

Image operations

Visual media and political conflict

**EDITED BY JENS EDER AND
CHARLOTTE KLONK**

Manchester University Press

went down into the park, engaged with what was happening and then took a photograph, it could be. When the commons appears where there is a state, it creates a form of counter-power, 'the joining together of women and men willing to expend all of their energy to solve in common, *at the margin of beyond, and outside state normativity*, the problems that stifle them' (Gutiérrez Aguilar 2014, xi, emphasis in original). Yet the commons is not permanent. It is a recurrent moment and so each time it is present is a revolution. Its sustained state would be permanent revolution.

Making and sustaining the visual commons is what I call groundwork. Here, ground has the double meaning first as non-owned earth (land, territory and other such terms have legal and colonial meanings). Such ground is the possibility of a world in which, as Grace Lee Boggs puts it, we can 'make a life rather than make a living' (Boggs and Kurashige 2012, xxi). Secondly, the ground is the element that makes depiction possible. In photography, the ground enables the subject or figure to be comprehended as such. Groundwork is itself common, understood as co-activity, collaborative in process and conversational in research method. Claiming ground in the post-encounter Americas is the work of abolition. When slavery is abolished or suspended, the space between regimes becomes a space without regime, an abolition democracy. In abolition, a person is not a subject for representation but claims to be a subject, as in Sojourner Truth's call 'Ar'n't I a woman?' (quoted in Mirzoeff 2003, 117). Truth famously sold her own photograph to support abolition, using 'the shadow to support the substance' as she put it. This substance was the basis of her abolitionism. Making ground in abolition is undoing the shattered worlds caused by slavery. This work has been described by the Spanish feminist collective *Precarias a la Deriva* as militant research, which they define as 'a desire for common ground when the common ground is shattered' (quoted in *Colectivo Situaciones* 2005, 606). The reshaped ground is the common in which we can be photographed, a ground that can hold and shape our imprint. The commons is our desire. We see ourselves in common, as, and in the visual commons.

The photographic commons (1832–1953)

The visual commons can effectively be explored through photography because photography has become the medium of the commons, and it is today perhaps the first universal medium in interaction with the Internet which is already overtaking it. Photography's beginnings can be told in this context as a reclaiming of the commons from slavery. The French artist Hércules Florence was the first person to use the term 'photography' in the Americas in 1833. Florence emigrated to Brazil in 1824 and settled in Campinas, now part of São Paulo, a coffee-growing district in which slaves outnumbered free persons by two to one (Conrad 1972, 6). According to Florence's own account, it was in '1832, on August 15, while strolling on my veranda [that] an idea came to me that perhaps it is possible to capture images in a

The visual commons: counter-power in photography from slavery to Occupy Wall Street

Nicholas Mirzoeff

If global visual culture summons up a world of surveillance, drones, rendition and annexation, I want to begin with a reminder: we were there first, on the commons, claiming the right to look.¹ The right to look was and is a horizontal process, producing the visual commons that has become photographic (Mirzoeff 2011). This photography exists in the moment I claim the right to look, and grant that right to others without reservations or guarantees: and someone takes a photograph. This right is the right to look into each other's eyes; we know this as the look exchanged between friends, and those we love and trust. This look is the invention of the other and the permission for the other to invent the looker, who is also looked at. It creates a commons between us because neither of us owns or controls the exchange that is created. It is an exchange with no surplus and it cannot be accumulated. Collectively, this interpersonal exchange becomes common when individuals come together to appropriate ground as the commons. Enclosed or privatised space, physical or virtual, becomes common by means of the refusal to move on and the insistence that there is something to see here. This commons is not abstract but material. It constitutes the grounds of freedom. It is the refusal to stay in the place allocated to you in systems such as that in Plato's *Republic*. It is the refusal to serve with downcast eyes, as required by codes of slavery; segregation, mass incarceration and servitude.

