including active participants as well as followers) to interact with professional news media and with one another. However, this occurred in a space next to, and only partly related to, the traditional approach to news content-making, yet under the same roof of professional news media organisations (see also Domingo 2011, pp. 85-88).

Playgrounds have specific designs and facilities, and are used by people to catch up with each other informally for the purposes of recreation, leisure and enjoyment, as well as for learning, thinking and problem solving (Frost 2010). All these characteristics strengthen the usefulness of the playground metaphor and highlight the experimental and playful character of participatory spaces, which are designed for exploring—relatively risk free—how media professionals can interact with audiences (Domingo 2011, p. 87). Besides fostering and maintaining customer relations, experimenting and entertaining are consequently two further characteristics of participatory spaces. The notion of play foregrounds the interaction between professional news media and people as a reason for accommodating amateur photographs.

### ***The interaction value of photography***

The concept of interactivity became especially popular in the context of the internet and new media (Deuze 2003, pp. 213-216), and has been increasingly promoted as a valuable characteristic of online journalism (Steensen 2011), customer relations (Baranov 2012) and successful business (Manafy 2011).<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Interactivity has been described as the “degree to which two or more communication parties can act on each other, on the communication medium, and on the messages and the degree to which such influences are synchronized” (Liu & Shrum 2002, p. 54). Interactivity can be understood as “a

Interactivity is also part of interpersonal communication, and therefore an inherent part of the negotiation process between news media workers and their sources. Here, it is a means to an end: news media workers interact with people to get information to produce news media content. In contrast, in participatory spaces interaction has become a reason for requesting and publishing amateur content. The advantages of interactivity have led to the integration of interactive features into news websites (Metykova 2008, p. 56; Steensen 2011, p. 318). However, some researchers argue that online news media largely reproduce traditional models of media communication, rather than truly interact with the audience (Domingo 2008; see also Chapter 1.2).

In the participatory spaces that I viewed as part of this project, professional news media commonly use photographs to interact with people. Interactivity is an inherent characteristic of photography practice, as interaction often takes place while photographs are taken. Family members perform in front of places of interest to create holiday pictures (see Chapter 3.3). Strangers look in the lenses of travel photographers. Party guests take photographs, apparently not just to commemorate moments, but also to engage with one another and to share this experience with those who are absent. Thus interaction is relevant for the moment of picture-taking as well as for the habit of picture-viewing and sharing (Van House 2011, p. 130).<sup>57</sup> The latter is especially important in the online environment. People upload and view photographs to keep in contact with family and friends, to inform each other about events, to maintain contact a to make

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measure of a media's potential ability to let the user exert an influence on the content and/or form of the mediated communication," dividing it into four sub-dimensions (Jensen 1998, p. 201; Steensen 2011, p. 315). Other scholars distinguish between features, processes and perceptions of "Human-to-Human", "Human-to-Computer" and "Human-to-Content" Interaction (Steensen 2011, p. 316; see also McMillan 2002; McMillan 2005). All these dimensions were relevant for my research, as the concept of interactivity can be seen in relation to the process of sourcing amateur photographs involving amateur photographers and news media workers; in relation to the computer and to how photographs are searched, sent, tagged or liked; and in relation to the content that is influenced by this interplay.

<sup>57</sup> Photo albums are used to narrate family history and trigger conversation (Walker & Kimball Moulton 1989). Documentary photography is believed to play an "active role in social change" (Becker 1998, p. 76), and thus is used to interact with the audience. Scholars of a number of disciplines including art, education, anthropology, psychology and social science have also used photographs to communicate with project attendees or research participants (Prosser 1998).

connections (Van House 2011, p. 131).<sup>58</sup> Research reveals that people even prefer pictures to text, as they are perceived as “faster and easier to both post and absorb” information (Van House 2011, p. 131). Photographs also play a role in the human-computer and human-web interaction. People are able to email, upload or download photographs, to click through a gallery, to comment on photographs, to recommend them, to bookmark and share pictures across social media platforms, and to vote for them. For this reason, photographs have an impact on how long people stay on a website (Schulz 2012, p. 72), which is important to reach people, but also to convey information.

Photography is also an important element for the synergies between different types of media and media content. Thus photographs are not only used to transmit visual information, but are also elements that lead to further content. Amateur photographs, but also still pictures more generally, can therefore be understood as links between different information, but also between different types of news media content and different kind of spaces and programs. All these factors draw attention to the “interaction value” (Nasrallah 2006, p. 339)<sup>59</sup> of photographs in a cross-media environment. Through interacting with a site, for example, by clicking through or commenting on photographs in participatory spaces, people might get “a sense (real or not) of democratic, or at least civic, participation,” Vuljnovic writes. At the same time professional news media get their “traffic figures, they can then sell to advertisers and sponsors” (Vuljnovic 2011, p. 146).

The sourcing of amateur photographs of participatory spaces could accordingly also be understood as a way to reach people beyond the news audience, as well as people across age groups, social groups and language barriers. Thus photography has become part of those technologies that allow professional news

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<sup>58</sup> A survey among a group of 143 university students demonstrates that “active forms of photo related activities” were one of the primary motivations for using Facebook, besides maintaining long-distance relations and motives such as game-playing and entertainment (Tosun 2012, p. 1510). Event photographs on Facebook are used to socialise with people important to those who shared them, as well as for those who were not able to be present (Young 2011, p. 29).

<sup>59</sup> I borrowed the term “interaction value” from the “Interaction Value Analysis” modeling “a network of rational actors who generate value by interacting with each other” (Nasrallah 2006, p. 339).

media “to win larger audience shares in a tough competitive environment” (Metykova 2008, p. 56).

Although the news value of random amateur photographs such as birthday cakes or animals could be perceived as low (see Chapters 3.2; 3.5), their interaction value, and thus their usefulness to potentially engage with the audience, can be considered high. It could even be claimed that the interaction value of photography potentially influences ideas about low and high news value and picture quality (see Chapters 3.2; 3.5). One interviewee in my research, *Leader* online journalist Burton, said that he would use amateur photographs as promotional material: “Using it as: Look! ‘This really interesting photo here was taken by a user. Upload yours!’” (2010, interview). Hence, amateur photographs in participatory spaces of professional news media can also be understood as a form of “interactive advertisement”<sup>60</sup> (Leckenby & Li 2000, title; Deuze 2007, p. 248) applied to “maintain the customer relationship and to create customer loyalty” (Baranov 2012, p. 15).

### ***Otherness***

Interactivity only partly describes the sourcing of amateur photographs for participatory spaces, as the concept expresses neither the otherness of the approach, nor the playful, experimental and unconventional character of spaces that have been created around the idea of amateur participation (Hermida 2011a, pp. 185-186). Interviewees spoke of the difference between the sourcing of amateur photographs for participatory spaces and the sourcing of amateur photographs for creating the news. Hermida used the concept of otherness to illustrate the distinction between the traditional approach to professional news content-making and the attempts to create participatory spaces under the roof of professional news media (Hermida 2011a, p. 186). Most simply, otherness can be understood as “the quality or fact of being different” (Oxford Dictionaries, Definition of ‘otherness’ in English 2013). The concept has its origin in

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<sup>60</sup> Scholars define “interactive advertisement” as “the paid and unpaid presentation and promotion of products, services and ideas by an identified sponsor through mediated means involving mutual action between consumers and producers” (Leckenby & Li 2000; Deuze 2007, p. 248).

philosophical and psychological writings and reflects on “the creation of perceived binary distinctions” (Jemmer 2010, p. 9). Fuss believes that such distinctions are necessary to allow meaning-making to happen (Fuss, cited in Jemmer 2010, p. 9; Fuss 1991), while Foucault writes that one needs the other to express its presence and foregrounds the issue of power relations (Foucault, cited in Jemmer 2010, p. 9; Foucault 1990).

The column ‘Black and White’ from the Melbourne-based tabloid newspaper the *Herald Sun* invites amateur photograph submissions.

Steve Perkin, responsible for this participatory space, said this about its development:

“It started at the *Herald* in the 1950s, existed for 20 years, changed in the next ten years, was killed off in the earlier ’80s. And then about three years ago somebody had the idea to bring it back and they gave it to me. [...] It was on page two but there was no photo along with it. When the new editor arrived about a year later he, after a few months, decided to remove it from page two, because they were doing a redesign of page two and he said you are going to page 12 or 20 and you have to come up with a photo a day” (2011, interview).

The story demonstrates how amateur photographs can be sourced on a regular basis in regular sections of newspapers. *Herald Sun* columnist Perkin said at the beginning he was “a bit concerned about that, because while the words are always there and you can sometimes generate words, you can’t generate photos. You rely on people supplying them.” But once he started, it became “obvious that it wasn’t going to be a problem.” According to Perkin he now would “get between three and 10 photos every day that are good enough to be published” (2011, interview).

Perkin said:

“I never have to say: ‘Look, we are running out of photos, please get out there.’ They just send them in; it’s never an issue. I have a box full of photos, which are all in the system. They are just printouts from the system and they are just photos I haven’t used. They are all pretty much

usable, publishable” (2011, interview).

Other interviewees confirmed the availability of photographs (Crossthwaite 2010, interview; Mackowsky 2010, interview), suggesting that it is possible to rely on amateur photographs for participatory spaces within professional news media. This finding stands in contrast to the general distrust identified in the amateur as well as in the non-routine character of sourcing amateur photographs in the more traditional news media context. Thus participatory spaces appear to be a permissible arena for amateur expression, which possibly reinforces that the distrust of amateur photographs in the news arena is motivated more by news values or market differentiation than by the standards and qualities of amateur content.