The visual commons is not space in a purely abstract sense. It makes a claim to be grounded. It is not an atavistic relic or a tradition to be reinvented. It is the means by which social change metabolises. That sensation occurs when we see, in the sense of coming to understand, a photograph of the commons that emanates from the commons and is not simply about the commons. When Zuccotti Park was under occupation, people would often approach from Broadway and stand at the top of the steps to take a photograph. That was not the commons. If a person

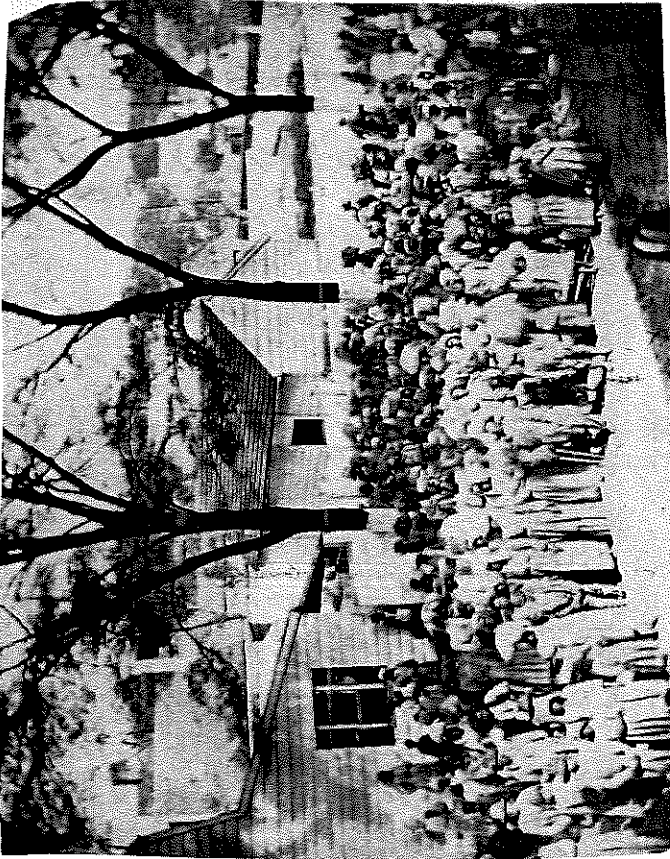


Plate 33 Timothy O'Sullivan, *Untitled (Slaves, J. J. Smith's Plantation, near Beaufort, South Carolina)*, 1861



Plate 35 Jill Freedman, *Untitled (Rev. Kirkpatrick)*, 1968



Plate 34 Jill Freedman, *Untitled (woman burning draft card)*, 1968

camera obscura by means of a substance which changes colour through the action of light. I captured a negative view of the jailhouse' (Kossov 1976, 16). With the assistance of the local pharmacist, Joaquim Correia de Mello, Florence named this process '*photographie*'. On the plantation, the veranda of the slave-owner's house was designed to give a clear view of the world created and sustained by slavery. The prison would have housed runaways and otherwise disobedient slaves because Brazilian slavery used state mechanisms for punishment, unlike North America. European artists visiting Brazil often depicted enslaved Africans being beaten in prison, as seen in drawings by Augustus Earle (1821–24) and Charles Landseer (1825–26) (Honour 1989, 143). Florence's experiments in visual form included a version of photocopying and extensive ethnographic illustration, especially of the Bororo people from what is now called the Mato Grosso. A hunter-gatherer people, the Bororo are today active in resisting deforestation and claiming land rights.

Florence produced colonial photography at the intersection of visual technologies of discipline (the jailhouse), spectacular punishment (the whipping and torture of the enslaved) and the 'ethnographic entrapment' of the 'native' (Smith 2014, 207–34). Florence did not imagine his photography and other forms of visual archiving against a *tabula rasa* of visual technology and theory. Both the enslaved and the Native peoples deployed modes of visual thinking and contested their subjection within that frame. As the Brazilian scholar Denise Ferreira da Silva puts it, 'I do not assume that those in contention, political subjects, precede their emergence in representation. Instead I conceive of them as political, because they emerge in signification' (Ferreira da Silva 2007, 27). In any hitherto existing world, these relations are always violent. As Ferreira da Silva argues, the colonial project is to create a 'scene of representation' in which only the coloniser has the interior judgement capable of recognising and interpreting representation. As Marx famously commented, 'they cannot represent themselves, they must be represented' (Marx 1852). Such representation engages both meanings of the term: political representation and visual or cultural depiction are interfaced aspects of the same violent relationship.