### ***Things that are a bit of fun***

The otherness of the approach in participatory spaces is also expressed in the difference between amateur content and photographs sourced in the more traditional news context. Perkin said he gets a lot of travel photographs and photographs of things that people have seen “that are a bit of fun” and “that amuse them” (2011, interview). For example, one of the photographs shows a spelling mistake on a sign attached to a gate in country Australia. The sign reads: “PRIVATE PROPERTY KEEP OUT TRESSPASERS PROSTITUTED.” The caption reads: “Noni says she smiles every time she sees this sign on a property in Strath Creek” (Perkin 2010, p. 9). Another photograph shows two yellow traffic signs on top of each other, which appeared to be the work of a street artist. The lower one calls attention to wild cassowaries displaying the word “BEFORE”, while the one above shows the word “AFTER” as well as a speed hump, which on closer inspection turns out to be a cassowary lying dead on the street. Additionally, the sign displays the phrase “CHILL OUT NOT FLAT OUT.” The caption reads: “Nadia saw these signs near Port Douglas, one warning of cassowaries crossing and the other of a speed hump” (Perkin 2010, p. 58).

These and other examples of amateur material submitted are published in a small book called “In Black and White: The favourite *Herald Sun* column” (Perkin

2010). Likewise, all five photographs,<sup>61</sup> presented in a double-page spread page on Saturday, April 21, 2012, showed photographs of funny labels and spelling mistakes on signs (Perkin 2011, interview). The content of such photographs demonstrates how people use cameras as communication tools (cf. Sontag 2003, p. 45), and reflects the entertainment value of amateur photographs that do not necessarily meet high news values (see also above; see Chapter 3.2).

For the purpose of informing citizens, who should be able to make knowledgeable choices (Harrington 2008, p. 268; Winch 1997, p. 114), photographs of funny labels, spelling mistakes and signs could be considered as journalistically irrelevant. Yet it must be acknowledged that the tabloid press, created for a mass audience (Harrington 2008, p. 269), has always run this kind of content, often produced by professional photographers. Page 3 girls, for instance, are certainly not news, but at the same time they still constitute professional news media content. Distinguishing features of tabloid and broadsheet newspapers include, for example, soft/hard, trash/value, personal/political, private/public, popular culture/high culture, emotional/rational, trivial/serious (Harrington 2008, p. 269).

Features of the tabloid press are also apparent in participatory spaces created for the accommodation of amateur material. Many news media workers treat entertaining content “with derision [...] even as lifestyle sections of newspapers and ‘non-news’ formats of journalism have become more popular and lucrative” (Hartley & Rennie 2004, p. 466). At the same time the tabloidisation and trivialisation of information has been frequently criticised (Sparks & Tulloch 2000; Turner 2004; Zelizer 2009), once again challenging the separateness of some components of the professional news media.

Interviewee Perkin said:

“It makes you realise that newspapers have got to stay in touch with the readers of this page. It can be a bit dull, but it entertains them. Newspapers are there to entertain, as long as they inform. [...] So it’s a really important thing” (2011, interview).

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<sup>61</sup> These photographs were randomly selected as part of this project.

Thus the otherness of sourcing amateur photographs for participatory spaces can be seen as part of an attempt to separate parts of professional news media content, and as an effort to maintain conventions of the professional news media system. According to Hartley and Rennie, this separation happens between news media content that conveys fiction, play and everyday life and news media content that conveys notions of information, urgency and importance (Hartley & Rennie 2004, p. 460). My research confirms that the attempt to protect certain parts of the news and to distinguish them from others is still common practice.

### ***The role of news media workers***

A third factor that demonstrates the otherness of the sourcing of amateur photographs in participatory spaces is the role of news media workers who host, moderate and present amateur photographs (cf. Jacobs 2010, interview), and can be understood as facilitators or curators (Cherian 2011; Fahy & Nisbet 2011) of incoming amateur photographs. Perkin said: "I basically just set the agenda. I find the topics that I think are interesting and throw them out there" (2011, interview). While the statement refers to the concept of curating, which suggests authority, expertise and creativity under a specific theme in a specific space, it also implies that the approach is about searching, selecting, gathering and evaluating (Fahy & Nisbet 2011, p. 780).

Part of this selection process is that news media workers have to decide to what they give prominence. By choosing to highlight specific photographs (through the way they are featured and presented), certain photographs are elevated or are moved into the foreground. Media workers thus direct the viewer to selected amateur photographs (Jacobs 2010, interview). Another insight that refers to the concept of curating is that professionals in participatory spaces "set the agenda," as Perkin said, and tend to define themes, topics, ideas or projects, an approach which a number of interviewees perceived as useful to create an environment that helps people to contribute photographs (Coomes 2010, interview; Burton 2010, interview; Jacobs 2010, interview; Perkin 2011, interview).

In 2000 scholar John Hartley asked:

“Are we in a period where it is not information, knowledge or culture as such that determine the age but how they are handled? If so, then a redactional society is one where such processes are primary, where matter is reduced, revised, prepared, published, edited, adapted, shortened, abridged to produce, in turn the new(s)” (2000, p. 44).

Hartley sees the news media professional as a “professional redactor” protecting “the knowledge processing skills of research, précis, editing, organising and presenting” (2000, p. 44).<sup>62</sup> What Hartley envisioned more than a decade ago is the “expansion of journalism” and the shift of the professional approach towards practices that are closer to the practice of “redaction” than to the process of production or manufacturing (Hartley 2000, pp. 44-45).

### ***Separateness***

Participatory spaces are fenced off from the traditional professional news context, reinforcing the acceptance of different concepts of what professional news is, and showing how news media workers separate and protect the more traditional (and arguably more serious and professional) approach to news content-making. They maintain distance not only from amateur photographs that are used within the conventional editorial space (see Chapter 3.1), but also from participatory spaces that are specifically designed for amateur contributions.

Under the headline “Valley Voices Tell Us, What’s Your Story?” in the *Diamond Valley Leader*, the editor published a short article promising that contributors could share their content in this space with “more than 70,000” neighbours.

The article reads:

“[...] This is your space. You may be organising a school concert or an art show. You may have won an award, helped Third World communities

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<sup>62</sup> While these tasks are relevant for the roles that news media workers undertake in participatory spaces, the term ‘curating’ can be considered the more useful concept. This is particularly because the term ‘redactor’, in languages such as German (Reakteur), French (rédacteur) and Russian (редактор), is the direct translation for ‘editor’, and therefore is not only able to be mistaken, but does not truly express the changes that are occurring in parts of professional news media.

access clean water, or landed the biggest fish of your life. You may have witnessed a house fire, just had a baby, tied the knot, or penned your first novel. If you see it, do it, plan it, blog it or think it, let us know and we'll be happy to publish it. Send your contributions to [diamondvalley@leadernewspapers.com.au](mailto:diamondvalley@leadernewspapers.com.au) or you can publish directly to the Your News section of our website" (Crossthwaite 2010, interview).

Amateur photographs that get published in such participatory spaces are perceived as being of low news value. For example, *Manningham Leader* editor Belinda Mackowski spoke about "things that are just for the Your Space page" or about "something that's not exciting enough for our photographers to do" (2010, interview).

Mackowski said:

"Maybe even a school thing, so someone might have won an award for something but it's not something the whole readership will be interested in; maybe it's just that school, or it could be something that we couldn't get to, maybe it was on a weekend or it was at night and we couldn't get to, then we'll ask people to write a bit of a write-up themselves and send in a photo and we'll publish it with their name on it. So it's a good way to get things in the paper that are probably not quite important enough to have our journalists and photographers spend time on, but still worthy of getting a mention in the paper and giving organisations in the community a way to promote what it is they're doing, in their own words as well. Then again, it's all different things. I leave it up to people, if they send it in, unless there is some sort of legal problem with it, I'll put it in" (2010, interview).

In the case of a "really interesting story", Mackowski said she would decide to publish it as a professionally-produced story.

She added:

"I guess [...] if it's something that's not so unique, but still worthy of having a spot in the paper, maybe then it will be on Your Space. For example, if it's a school program, a certain school might have the idea to nominate

two school captains. Every school does that so we couldn't do a story on that because then every school will ring us up and ask, 'can you do a story on our school captains?' But if the school rings up and I happen to have room on Your Space I'll put it in, and if other schools ring up I say I'll put yours in too, but they got in first" (2010, interview).

This notion of lesser news value manifests in relation to content, but also in when, where and how these participatory spaces are placed in the printed outlet.

Mackowski continued:

"Some weeks if the paper is really small I can't fit it in, but most weeks I'll fit it in. It's a half page and it will be reserved just for stories and photos that readers send in" (2010, interview).

Participatory spaces at the *Leader* are only published "as long as there is room" for them (Crossthwaite 2010, interview). Furthermore, they are placed further back in the paper (Allchin 2010, interview), which once again shows that amateur material is perceived as less important.

Interviewee *MaroonDAH Leader* editor Bryan Allchin said:

"I'm not a fan of getting people to send in photos of whatever. I mean if they send a photo for Your Space then we'll put that in, because that's what it's there for. [...] So I have this dedicated space for them" (2010, interview).

Similarly, Mackowski explained that she places amateur photographs on the Your Space page "to distinguish between reader's photos as separate to our photographer's photos" (2010, interview). Thus the creation of participatory spaces can also be seen as a way to confine the input of the people and as an attempt to defend and preserve the stature of professional news media brands (Hermida 2011a, p. 186).

## ***Conclusion***

Amateur photographs are included in the professional news as complements to a story and are akin to “source materials” (Kristensen & Mortensen 2013, p. 354). In addition, amateur photographs are sourced for participatory spaces set up by the professional news media to maintain customer relations, to interact with the audience and to entertain people. Participatory spaces are also used to experiment with different forms of media communication and to learn how to create a different way of media communication, as well as to educate audiences about how to be part of the news-making process. The separateness and otherness of participatory spaces can be understood as another attempt by news media workers to control and protect the news media system, to maintain their authority over amateur material, and to defend what the professional news media consider important. Amateur photographs are especially valuable in such spaces, as they allow easy and effortless interaction between the news media and their audiences. Thus photographs have found a role beyond the conventional purposes of pictures in the news: they are used as tools to actively engage with people, and must be understood in relation to several areas including consumer relations, interactive advertising and media entertainment.

In the last chapter of this thesis, I will discuss the sourcing of amateur photographs as a cost-saving strategy, and demonstrate the various attempts of the professional news media to pay (or not pay) for amateur material.

### 3.8 The price of amateur photographs

*“Every time a photo like this is run in the paper, it’s another cheque the paper is not writing to a freelance photographer. [...] Making a living as a photographer is as tough as in the 1950s when television came on stream and Life magazine cut right back. These days they are also watching budgets. They don’t want to pay for photography” (Chapman 2010, interview).*

The profitable business model under which the professional news media has operated no longer works, and there is no obvious business model yet that will provide the same level of security and revenue. A common way of dealing with this situation is to reduce the costs of news production (Ferguson 2006, pp. 297-323), which can be a motive for the accommodation of amateur photographs. In this chapter I discuss the sourcing of amateur photographs in relation to attitudes towards remuneration, and examine the issue of paying for amateur material. Additionally, I ask whether the attempt to save money with amateur photographs is truly helpful in sustaining the news industry, and whether the motivations for sourcing free amateur photographs demonstrate the ideal purposes of professional news media or mainly serve economic purposes (cf. Vujnovic 2011; pp. 139-154). The sourcing of amateur photographs as a cost-saving mechanism reinforces a recurrent theme in this thesis: that the motivations for accommodating amateur photographs are largely practical rather than the result of idealistic notions of participation in news media.

#### ***Paid versus unpaid photographs***

At the *Leader Community Newspapers* (Allchin 2010, interview; Mackowski 2010, interview; Richardson 2010, interview), amateur photographs were not paid for. Unlike news media that work predominantly with freelance photographers or agency pictures, the *Leader Community Newspapers* chain employed a comparatively large number of photographers in 2010—36 (Richardson 2010, interview). Online journalist Jon Burton said that, as a consequence, the organisation spent little on photographs produced outside the institutional environment, and as part of this practice usually did not pay amateur

photographers. Burton said: “I would find it almost impossible to think of a reason why we would pay for an external image” (2010, interview).

While these news media workers perceived amateur photographs as free material, other interviewees in my project said that payment for amateur photographs depended on content criteria. An amateur photograph that is worth money must be “spectacular and unique,” explained Mario Borg, Assistant Picture Editor at the Melbourne-based newspaper *The Age* (2011, interview). Thus the price of amateur photographs is subject to content-related qualities such as rarity, exclusiveness and newsworthiness, which are perceived as rationales to pay for amateur photographs, or to pay more for them.

Other interviewees said that amateur photographs were generally paid for (Dietrich 2010, interview; Krug & Wellnitz 2010, interview; Seewald 2010, interview; Lucy 2011, interview). One of the motivations for this was seen in the need to clear legal rights to be able to use amateur photographs. Interviewees also spoke about fairness, and discussed the use of amateur photographs from a moral position, and from the standpoint that photographers, whether amateurs or professionals, should be informed about the use of their photographs as well as paid. “We wouldn’t steal a picture,” Ellen Dietrich, picture editor at the weekly German newspaper *Die Zeit* said (2010, interview).

Referring to the use of Facebook pictures of a gunman who shot students at an American university, *BBC* picture editor Phil Coomes said:

“It’s not about rights; it’s an ethical, moral decision. [...]. You pay if you find the person who took them [the photographs] perhaps or you clear them if you can. Sometimes it just comes down to do you want to be seen as stealing a photograph from somebody? And I think, mostly the answer is, no we don’t. And therefore we don’t use them. The only time we would is if there is an overriding editorial need and then a decision is made by a senior editor for use across all BBC News outlets. It doesn’t happen often, and we always try to use pictures in a fair light” (2010, interview).

Accordingly, payment for amateur photographs could also be understood as a gesture of responsibility towards audiences, and as an attempt to deal with

amateur material in a respectful, decent and honest way. However, it must be questioned whether news media workers offer payment for amateur photographs or if they just react to a request for payment, as some interviewees said.

Interviewee Michael Lucy, production manager at *The Monthly*, told of a case where he offered someone \$125 for a photograph, which, according to him, was the same price he would have paid to a picture library:

“I just thought, what’s a reasonable amount to pay for that, looked at a picture library, scheduled the fees; offered that much money. He was happy with that. So, in general we pay about the same [...]” (2011, interview).

Such insights show that the attitudes to remuneration in professional news media at the time of data collection were unsettled and diverse. Nevertheless, interviewees said that the costs of sourcing amateur photographs are, apart from a few expectations, generally lower than employing or assigning professional photographers. One interviewee, *Leader* online journalist Burton, believed the culture of paying “has shifted a little bit” (2010, interview). He recalled that the initial response to the growing presence of amateur photographs at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century was that they should be paid for just like professional photographs, whereas now amateur photographs are often perceived as free material (Burton 2010, interview). The visual quote concept that suggests amateur photographs have become part of everyday communication indicates the same development (see Chapter 3.1). My research shows that the practice of not paying for amateur photographs is also relevant for those photographs that are news tips and thus part of the newsgathering process (see Chapter 3.1).

Amateur photographs are generally also not paid for when they are published in participatory spaces that are set up to engage and interact with the audience (see Chapter 3.7). Additionally, interviewees spoke of cost-related issues in the context of the sourcing of amateur photographs for use in free online news. While compared with their printed counterpart, costs for online media are low, several interviewees said that the professional news organisations they were working for tended not to invest to a greater degree in free online news media. Accordingly, interviewees considered free amateur photographs as suitable for the demands

of free content delivery. Part of such cost-related thinking is also the temporality of online publishing (see Chapter 3.6).

### ***The voluntary approach***

While some interviewees said they would pay for amateur photographs, at the same time they spoke of the voluntary approach of amateur photographers, which helps professional news media to economise on content material.

Interviewee Lucy at *The Monthly* said:

“Sometimes people are happy just to publish for a copy of the magazine and the acknowledgement. And that’s great for us, because it helps us to keep our costs down. We don’t try to avoid paying people, but if people offer to do so for free, it’s nice” (2011, interview).

Several other interviewees confirmed that people just want to share photographs and do not send them in to pursue financial objectives (Borg 2011, interview; Geraghty 2011, interview; Lucy 2011, interview; Mackowski 2010, interview; Richardson 2010, interview; Seewald 2010, interview). Borg, assistant picture editor at *The Age*, said: “Usually people are very keen for us to have the images as long as we credit them and they don’t really want any money” (2011, interview). “It’s pretty much a cost-free process for the media because people have an obsession with getting their stuff sent in,” David Geraghty said (2011, interview).

Interviewee Belinda Mackowski, editor at the *Manningham Leader*, said:

“Very rarely we’ll get someone contacting us, wanting to sell their photos; usually if readers come across something they are very happy to give them to us and see their photo in the paper rather than wanting money for it. [...]. Usually people just give them to you” (2010, interview).

Other interviewees said that people are well aware of the potential to make money from photography (Gambarini 2010, interview; Levy 2010, email). Perhaps the emphasis on voluntary contributions is used to de-emphasise and obscure the cost reasons for sourcing amateur photographs. Then again, the non-

commercial and voluntary approach is an inherent part of amateur photography (see Chapter 1.1). Unlike professionals, amateurs do not always aim to make money from photography and can decide whether they want to sell photographs, share them, not share them or present them only to a selected audience. Thus the amateur approach suggests that, even in the context of professional news media, amateurs do not primarily perceive photographs as saleable material. Hence, they can be perceived as part of a “gift culture,” in which “social status is determined not by what you control but by what you give away” (Raymond 2000).

The gift is “central to fan economy” and includes “to give, to receive, and to reciprocate” (Hellekson 2009, p. 113). The exchange of gifts is commonly perceived as part of an “alternative regime to capitalism”, in which “community building drives the gift economy” (Pearson 2010, p. 87). However, authors also point out that gift and commodity cultures are not necessarily contrary systems (Scott, cited in Pearson 2010, p. 90). Fans give, receive, and reciprocate, resulting in the formation of fan social networks (Pearson 2010, p. 87). Photo enthusiasts who contribute photographs for free might also aim for enhanced reputation among their peers. Others may find satisfaction and recognition if a photograph gets selected for publication in the professional news media. Hence, the value for photography enthusiasts could be the name and standing of professional news media and the chance to advertise one’s own competencies and skills. Pearson asks whether the “legitimacy bestowed by showcasing their wares on a recognised media outlet lure fans out of previously closed networks into the arms of the powerful corporations” (Pearson 2010, p. 87). The gift economy should suit the demands of fans, Scott believes (cited in Pearson 2010, p. 87). Ideally it suits the demands of all parties.

The voluntary work of fans is relevant for the sourcing of photographs in the professional news media. Nevertheless, it is questionable whether the concept of gift culture and the literature on fandom are useful in understanding the amateur approach in professional news media beyond the enthusiasm of devoted professional amateurs interested in the medium and/or technology of photography and beyond those fans who capture celebrities (or other objects of desire) comparable to paparazzi photographers (see Chapter 3.2). The ease with which digital photographs can be taken and the immateriality and simplicity of

distribution have reduced the cost of photography, as reflected in the non-exclusiveness of large numbers of free pictures online and in the generally low royalties paid for photographs by professional news media (Gambarini 2010, interview; Seewald 2010, interview; Sonntag 2010, interview). The devaluing of many (if not most) photographs as products (and thus as gifts) suggests their value as components of everyday communication, reinforcing the visual quote concept (see Chapter 3.1).

Referring to the London bombings, Coomes said:

“Most people who sent photos in didn’t even think about it [payment]. There were a couple of people who did ask for payment, and that was fine. Some went on to sell them to various agencies to syndicate them and make some money. Some didn’t, as they didn’t want to make profit. They just happened to be there” (2010, interview)

One of the witnesses, Adam Stacey, whose grainy portrait became one of the best-known photographs of the tragedy, said, “I didn’t think of the image as my property. It would have seemed so mercenary to make money from it” (Dear 2006). Relevant here are the ethical considerations and the conflict between journalistic ideals, individual perspectives and commercial interests (cf. Martin & Souder 2009, p. 127), which also applies to some people who use photographs to share what they have experienced.