Colonial representation overwrote the existing forms of the visual commons in Brazil and across the Americas. Named 'Amerindian perspectivism' by the anthropologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, this commons understands that 'the world is inhabited by different forms of subjects or persons, human and non-human, which apprehend reality from different points of view' (Viveiros de Castro 1998, 469). What is common here is that humans, spirits and animals all share the same form of subjectivity or personhood: the capacity to act. This subjectivity is humanity but not specifically the human form. A human sees a human as a human. A spirit or a jaguar sees the human as prey but themselves as human. It is this category which de Castro calls the soul; it is indexical but unseen. What is seen is not a representation, because the specific 'point of view' is located in the body' (478), be it spirit, human or animal, as opposed to the common condition of humanity. This does not mean that humans are equal or that there is a commons in Amerindian society, but whereas Western understanding attributes a point of view to a subject, here

'the point of view creates the subject' (476). The body of a howler monkey sees differently to that of a spirit or a human, producing one culture but many natures. Photography superimposes onto this cosmology the scene of representation, in which the index is a material trace. It is no coincidence that Charles Sanders Peirce used the bullet hole as his example of the index, pointing to the bullet which must have been there. The photograph is the Western representation of reality as the scene of actual or potential gunfire. After all, we shoot a photograph.

Cosmology has a different form of indexicality. A depiction of a cosmology is a cosmogram, hence in the cosmology of the visual commons the photograph is the mark made by the imprint of the commons, just as a photograph is created by placing objects directly onto the surface of a light-sensitive material. Photography becomes a commons and forms such cosmograms when it refuses to represent, but intersects and interfaces points of view that create subjects. Photography creates a ground against which figures or subjects can be seen. Like land, the photograph holds the imprint of the commons. Consider memory: it exists, it cannot be represented, and it is individual. But photography surrogates it into material form that itself becomes a kind of common memory. In the commons, photography gives shape to the ground of a commons and depicts the ground that it occupies. Not all photography can serve as common ground. In order to do so, it needs to be for the common, about the common, in a moment where the perspective of the common is visible and then it can retain its imprint as memory.

Here is a key example of common ground, taken on the other side of the Atlantic world at the time Florence was formulating colonial photography. In England, the Chartist movement arose alongside photography. The Chartists (so called because their demands were organised into a charter) argued for universal male suffrage, annual parliaments and an end to the property qualification to vote. They refused to be represented, claiming instead to represent England. The Chartists were an abolition movement in the sense that they called on people to reject their condition as 'slaves of capital'. This commons was imprinted in a remarkable daguerreotype taken by William Kilburn of the 1848 Chartist gathering at Kennington Common, London, the first such outdoor photograph. At this rally, held on literally common ground, the Chartists gathered 50,000 people to deliver their petition of 5 million signatures in support of the Charter (Goodway 1982, 129–38). The shock of the picture is to actually show the usually invisible mass resistance to early industrial capitalism. Women and children are dotted across the mostly male crowd which, judging by the photograph's clarity, must have been standing remarkably still, presumably listening to speeches. Speeches were relayed in the manner recently revived by Occupy as the human mic (abbreviation for microphone). The viewpoint situates us in the crowd, looking forward (as all the other Chartists are) but from an elevated position, suggesting we are on one of the carriages or carts that can be seen. The flag numbered two, visible on the left, indicates that the assembly was carefully organised. In the background, eighteenth-century Georgian townhouses appear to be crowded out by working-class terraces and a factory, all clustered around the iconic smokestack chimney.

The scene as a whole evokes the drama of the enclosure of common land that had driven former agricultural smallholders into the cities to become the industrial workforce. This is the moment of transition from one means of production to the next (in this case, from colonial feudalism to imperial capitalism). Here, too, is a new means of visual production: the daguerreotype, with the radical, democratic potential to make visual memory common. At this moment, the assembled multitude has not yet consented to what now seems to be its inevitable immiseration by, and subjection to, capitalism. They stand as the common alternative. Any echoes of our current transition to financialised capitalism with its digital media – sometimes common, mostly not – are entirely intentional. So, too, the presence of 80,000 police and the charges of ‘unlawful assembly’ directed at the Chartists resonate with recent occupations.

It was the sight of this counter-power that led Thomas Carlyle to assert that ‘The history of the world is but the biography of great men’ (Mirzoeff 2011, 125ff.). Carlyle called this viewpoint ‘visuality’, generalising the military technique of visualising the battlefield. Just as the modern general had to visualise a battlefield that was too extensive to be seen, the great man visualised the flow of global history. Under the gaze of colonial visuality, all ground becomes either the battlefield of military action or land for coerced labour. Under these conditions – just as the rank and file must obey orders and nothing else – the commons cannot exist. It does not even have a name. For Carlyle, there is no such thing as the people, the masses, or any other form of collectivity. There is the Hero, or great man, and those he has to lead, who have only the right to be led. If they refuse, they are the mob, always designated by him as ‘Black’, be they Irish, French *sans-culottes* or Haitian revolutionaries. All are revolting slaves. But the Haitians are, for Carlyle, ‘Black beyond redemption’: a condition to which we should all aspire.

As capitalism constantly revolutionises social life, so the visual commons must be made and remade. It was remade in Timothy O’Sullivan’s 1861 photograph of African Americans who had participated in what W. E. B. Du Bois called ‘the general strike against slavery’ (Plate 33).

Here, people have gathered for the purpose of being photographed to attest to their right to do so. At the time, their very persons were interstitial: neither slave nor free, they were technically contraband because they had, under slave law, ‘stolen’ themselves. By presenting themselves to be seen by the camera, a machine that had been used to advertise human property, the strikers claimed a new subjectivity before and outside the law. The land they claimed for the visual commons became a material commons in 1865, when General Sherman’s Special Field Order no. 15 confiscated plantation land and redistributed it in forty-acre allotments to the newly freed. This measurement of the commons reverberates to the present day, because reparations for the many wrongs of slavery remain unpaid. Although the opportunity to use the Reconstruction state to compel former slave owners into bankruptcy and enable bottom-up redistribution was lost, in places like Scanlonville, South Carolina, the freed pooled their resources and labour to create a commons, purchasing land from a bankrupt plantation. Reporting on

such endeavours in 1873, the *Charleston Courier* rightly called it ‘colored communism’. The paper noted that ‘some of the largest plantations ... are now owned and successfully conducted by colored people, who have united their resources and combine in their labor’ (repr. as ‘Negro Cooperation’, *New York Times*, 17 August 1873). The neighbourhood still survives today in the suburbs of Charleston.

The achievement of the strikers and the commons can be measured within their own time and across modern time. In 1865, Harvard professor Louis Agassiz went on a scientific voyage to Brazil in pursuit of global racial formations (Dos Santos Gomes 2012). The now-notorious set of photographs taken by J. T. Zealy having failed to make race fully visible on the body of the South Carolina enslaved, Agassiz imagined that Brazil would offer clearer visions. Accompanied by the young William James, Agassiz set out to take and collect racial photographs in the plantation colony. Among the pictures he collected were those of Augusto Stahl (1828–77), a German expatriate working in Rio. The results are strikingly similar to those from South Carolina. A woman, known only by what Agassiz presumed to be her racial type ‘Mina Igerichá’, confronts the camera wearing a magnificent headdress. Her head is tilted, her mouth slightly open (but not in a smile), her eyes look askance and defiant. Despite the resistance of the woman’s embodiment, she is engulfed by the racialising name that carries with it the spectre of annihilating murder, the social death of slavery (Ferreira da Silva 2007, 29). For Agassiz she was a ‘pure racial type’, but he had no real idea where she was from. According to colonial thought on slavery, she could not have an interior life and could not be a subject, only the object of colonial representation. This is not to withhold in any way the compelling personhood of the Mina woman: her isolation sends us a message, telling us to constitute a visual commons to which she can belong.