### ***Cost-saving strategies***

Several interviewees, some of them apparently uncomfortably, referred to amateur photographs in relation to cost-saving strategies of the professional news media. A common cost-saving strategy for newspapers is to economise on the printing process that constitutes, according to Ferguson, “about 20% of cash operating expenses” (2006, p. 309). For example, as part of major restructuring at Fairfax Media in Australia, two printing plants will be shut down in Sydney and Melbourne in 2014. Furthermore, the Melbourne-based newspaper *The Age* reduced its format from a broadsheet to a tabloid size in March 2013 (Zappone 2012). Other news media tend to print either smaller, fewer copies, less frequently, or they have even stopped printing altogether. Many others are in the

process of discussing if, when and how to make the step from the combination of print and online towards digital-only news media outlets, as discussed in Chapter 3.6.

Another common way to economise on production costs is to make news media staff redundant. Fairfax announced in Australia in 2012 that 1900 staff members would lose their jobs over the following three years (Zappone 2012). It is not only people involved in the printing process who are affected by such job cuts, but also news media workers such as editors, writers and staff photographers; 20 per cent of the 1900 staff lost at Fairfax Australia are from cuts in editorial (Zappone 2012). The State of the News Media Report on the situation of American journalism shows a similar trend. For the first time since 1978, US newspapers employ fewer than 40000 people full-time (State of the News Media 2013). Whilst the numbers differ in different parts of the world, the trajectories of the professional news media are comparable in all countries presented in this research.

Further cost-saving strategies include “acquisition or partnerships with firms possessing advanced content creation technologies” as well as “acquisition of content that can be repurposed for other media or segmented for specialised audiences” (Shaver & Shaver 2006, p. 642). Part of the latter is the centralisation of media production, according to which professionals might work for more than one news media outlet. One interviewee, German picture editor Claudia Sonntag, mentioned that she works for eight media outlets in parallel. According to her, a story, for example on healthy food, will be produced for publication in one magazine. Slightly modified, condensed or adjusted, the same story will be published in other magazines. The re-use of photographs in such a centralised environment means fewer photography assignments and fewer photographs sold, which challenges professional photographers who aim to make a living from photography (Sonntag 2010, interview). The use of repurposed photographs for several stories and outlets can also be seen as one of the reasons why photography in professional news media has become more illustrative. Thus cost-saving strategies have an impact on what professional news media content constitutes, and whether and how stories are told (see Chapters 3.3; 3.6).

Although amateur photographs were often seen as either free or less-expensive photographs, interviewees did not usually speak of cost-cutting strategies as the main motivation for the sourcing of amateur photographs. These were largely sourced for several overlapping reasons, such as the lack of professional images or the demand for more pictures, the search for particular content or the gap in the back of the paper, as discussed in previous chapters of this thesis (see Chapters 3.2; 3.3; 3.6). Nevertheless, resources were raised as an important additional consideration that was taken into account when news media workers decided to source and use amateur photographs.

### ***The cost efficiency of amateur photographs***

Interviewees demonstrated controversial views on the cost efficiency of amateur photographs. Although they said that amateur photographs usually cost less than employing or assigning photographers, the hidden costs of sourcing amateur photographs, such as elaborate validation processes, are comparatively high, as they involve more effort and time (Fischmann 2010; Henningham 2010, interview; Krug & Wellnitz 2010, interview; Mackowski 2010, interview). Interviewee Lucy, production manager at *The Monthly*, said that to clear the rights to use an amateur photograph, it would take “an hour or two” of his work time as opposed to “five minutes at an image library. [...] So it’s not a big deal if it’s a few [amateur] images an issue, but if it were every image that would be sort of a significant amount of time” (2011, interview).

The manifold issues with which news media workers who are involved in the sourcing of amateur photographs are confronted include: the demands of dealing with payments and legal issues, the challenges that can be involved in processing large quantities of photographs, and the demand for quality, as discussed in Chapter 3.5. Additionally, the challenges of dealing with people one does not know, or with people who do not know the needs of the media industry, can make the sourcing of amateur photographs time-consuming and inefficient (see Chapter 3.4).

Other research confirms controversial perspectives on the cost-efficiency of amateur material in the professional news media. According to an international

study (Singer et al. 2011), news media workers in smaller markets such as Belgium and Croatia perceived amateur content as a “cost saving strategy or at least a way to use limited resources more efficiently.” While one of their research participants suggested that news media should “get rid of the idea that USC is cost saving,” another one said that it is “a cost-efficient way” or even was “the only way” to publish hyper-local content (Vujnovic 2011, p. 149). Vujnovic, who belonged to the research team, concludes that this might indicate that amateur content could be part “of an emerging media business model that incorporates the labor of audiences as well as journalists” (2011, p. 150).

### ***Rosters, business hours and staffing issues***

At the *Leader Community Newspapers*, staffing issues were cited as another reason for sourcing amateur photographs. Because of the defined number of employed photographers, the lack of additional resources and the timing of some news, editors have to decide on the priority of an event, whether it is worth sending a photographer, whether no photograph is needed or whether an amateur photograph or a picture from a PR agency or another source can be used. Although the *Leader* is a collection of weekly papers that focuses on community themes rather than on news as it happens, *MaroonDAH Leader* editor Bryan Allchin referred to a truck accident to illustrate this issue. He said that he did not have a staff photographer available to capture the incident, and for this reason sourced a photograph that a bystander had taken (Allchin 2010, interview; see Chapter 3.6). Allchin said: “If it’s a case of we couldn’t get there physically, for whatever reason—it was scheduling, the photographer was sick—obviously then I would use whatever I can” (2010, interview). Part of this challenge is that employed *Leader* photographers usually worked within business hours and were not always available when needed beyond this time frame.

Interviewee *Leader* photographer Michelle Kelcey said:

“I think we do need it [supplied photographs],<sup>63</sup> because there are some things we just can’t actually obtain ourselves. Just as an example: the

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<sup>63</sup> At the *Leader*, the category ‘supplied’ includes amateur photographs, but also other photographs such as pictures from PR agencies. This situation points to the need to investigate the accommodation of PR photographs in the professional news media.

events that happen after hours: If there is a function on one night. We finish at 5.30pm. Then we can't get to work because it's at 8.30pm or something. There are a few photographers that do work at night. They do social photos, but not on the papers I work on there is not a night work. Weekend is possible, but that's usually sport. Working in business hours was appealing to the job" (2010, interview).

*Manningham Leader* editor Mackowski said: "I might have to contact somebody and say, Look, we were short-staffed when this and that happens, could you maybe take some photos and send them in" (2010, interview). Mackowski said also that people might forget to tell editors about an event or might tell them about it too late, so that staff photographers are already booked and cannot be sent. In such a case she would invite people to send photographs and say: "How about you take a picture and send it in. [...]. And if it just can't be organised for one reason or another we might just take theirs" (Mackowski 2010, interview).

### ***Internal amateurs***

Cost is also a factor in an increasingly-flexible workforce, the merging of professional roles (Compton & Benedetti 2010, p. 490) and the adoption of freelance and part-time work (Deuze 2007, p. 170). Scholars suggest that "labor rationalization in combination with the use of new technologies, shrinking audiences, 24-hour news cycles, and intensified hyper-commercialization is fundamentally reorganizing the division of labor in newsrooms" (Compton & Benedetti 2010, p. 487). Or as Vujnovic writes, fewer news media workers must "pick up the slack left by departed colleagues but also must take on new responsibilities" (Vujnovic 2011, p. 139). As part of their new responsibilities, some news media workers monitor amateur photographs (see Chapter 3.6) and other content submitted online (Vujnovic 2011, p. 140). Others search for photographs in personal online archives, as described in Chapter 3.3.

Further, in some organisations, news media workers without a strong background in photography are nowadays expected not only to research stories and write articles but also to capture images. While this is not an entirely new phenomenon, since in the past writers would also occasionally take photographs (Deuze 2007,

p. 161), the ease of using digital cameras, the rationalisation of labor and the more flexible organisation of news content-making have opened the doors wider for internal amateurs. Therefore another aspect that must be considered in terms of using amateur photographs are photographs taken “by our reporters”, as Dan Peled, picture editor at the news agency *AAP* expressed it (2011, interview). Throughout the thesis the term ‘amateur photographs’ is used to mean photographs taken by non-professionals outside professional news media (Andén-Papadoloulos & Pantti 2011, p. 9). However, news media also collaborate with ‘internal amateurs’ whose photographs are not necessarily identifiable as amateurish, as they are presented and distributed as professional material.

Peled said that photographs that are taken by journalists are

“a very big part of our offerings on a daily bases [...]. Reporter photos would be the main source of amateur photographs. Public photos not so much, sometimes. Mainly big events... [...]. So all our journalists, and if I’m not mistaken there are at least 100 journalists around the country. And almost all of them have a camera, and if they don’t have their own camera they certainly have access to one. And they do photos and video on a daily basis now. This started about five years ago when we started to encourage it and we sort of asked nicely if it’s OK. These days it’s part of their contract, and it’s in their contract that they take photos. Of course the reporters write the story, that’s their first priority, but it is expected of them that a few stories a week will be accompanied by photos. That’s of course if there wasn’t a photographer there. Some of them do amazing work and some of them don’t” (2011, interview).

Peled continued:

“We have good quality small cameras, some have big, quality DSLRs and you always get one or two people that are keen and that are happy to carry the big camera around and they do great work. We had great photos when we were doing the Victorian bushfires and the Queensland floods but also a lot of court cases that we cover in small places where we don’t have photographers, like Adelaide and Perth; they are very active there and they take photos every day. Even to the point that I would rely on a

certain reporter to take photos of a good-size event and I would have the trust that the photos would be good enough for me to treat them as professional photos. So I guess you can regard that as amateur photography. Look, I imagine it happens in other organisations as well, but I'm not sure. These days reporters are expected to be a one-person band, photo, video, audio all in one; and we have reporters doing this" (2011, interview).

Other interviewees spoke of comparable tendencies (Coomes 2010, interview; Gambarini 2010, interview; Henningham 2010, interview), reinforcing that media convergence partly stimulated by economic reasons has blurred not only the lines between different journalistic areas and outlets, but also between different task areas of news media workers (Huang et al. 2006, p. 253). The latter has evoked discussion among academics and practitioners on whether this is a positive development (Huang et al. 2006, p. 224). Interviewees had their doubts.

For example, Leigh Henningham, picture editor at *The Age*, perceived the tendency to use internal amateur photographs as a disadvantage:

"The other downside is, sometimes journalists on the job think they can take pictures too. We don't need to send a photographer, we just send the journalist. He can take the picture too. Not on a day-to-day basis, but it can happen on overseas assignments. Recently we sent our reporter down to Antarctica. She was there two or three weeks. She also tried to take pictures. It ended up being a disaster photographically because she just couldn't do that as well as trying to write her stories as well as trying to email her stories out. [...] Nine times out of 10 a photographer would go with a journalist, but often a journalist would go without a photographer. Often a journalist would go on a job to Dubai or something, commission a local photographer wherever the job was. Nine times out of ten our foreign correspondents hire a local photographer to do it. Occasionally they might take pictures themselves. Usually it's not that good, even if you can shoot with a digital camera and you can email that file usually the picture isn't that great compared to what you are trying to get from a professional photographer" (2010, interview).

Interviewee John French, picture editor at the *Leader*, made a similar comment:

“Some reporters might take a happy snap with a camera, not very often but sometimes. Once again they are good writers and reporters, but they are lousy photographers. [...] In regional Victoria and regional Australia, they make sure the journalist takes photos and everything and they spend a lot of time lecturing those people and showing them how to do those sort of things, but it’s all a bit difficult. They do a reasonable job. They never do a great job” (2010, interview).

While these observations indicate collegiality and moral support towards specialised staff photographers, they also suggest strong resistance to “cross-departmentalized ways” of news content-making (Deuze 2005a, p. 451), which have been implemented in some professional news media outlets for more than a decade (Huang et al. 2006, p. 225). In addition, they suggest that there is a continuing need for training opportunities that allow news media workers to produce content more flexibly.

Some interviewees spoke of their role in training other news media workers. For example, *DPA* photographer Maurizio Gambarini said: “We also encourage our journalists to take photos in cases when we don’t have time.” Afterwards he would talk with them about the outcome: “We definitely want them to produce good outcomes” (Gambarini 2010, interview). Likewise, *AAP* picture editor Peled said that he would give journalists training in photography, which puts news content-makers, including professional photographers and photo editors, in the role of educators, not just of amateurs outside, but also of those within the news media organisations.

Peled explained:

“Right now I’m in the middle of going to all the bureaus; we have two in New Zealand that we just recently established, and I just went there to give them all cameras and give them training on how to shoot, how to send and what we’re after in terms of the caption and all that. It’s a big part of it and you have to keep doing it because people move, people change; people are lazy so you need to remind them how important it is to take photos. It’s also really important to congratulate them on good photos

and to just keep their fire going; yes, so training is a really important part of it. You can't just give them cameras and before we actually realised that we came to the bureaus and all the cameras were still in the box. They had not been taken out of the box; they were in the cupboard somewhere. But the more they do it, the better they get and the more enthusiastic they become. But especially in the beginning there was this resistance, you know, 'it's not my job, I'm not being paid to take photos. I'm a reporter, I'm a writer and that's all I do.' [...] The main thing I tell them is that those photos sell your stories, and the other way around. We offer a much better product if we have stories, photos, video—all the offerings from the same story" (2011, interview).

In times of economic difficulties, news media workers need to be flexible and open to change (Huang et al. 2006, p. 256). However, scholars point out that specialisation and versatility should be of equal rank (Huang et al. 2006, p. 255). For photography that also means that the professional approach remains important.

### ***Amateur photographs as subsidies?***

Identifying viable business models for news media remains an elusive and difficult task. For professional news media, advertising is seen as the "primary source of revenue" (Herbert & Thurman 2007, p. 208). Additionally, several organisations have started to experiment with the sale of online content (Chyi 2012; Herbert & Thurman 2007).<sup>64</sup> Others believe "that democracy may not be best served, and may indeed be extremely ill served, by media regulated according to purely market principles" (Petley 2012, p. 533). Hence practitioners experiment with a number of funding options, which are independent of the commercial factors of news content-making (Kaye & Quinn 2010). Others claim

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<sup>64</sup> Investigating which news media content costs money and why, Herbert and Thurman show that all UK online newspapers selected for their analysis charge for some content. General interest content is provided free of charge, whereas "content that is closely identified with the newspaper brand" is sold (2007, p. 223). Additionally, they found that the selected online newspapers broaden their commercial range, which from their point of view indicates that professional news media acknowledge "the need to diversify their revenue streams" (Herbert & Thurman 2007, pp. 222-223).

that professional news media can only have a future when subsidized by governments (Nichols & McChesney 2010).<sup>65</sup>

The propensity to give photographs away speaks for the usefulness of amateur photographs as subsidies to professional news media. Amateur photographs can be understood as indirect payments contributed by amateur photographers. Accordingly, amateur photographers can be recognised as news media volunteers who help to economise on the production of news media content. The concept of amateur photographs as subsidies also reinforces the understanding of non-professional material as additional elements that neither “adequately replace the diminished labor capacity of shrunken newsrooms” (Compton & Benedetti 2010, p. 490), nor change the editorial authority of news media workers who work for a “system in which information remains a commodity” (Vujnovic 2011, p. 150). However, my research also indicates that the amateur can only be one of several elements, and is unlikely to be the sole sustainer of news content-making. “So, while it is great to have this from time to time, you can’t build a sustainable business on it [...]. It’s icing on the cake. It’s cream,” Turi Munthe, Chief Executive Officer of the London-based picture agency Demotex, said (2010, interview).

Although it is largely unclear what a financial model of future professional news media will look like, authors agree that the business volume is likely to be smaller than in recent decades (Vujnovic 2011, p. 143). Revenue enhancement, as well as strategies to lower production costs, define the current state of professional news media, and will have considerable implications for the future news media industry (Albarran, Chan-Olmsted & Wirth 2006, p. 642). The shrinking numbers of photographers in professional news media, the limited resources, and the

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<sup>65</sup> Subsidies are “payments provided to firms to help make firms more competitive.” They can be either direct payments or indirect payments including “forgoing of taxes or the provision of some good or service without charge” (Barbezat 2006, p. 721). In professional news media, subsidies are often perceived as a risk to democratic dialogue (Nichols & McChesney 2010). However, in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, US journalism subsidies for print and delivery of newspapers were developed in order to expand the range, quality and quantity of journalistic content (Nichols & McChesney, 2010). Referring to these historical trajectories, Nichols and McChesney suggest that some subsidies can be useful to promote and encourage democracy (2010).

ongoing need to reduce production costs, point to a continuing role for amateur photographs in the professional news.

### ***Conclusion***

Professional news media, either private, partly or fully subsidized, have a limited amount of resources that can be used to produce content (Martin & Souder 2009, p. 128). These resources have shrunk in recent years, largely due to an outdated business model, which so far has not been replaced by a model that can sustain the industry. This challenging situation has caused a number of cost-saving strategies, including the reduction of costs for production material. This chapter has demonstrated that amateur photographs were generally understood either as free or inexpensive photographs used for several overlapping reasons, one of which is the need to cut the cost of news content-making.

The attitudes to paying amateur photographs were unsettled and diverse in 2010/2011 when the interviews took place. While some quality media outlets tend to pay for amateur photographs, others perceive them as free material. All news media workers believed that using amateur photographs is less expensive than assigning photographers, and welcomed amateurs' tendency to contribute photographs voluntarily. Yet the overall financial value of amateur photographs is perceived as limited, partly due to the increased workload related to tasks such as transferring money and checking sources (see also Chapter 3.4).

Nevertheless, the "unpaid labor" (Vujnovic 2011, p.146) of amateurs is relevant for the professional news media, especially as their contributions have become an integral element of the freely-available online news sites and participatory spaces, which I have described in previous chapters of this thesis (see Chapters 3.6; 3.7). Therefore amateur photographs could be considered one of a variety of contributions that have the objective of sustaining the professional news media system (see also Vujnovic 2011, p. 150).

## Conclusion

In the first decade of the millennium, a number of authors claimed that the rise of the amateur would lead to fundamental changes in media and society. My research has found that so far this is not the case—at least not in the context of sourcing amateur photographs in the professional news media. Does this mean that amateur photographs are irrelevant to the professional news media? Certainly not. In fact, the research underpinning this thesis indicates an openness to, and dependence on, amateur photographs on the part of the professional news media, and that the availability of amateur photography is influencing sourcing practices. Nevertheless, the presence of amateur photography has not significantly changed the system in which it is embedded and is thus not as disruptive as several authors anticipated. Specifically, this thesis has confirmed that news-workers still maintain the principles and basics of news content-making and a position of control, making key decisions over the use of amateur photographs in professional news. This decision-making has implications for our understanding of the role and use of amateur material in the professional news media and in the wider changing media environment.

### ***The impact of the amateur***

Amateur photographs of unpredictable, highly newsworthy events are especially valued by news media workers, particularly when professional photographers are not able to capture an incident, when the event takes place over a longer period of time or happens in a large, inaccessible space. Amateur photographs provide evidence and personalise news, reinforcing the special role played by people as eyewitnesses to news events. Thus while in the 1990s the truth-value of digital photography was queried and the personal perspective of amateur work was often perceived as the counterpart of journalism, amateur photography has partly adopted the evidential role of photographs in the professional news media. In particular, the speed of delivery of digital files and the amateur aesthetic of low picture quality have restored the role of photographs with regard to their reference to and construction of reality. Amateurish photographs signal authenticity and truth, standing in contrast to pictures that are perceived as

professional (and beautiful). My research has also suggested the growing value of the personal perspective and the “move away from objective realism towards multiple subjectivities” (O’Shaughnessy 2009, p. 86).

Further relationships exist between the sourcing of amateur photographs and news values such as conflict and human interest. This indicates that news workers source amateur photographs according to the established codes and needs of the professional news media system. Additionally, amateur photographs are valued for the access that amateurs may have, due, for example, to their occupation or their affiliation with a certain community. Nevertheless, the strong link between the amplitude and unpredictability of news events suggests that amateur photographs are less important in the predictable, bread-and-butter business of content-making. As most news is either predictable or produced on the basis of press releases (Deuze 2007, p. 161) the amateur impact must remain limited.

This thesis has also demonstrated the relevance of amateur photographs for what is understood as low news value content. In this context amateur photographs are conceived as useful to fill those spaces that are understood as less important. This includes gaps that require small pictures or spaces that need to be filled in the back of a news outlet, as well as online formats such as picture galleries. While amateur photographs are used for both online and print media, my research has indicated that there is a stronger relationship between free online news sites and the sourcing of amateur photographs than there is with print news. In fact, many amateur photographs in online news can be understood as fodder, necessary to meet the demand for large numbers of images. Using amateur photographs of lower news value is also one of the overall cost-saving strategies of the professional news media. Their use seems especially relevant in the context of tabloid and local media content. Other amateur photographs are recognised as interactive elements in participatory spaces accommodated to entertain and to build rapport and connection with the audience rather than to convey content that is considered important. Amateur photographs are thus sourced for both very high- and low-value news. By identifying this relationship, my research confirms Northrup’s suggestion that amateur photographs can be found at the “extreme ends of the news spectrum” (Northrup 2006, p. 37).

### ***The authority of professional news media***

Amateur photographs are understood as raw, additional or potential elements of news content-making and are subject to a translation process. The concept of the visual quote explains this process and illustrates how news media workers not only accommodate but also distance themselves from amateur work. Although the comparison between photographs and verbal quotes has limitations, the concept of the visual quote illustrates how the use of cameras as tools for everyday communication has had an impact on the professional news media system. It also underlines the importance of examining the use of amateur photographs as a practice of sourcing. The finding confirms the influence of news media workers in daily decision-making and reflects that amateur photographs are used and prescribed according to a news practice that is well established.

The thesis has proposed that agencies play a role in the sourcing of amateur photographs, as they adapt amateur material to professional standards. This process helps to highlight some amateur photographs (such as photographs used to provide evidence or to personalise news), yet can make the origin of other amateur photographs, such as illustrative images, less obvious. The relevance of such less recognisable amateur photographs is best described by what Frosh called the “significance of the ordinary, the unremarkable and the overlooked,” in reference to stock photography (2002, p. 173). Agency-derived amateur photographs blend into the larger pool of standardised images and become almost invisible (cf. Frosh 2002, p. 171). Accordingly, it is important to recognise not only the presence and absence of amateur photographs in the professional news media, but also the visibility and invisibility of them. The hidden status of some amateur photographs reinforces the point that while amateurs take photographs that make it into the news, their influence remains rather limited. It also highlights the role of routine sources in the process of accommodating amateur photographs, which has so far been largely overlooked in research on the amateur in the professional news media.

The aforementioned aspects show that my project has supported the status of amateur photographs as sources in the news. Additionally, I have shown their utility in participatory spaces designed for less important content. Photography in such spaces can be understood as a tool that enables people to engage with the

professional news media in a cheap, simple and entertaining way. At the same time, it allows professional news media to reach people and to source photographs easily and effortlessly, maintain customer relations and experiment with new ways of content-making. The use of amateur photographs in participatory spaces indicates that amateur photographs, but also photographs more generally, have found an interactive role in the news. While the thesis has demonstrated that news media workers often understand the sourcing of amateur photographs as a positive development, as there is a defined place and need for them, the attempt to create a distance—between different content types and spaces—also illustrates the perceived otherness of amateur work in the professional news media context (Hermida 2011, p. 186).

My project has also confirmed that people have a “role at the initial access/observation stage, an increasingly commonplace role at the post-publication interpretation stage—but relatively little impact on the crucial stages in between” (Hermida 2011, p. 178). The influence of the amateur remains first and foremost at the very beginning of the picture production chain, as amateurs are usually treated as suppliers of photographs that may or may not be used depending on professional needs. In addition, amateurs become relevant in the “post publication [...] stage” (Hermida 2011, p. 178), in how people comment on, like, or recommend photographs to others, which refers to the interactive value of photography for the online space and the potential influence of the amateur for future professional work. Thus while amateurs are requested to supply photographs, and people are invited to interact with the news media, the “stages in between” (Hermida 2011, p. 178) remain in professional hands.

My research has also demonstrated that amateur photographs used as source material in the conventional news context are largely subordinate to established professional principles and practices for reasons concerning ethics, legality, credibility and quality of content. News media workers usually monitor amateur photographs and use a number of methods to ensure that the sourced visual material is reliable, meets legal requirements and thus suits the needs and standards of professional news. I revealed a variety of techniques for monitoring amateur photographs. Some professional news media communicate with individuals before using their photographs. Others will use them and deal with the

consequences later, or apply methods of transparency to be able to accommodate unverifiable material. While once again these findings demonstrate the impact of the amateur, professional news media are largely hanging on to existing standards and norms, rather than collapsing under the pressure of the amateur.

The ways news media workers in my project spoke about amateur photographs, or sometimes did not want to talk about them, supports the position and source-bias of the professional news media. Amateur photographs are generally identified as unreliable, low-quality material and were framed in opposition to professional photographs. Generally news media workers favour working with professional photographers, news and photo agencies, which confirms Leon Sigal's research conducted in the 1970s, which revealed that the need for efficiency leads to the preference for standardised procedures and therefore to the use of routine channels (Sigal 1973, p. 119). Additionally, news media workers tend to play down the relevance of amateur work. For example, although interviewees in my project recognised the increasing use of amateur photographs over the past decade, amateurs are generally still understood as non-routine sources, arising through coincidence. While this can be perceived as a way to suppress and deny the rise of the amateur, it also indicates that the current sourcing of amateur photographs must be understood as a continuation of a practice that existed prior to the rise of online amateur content, albeit in a less sophisticated form. The acknowledgement of the historical trajectories of amateurs in the professional news media has been a particularly important part of my thesis, and challenges the idea that the presence of amateur material in the professional news media needs to be framed as an emerging phenomenon.

### ***Lessons for the future***

What do the findings from this project mean for the future of professional news media? While my research provides a starting point for further investigation, it cannot answer this question definitively. In fact, the findings could be interpreted in contradictory ways. The sourcing practices used by the professional news media for amateur photographs are possibly symptomatic of a dying industry that is not, or is only slowly and reluctantly, adapting to the new media landscape. In

other words, the findings might be an indicator of a declining news industry that has been in a state of demise for several decades. The resistance interviewees expressed towards adapting to the accommodation of amateur material could also be interpreted as a necessary response, required to protect the professional news media system. Professionalism in the news might even be of greater significance than in the past, in that it may contribute to credible, informative and insightful news for which people might even be willing to pay. Thirdly, the influence described of amateur photography in terms of quoting, personalisation and authentication indicates that the amateur could have a significant long-term impact despite the continuing resistance of the professional news media. Identifying elements of the professional practice of news content-making as it enters a new era—as this thesis has attempted to do—provides useful insights into the strategies for the retention and growth of audiences. Further research is required to determine whether and how the news industry can be sustained and which of the above conclusions will preside in the long run.

Although my project allows several conclusions for the future of professional news media, it does provide useful lessons for industry and research. First and foremost I have confirmed that professional news media practices are enduring despite the accommodation of amateur photographs, in some cases for good reason. For example, quality, responsibility and control mechanisms persist as part of the news media practice. My project has indicated that a certain authority on the side of the professional news media is crucial for the decision-making that is involved in the sourcing of amateur photographs. This authority refers to judgements about content, credibility and ethics as well as aesthetics, which emphasise the news media professional's role in selection and editing, rather than in creation and production practices. I have also found that professional news media partly let go of strict notions of control and apply a more fluid approach to quality control and verification. As the unsettled practices of checking sources in this thesis have reflected, professional news media are in a process of transition and of adapting to the challenges of the changing media landscape, even with the resistance and obstacles that are part of the system.

Further consideration needs to be given to how inclusive or exclusive professional news media should be in fulfilling its role in democratic societies.

Despite this, the findings have indicated that the source-bias of news media workers towards amateurs is not helpful in accommodating amateur material. Perhaps news media workers need to be more like amateurs (in the original sense of the word) in that a shared passion, desire (and need) for reliable news might help to bridge the gap between professional news media and audiences. Is the source bias that I have found only hindering mutual trust that could have a positive effect on the relationship between professional news media and their audiences?

My thesis has also shown that the accommodation of amateur photographs produces several ethical challenges. In particular, the sourcing of amateur photographs in personal online archives and the accommodation of unverified, unauthorised or particularly graphic content is problematic, strengthening findings in recently-published research. I suggest that ethical and respectful interaction must be mutual if collaboration with amateurs in the professional news media is to be sustainable. This includes communication about when, why and how to use amateur photographs and the responsibility of news media workers to make sure material is not exploited, but is used in people's best interests.

Furthermore, my research has demonstrated that amateur photographs are less a substitute for professional photography than an addition to it, indicating that the professional approach to photography is still important, in particular for the predictable processes of news content-making. It has been widely suggested that terms such as amateur have lost their significance (Mortensen 2011b, p. 68). Throughout this thesis I have challenged whether this is truly the case. However, what is apparent is that amateur photography is no longer an antonym for professional photography. Thus amateurs and professionals form a symbiosis, at best "to the advantage of both" (Oxford Dictionaries, Definition of 'symbiosis' in English 2013). Nevertheless, it must be considered who will take photographs if professional news media continue to reduce their resources for photography. Does professional photography need to become more expensive to maintain or raise quality standards? Is the re-use and resale of photographs or the use of amateur photographs really the answer to a failing business model? How do the re-use of photographs and the use of amateur content affect the presentation of reality in the professional news media? Do quality standards become more open

and adjust to the ubiquity of amateurism and the possibility of using amateur photographs as visual quotes? A level of visual competency is needed in a news media environment in which internal amateurs produce or search for photographs and people contribute to the media. Changes in the approach to picture production (including sourcing and taking images) have implications for professional education, as well as for organisational structures and professional practices. If the idea of participatory journalism is taken seriously, it must also be examined whether news content-making including visual literacy should be the subject of basic education for people.

Professional news media need to adjust to the radical changes in the media landscape. To do that, they need to re-evaluate standardised procedures and routine practices. So how are professional news media able to become visible and stand out from the mass of media content in order to provide their service to people? How can other forms of independent online information be incorporated into the professional approach to news content-making without destroying the valuable elements of the system still in place? While the answer to such questions was beyond the scope of my project, I have sought to contribute to the knowledge-base on the future of professional news media. I invite scholars to undertake further practice-oriented research.

### ***The need for further research***

My research was based on the assumption that news media workers source more amateur photographs than ever. While interviewees in my project confirmed this assumption, I did not collect quantitative evidence to verify it, nor did I analyse content independently of what has been said. Consequently, a useful next step flowing from this project would be to quantify the accommodation of amateur photographs and to study systematically and in more detail the kinds of photographs that are submitted, gathered and used. This is particularly important, as most research on amateur photographs in the news focuses on eyewitness photographs.

In this project I have examined the requirements and perspectives of news media workers regarding the reasons why amateur photographs are sourced and how

this affects professional work, with a focus on the decision-making that is part of the practice of sourcing. I have not analysed when, why and how many people participate, or why they choose not to be involved in the process of news. Interviewees suggested that people tend to give photographs away, which speaks to the usefulness of amateur photographers as volunteers. Do people distinguish between commercial and public news media organisations? Are there specific themes and stories that they are willing to support voluntarily? Such research will need to identify people who contribute to the news and to search for consistent terminologies to describe and understand contributors. Part of the role of such research would also be to identify amateur photographs that may be channelled through routine procedures such as the use of news, picture, or PR agencies. I have suggested that news and picture agencies play a key role in the distribution and translation of amateur photographs. The latter in particular remains an under-researched area.

As mentioned above, my findings suggest that tabloid and local media are more likely to embrace amateur work than more serious or national news outlets. However, I did not set out to compare the sourcing practices that occur in different professional news media, perhaps neglecting distinctions between different types of news media outlets. While this could be perceived as a shortcoming in my research, my project focused on media convergence as it occurs in the professional news media, and sought to encompass more general trends in the sourcing practice of amateur photographs. Nevertheless, the research indicates that it is necessary to understand the extent to which the sourcing of amateur photographs occurs across different areas of the professional news media. It must be investigated how methods and methodologies can be adapted to acknowledge the convergence and divergence in the media. Attention also needs to be paid to the practice of sourcing on social media sites and in the context of other forms of mobile publishing that I did not cover in my research. How is the notion of sourcing changing in such environments? Is it dissolving due to the extent and characteristics of sources and materials that make it into the news (Kristensen & Mortensen 2013, p. 355)? Further attention needs to be paid to the historical trajectories of the sourcing of amateur photographs in professional news media, as historical studies in this field are still limited.

Last but not least, in this thesis I have stressed the significance of photographs in the professional news media. Many researchers have overlooked photography when investigating amateur work, or have written about amateur content in more general terms. I have attempted to address this shortcoming by examining the sourcing of amateur photographs, taking into account the practice of sourcing, the production of pictures, the characteristics of photographic images, as well as the history and interdisciplinary of photography practice. While I have argued that the concept of photojournalism is insufficient for describing the sourcing of amateur photographs in the professional news, the findings have suggested that the work and roles traditionally attributed to photojournalists and photo editors remain a significant component of professional news media practice.

“Photography is now so much a part of our daily lives that our familiarity causes us to overlook it,” Freund wrote in 1980 (Freund 1980, p. 4). If this was true more than 30 years ago, then it is even more applicable today. Cameras are build-in parts of mobile devices that accompany us wherever we are, photography has “reached an apex of effortlessness” (Jaeger 2007, p. 6), and the internet is used by large numbers of people to share millions of images daily.

In 2011 Andén-Papadopoulos and Pantti proclaimed the “rising importance of photography as an all-pervading social practice and mode of public communication” as people embrace the camera to communicate the mundane and outstanding experiences of everyday life (Andén-Papadopoulos & Pantti 2011, p. 10). It is questionable whether photographs are always required, wanted or used. Regardless, picture-recording devices have become commonplace and their use extends the way people capture, communicate and perceive the world. My thesis has contributed to the body of research on the sourcing of amateur photographs and has sought to encourage scholars in communication, media and journalism studies to take the production of visual news content more seriously.

The desire for news is as old as humankind; so is the attempt to communicate in pictures, as the oldest cave paintings illustrate (for example Newton 2001, p. 17; p. 20). In this thesis I have shown that so far the change in scale of amateur material such as photographs has not fundamentally transformed the professional news media. While the media today are dramatically different from the media in previous centuries, certain routines, values, norms, and structures

are still in place, and adapt rather reluctantly to changes that we are yet fully able to understand. The professional approach to news content-making thus persists, but with news media workers resistant to allowing people to become not only suppliers, but also creators of the news (Hermida 2011, p. 184).

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## Appendices

### 1. News media outlets and agencies

In the next section I briefly introduce the companies involved in this research. Firstly, I give an overview of professional news media including newspapers, news magazines and a public broadcaster. Secondly, I introduce the news and picture agencies that I included in this research.

#### ***The Age***

The Melbourne-based newspaper *The Age* was first published in 1854, and since then has been documenting and influencing life in Australia (Fairfax Media, *The Age* 2013). The printed newspaper has a circulation of between 194,257 (Monday to Friday), 209,024 (Sunday) and 239,439 (Saturday) copies and a readership between 760,000 (Monday to Friday), 625,000 (Sunday) and 738,000 (Saturday). *The Age* also produces the *Good Weekend* and *Sunday Life* magazines and books, as well as digital editions that can be accessed via computer, tablets and mobile phone applications (Fairfax Media, AD Centre, *The Age* 2013). In March 2013 the newspaper changed from broadsheet to tabloid format. *The Age* has been also affected by job cuts of 1,900 positions in Fairfax Media, as announced in 2012 (Zappone 2012). This also includes photojournalism redundancies (ABC 2014).

#### ***The Australian***

*The Australian* was first published in 1964. Owned by News Limited and identified as Rupert Murdoch's flagship (Cryle 2008), it is the only national broadsheet newspaper in Australia. The production of the newspaper is headquartered in Sydney, New South Wales. Additional offices are located in Victoria, South Australia and Queensland. The newspaper is published from Monday to Friday, can be bought nationwide and has a circulation of 116,854 and a readership of 524,000. It covers national and international news and includes business, arts, sports, and lifestyle sections. It focuses on political, social and economic themes that have an impact on Australia. *The Weekend Australian*, published on

Saturdays, has a circulation of 250,186 and a readership of 730,000. *The Australian* publishes a lifestyle magazine, has an online edition and a mobile and tablet application (News Corp Australia, *The Australian* 2013).

### **BBC**

Founded nearly a century ago in London, the *BBC* broadcast its first radio program on 14 November 1922, which “was considered the latest scientific marvel of the age.” In 1936, the *BBC* started to offer the first regular TV service worldwide (BBC, *About the BBC* 2012). Another important historical milestone relevant to this project was the *BBC*’s introduction of an online service in the 1990s. *BBC Online* has existed since November 1997, and by 1998 the website had been recognised as “the leading British Internet content site” (Allan 2006, p. 37). A number of media commentators and scholars have written about the *BBC*’s approach to amateur material (see Chapter 1.3). With its manifold services, the *BBC* seeks to sustain citizenship, promote education, stimulate creativity, represent the UK, bring the world to the UK and deliver the benefits of new communication technologies and services (BBC, *Inside the BBC, Who We Are, Mission and Values* 2012).

### **Herald Sun**

Published in Melbourne, the *Herald Sun* was established in 1990 following the merging of the former Melbourne-based morning paper *The Sun News Pictorial* and afternoon sister paper *The Herald* (Herald Sun, *About us* 2012). *The Herald Sun* is printed seven days a week and focuses on popular journalism, which includes sections such as sport and entertainment (Herald Sun 2012) commonly described as “infotainment” (Deuze 2005c, p. 862; see also Sparks 2000, p. 14f). The printed newspaper has between 1,439,000 (Monday to Friday) and 1,188,000 (Saturday) readers and a circulation of between 399,638 (Monday to Friday) and 399,730 (Saturday) (News Corp Australia, *Herald Sun*, 2013). *The Sunday Herald Sun* has a readership of 1,130,000 and a circulation of 470,326 printed copies (News Corp Australia, *Sunday Herald Sun*, 2013). Additionally, *The Herald Sun* publishes a website, and offers its content digitally via iPad and mobile phone applications (News Corp Australia, *Herald Sun*, 2013).

### ***The Leader Community Newspapers***

The Melbourne-based *Leader Community Newspapers* chain publishes suburban newspapers (such as *The Maroondah Leader*, *The Manningham Leader*, *The Heidelberg Leader* and *The Diamond Valley Leader*) that inform the specific communities about local issues. The target audience includes people between 25 and 54 years, mothers with young children, homeowners, and older people (so called baby-boomers). Unlike other outlets in this project, these weekly papers are sustained 100% by advertising and are delivered to people free of charge. 1,503,630 copies of its 33 titles are distributed on a weekly basis. *The Leader* also publishes a website, which is now a separately-branded part of the Herald Sun site and offers digital copies of the printed newspapers in PDF format (News Corp Australia, *Leader*, 2013).

### ***The Monthly***

Australian publisher Morry Schwartz established *The Monthly* in 2005 in response to the perceived gap in the nation's intellectual journalistic landscape (Naparstek 2011, interview). As the name suggests, the magazine is published on a monthly basis (11 times per year). While this might be considered atypical for news media, *The Monthly* "features investigative reportage, critical essays, thoughtful reviews and whimsical reflections on the state of affairs" (Magpile, *The Monthly*, About 2013) and thus can be considered a news magazine. In contrast with other publications, the magazine is produced by a small number of staff, and does not employ writers or photographers. Rather, *The Monthly* pays freelance authors and largely sources photographs, thereby outsourcing an important part of news content-making that traditionally takes place within a professional news media institution (Naparstek 2011, interview). 30,955 copies are circulated every month, and 149,000 people read the magazine (The Monthly, About 2013).

### ***Der Spiegel***

*Der Spiegel* (German for 'The Mirror') is a weekly news magazine founded after World War II in Germany. With a circulation of 896,298 printed magazines per week, *Der Spiegel* has the highest sales of any news magazine in Germany (Spiegel QC 2013). *Der Spiegel* is highly respected for its investigative journalism, political analysis, extensive international coverage, and for the quality and

reliability of its content (The Economist 2002). To ensure the latter, *Der Spiegel* employs highly-skilled journalists, as well as staff members who verify the facts (Silverman 2010). Alongside the weekly magazine, *Der Spiegel* publishes an online edition that is provided partly in English. Additionally, *Der Spiegel* produces TV programs, digital publications for tablets and mobile phones, as well as a number of specialist books and magazines (Spiegel Online 2013).

### ***Der Stern***

The German weekly magazine *Der Stern* (German for 'The Star') was founded in 1948. Its creator, Henry Nannen (1913–1996), became a well-known journalist, who influenced not only politics but also the understanding and education of journalism in Germany. Nannen established the brand *Der Stern* for the specific purpose of publishing investigative journalism. In the 1970s it became one of the most important magazines in the West German media landscape (Nannen, 1988). The magazine is known for its strong visual language. Through its selection of current affairs reporting, *Der Stern* aims to show the human side of the news. 812,429 copies are sold every week throughout Germany. (G+J Media Sales, Stern 2013) In addition, the magazine and the related digital outlets for online and mobile, offer assistance on practical themes such as health, finances and justice (stern.de 2013).

### ***The Sydney Morning Herald***

The Australian newspaper *Sydney Morning Herald* is also owned by Fairfax Media and has been affected by the above changes. The newspaper was founded in 1831 as a weekly newspaper, the *Sydney Herald*, consisting of only four pages and with a circulation of 750 copies. In 1840 it became a daily newspaper (History of The Sydney Morning Herald 2012). *The Sydney Morning Herald* has a print circulation of between 200,612 (Monday to Friday) and 276,318 (Saturday) copies (Fairfax Media, The Sydney Morning Herald 2013), and a readership between 773,000 and 863,000 (Fairfax Media AD Centre, The Sydney Morning Herald 2013). Alongside its print products (including the newspaper and a magazine), *The Sydney Morning Herald* offers a website and digital editions for mobile and tablet. The corresponding Sunday paper, *The Sun-*

*Herald*, has a circulation of 321,636 and a readership of 872,000 (Fairfax Media, Fairfax Publications, The Sun-Herald 2013).

### ***Die Zeit***

*Die Zeit* (German for 'The Time') is a weekly German national newspaper, founded in 1946 and known for its high-quality journalism. Based in the north-west German city of Hamburg, it is owned by Zeit Verlag Gerd Bucerius GmbH & Co. KG. With a circulation of more than 500,000 sold copies every week, it is the leading weekly newspaper in Germany (Die Zeit Verlagsgruppe, Unternehmen, 2013). *Die Zeit* publishes on themes such as politics, society, economics, occupational career, culture, lifestyle, travel, technology, knowledge, studies and sports (Zeit Online 2013). Additionally, the editorial staff produce additional regional pages for editions in East Germany, Switzerland and Austria (Zeit Verlagsgruppe, Presse 2013). *Die Zeit* also produces several online publications, a number of special print magazines, and offers events as well as professional development opportunities (Die Zeit Verlagsgruppe, Marken und Produkte 2013).

### ***DPA***

The German press agency *DPA* was founded in 1949. It has offices and staff members in more than 100 countries, and employs about 1,200 people. It is the biggest German news agency, and is one of the four biggest news agencies in the world, the others being Reuters, Associated Press and Agence France Press. German industry subsidies financially supported the *DPA* until the 1960s. Since then it has operated as an independent company structured as a cooperative. To facilitate journalistic independence, its associates are not authorised to own more than 1.5 % of the agency (Hartman 2009). The *DPA* delivers about 1,200,000 million text services per year. In the German core service, that amounts to 220,000 words every day. The *DPA* also distributes news in English, Spanish and Arabic. Additionally, it produces photographs, graphics and multimedia content. On a daily base, *DPA* sends about 1,500 pictures to its customers and has a database of 17,000,000 images (DPA, Unternehmen, Zahlen und Fakten 2013).

## **AAP**

The *AAP* (Australian Associated Press) was founded in 1935 with the purpose of sharing the costs among Australian metropolitan newspapers for bringing international news to Australia. In 1935 the agency employed 12 staffers, had its main office in Melbourne and two additional offices in London and New York. The agency is now headquartered in Sydney, has more than 800 employees worldwide, and collaborates with a number of international and national agencies. Its mission is to offer Australia a “cost-effective, unbiased, reliable, comprehensive news and information resource.” Since 2012, *AAP* has provided content and a number of related services and solutions in three key areas including editorial, business and publishing. Services cover, for example, a newswire, (social) media monitoring, and editorial production (AAP, About 2012; AAP, Explore Partnerships 2012).

## **Demotix**

After *Demotix* was launched in 2008, the site became known for its role in the coverage of the political unrest after the Iranian elections in 2009. Similar to traditional news wires or picture agencies, *Demotix* acts as an agent between those who produce the content and those who publish it in a journalistic context (Munthe 2011, interview). In contrast to photo agencies that were traditionally restricted to a small number of expert photographers, *Demotix* works with more than 4,500 active contributors worldwide. Contributors can be highly-skilled photographers, professional amateurs or snappers who are all invited to follow and comment on each other’s work and are guaranteed to get a 50% share if their content is sold. The platform can thus be understood as a hybrid between a social media site and a picture agency. Since its launch in 2008, the London-based agency has shifted the way it presents itself from being a citizen journalism website that delivers ‘news by you’ to a network for freelance photojournalists (Demotix 2012).

## **Panos Pictures**

In the 1980s *Panos Pictures* was one small filing cabinet of transparencies taken by staff members of *Panos*, a London based NGO, on their travels. Adrian Evans, the current director of *Panos Pictures*, proposed the idea of a picture agency as

an opportunity to raise money for the NGO. Since then, *Panos Pictures* has become known for its focus on global social issues and for photographs that tell stories “beyond the contemporary media agenda” (Panos Pictures, About Us 2012). The London-based team works with around 100 freelance photographers who are based around the world, and specialises in countries where there is less coverage by other agencies. Beside its core business of selling photographs to customers (including news media institutions and development organisations), *Panos Picture* produces exhibitions, videos and multimedia pieces, and works on long-term documentary projects (Arnott 2010, interview; Panos Pictures, About US 2012).

### ***Plainpicture***

In 2000, Astrid Herrmann, one of the managing directors and founding members of *Plainpicture*, created a fictive picture agency that offered authentic rather than artificial-looking photographs. This idea was part of an art project, which resulted in 2001 in the foundation of the stock picture agency *Plainpicture*, based in Hamburg, Germany. The first pool of photographs was a collection of photographs of a wide range of people including friends and amateurs. Roman Haerer, one of the directors, stated that he even searched for photographs in family albums and private shoeboxes and invited people to contribute their personal photographs. With this approach, unconventional at the time, *Plainpicture* “has established itself as an alternative source for photography right from the outset.” *Plainpicture* has offices in Hamburg, London, Paris and New York, and sells to a wide range of customers including traditional news media organisations (Plainpicture, Profile 2012; Hermann & Haerer 2010, interview).

## **2. Examples of amateur photographs**

Due to copyright reasons, the specific examples of amateur photographs are not published in the online version of this PhD thesis.

### 3. Ethics clearance

The email below shows that the ethics committee of Swinburne University approved the project on January 4, 2010. All conditions relating to the ethical clearance were properly met. A final report was submitted on May 13, 2014.

Kaye  
Goldenberg Monday - January 4, 2010 4:00 PM  
To: erennie@groupwise.swin.edu.au; kschmieder@groupwise.swin.edu.au  
Subject: SUHREC Project 2009/264 Ethics Clearance

To: Dr Ellie Rennie, FLSS / Ms Kathrin Schmieder

Dear Dr Rennie,

**SUHREC Project 2009/264 Participatory Photography and Photojournalism**  
Dr Ellie Rennie, FLSS / Ms Kathrin Schmieder  
Approved Duration: 04/01/2010 To 04/01/2011 [Adjusted]

I refer to the ethical review of the above project protocol undertaken on behalf of Swinburne's Human Research Ethics Committee (SUHREC) by SUHREC Subcommittee (SHESC4) at a meeting held on 5 November 2009. Your response to the review in the form of a substantially revised protocol as e-mailed on 4 December was forwarded to a SHESC4 delegate for review. Further revisions were requested to which you responded by e-mail on 21 December 2009 and 2 January 2010, respectively. Your responses were put to the same delegate for consideration.

I am pleased to advise that, as submitted to date, the project has approval to proceed in line with standard on-going ethics clearance conditions here outlined.

- All human research activity undertaken under Swinburne auspices must conform to Swinburne and external regulatory standards, including the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research and with respect to secure data use, retention and disposal.

- The named Swinburne Chief Investigator/Supervisor remains responsible for any personnel appointed to or associated with the project being made aware of ethics clearance conditions, including research and consent procedures or instruments approved. Any change in chief investigator/supervisor requires timely notification and SUHREC endorsement.

- The above project has been approved as submitted for ethical review by or on behalf of SUHREC. Amendments to approved procedures or instruments ordinarily require prior ethical appraisal/ clearance. SUHREC must be notified immediately or as soon as possible thereafter of (a) any serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants and any redress measures; (b) proposed changes in protocols; and (c) unforeseen events which might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project.

- At a minimum, an annual report on the progress of the project is required as well as at the conclusion (or abandonment) of the project.

- A duly authorised external or internal audit of the project may be undertaken at any time.

Please contact me if you have any queries about on-going ethics clearance. The SUHREC project number should be quoted in communication. Chief Investigators/Supervisors and Student Researchers should retain a copy of this e-mail as part of project record-keeping.

Best wishes for the project.

Kaye Goldenberg  
Secretary, SHESC4  
\*\*\*\*\*

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