Across the post-Reconstruction (1865–77) United States, such looking was criminalised under the new Black Codes as the offence of ‘reckless eyeballing’ meaning the look of any person designated black at any person designated white, especially from man to woman. Matt Ingram was the last person formally convicted of reckless eyeballing in the state of North Carolina in 1951. Despite having lost official legal force, the concept is still fully active in the prison-industrial complex. The command ‘Don’t eyeball me’ was documented at Abu Ghraib, where sexualised punishment was rife (Greenberg and Dratel 2005, 1294).

Two examples might help explain the distinction between the scene of representation and the visual commons. One is banal, the other extraordinary. It is, to say the least, a common experience to dislike your passport or driver’s licence photograph. People will say that these photographs do not look like them and they are right. Such photographs show you as the state sees you, not as a subject but subjected, according to the careful codes of identification. The police do not, in fact, say ‘hey, you there’, as Althusser puts it (Althusser 2001, 118). They say, in effect: ‘This is you’ and they will add, ‘You are nothing’ (Ward 2013, 249). The photograph depicts your subjection and nothing else.

By contrast, consider this drama of identification. Once in Buenos Aires on a warm night in the garden of Eva Perón’s former mansion, a woman I had just

The scene as a whole evokes the drama of the enclosure of common land that had driven former agricultural smallholders into the cities to become the industrial workforce. This is the moment of transition from one means of production to the next (in this case, from colonial feudalism to imperial capitalism). Here, too, is a new means of visual production: the daguerreotype, with the radical, democratic potential to make visual memory common. At this moment, the assembled multitude has not yet consented to what now seems to be its inevitable immiseration by, and subjection to, capitalism. They stand as the common alternative. Any echoes of our current transition to financialised capitalism with its digital media – sometimes common, mostly not – are entirely intentional. So, too, the presence of 80,000 police and the charges of ‘unlawful assembly’ directed at the Chartists resonate with recent occupations.

It was the sight of this counter-power that led Thomas Carlyle to assert that ‘The history of the world is but the biography of great men’ (Mirzoeff 2011, 125ff.). Carlyle called this viewpoint ‘visuality’, generalising the military technique of visualising the battlefield, just as the modern general had to visualise a battlefield that was too extensive to be seen, the great man visualised the flow of global history. Under the gaze of colonial visuality, all ground becomes either the battlefield of military action or land for coerced labour. Under these conditions – just as the rank and file must obey orders and nothing else – the commons cannot exist. It does not even have a name. For Carlyle, there is no such thing as the people, the masses, or any other form of collectivity. There is the Hero, or great man, and those he has to lead, who have only the right to be led. If they refuse, they are the mob, always designated by him as ‘Black’, be they Irish, French *sans-culottes* or Haitian revolutionaries. All are revolting slaves. But the Haitians are, for Carlyle, ‘Black beyond redemption’: a condition to which we should all aspire.

As capitalism constantly revolutionises social life, so the visual commons must be made and remade. It was remade in Timothy O’Sullivan’s 1861 photograph of African Americans who had participated in what W. E. B. Du Bois called ‘the general strike against slavery’ (Plate 33).

Here, people have gathered for the purpose of being photographed to attest to their right to do so. At the time, their very persons were interstitial: neither slave nor free, they were technically contraband because they had, under slave law, ‘stolen’ themselves. By presenting themselves to be seen by the camera, a machine that had been used to advertise human property, the strikers claimed a new subjectivity before and outside the law. The land they claimed for the visual commons became a material commons in 1865, when General Sherman’s Special Field Order no. 15 confiscated plantation land and redistributed it in forty-acre allotments to the newly freed. This measurement of the commons reverberates to the present day, because reparations for the many wrongs of slavery remain unpaid. Although the opportunity to use the Reconstruction state to compel former slave owners into bankruptcy and enable bottom-up redistribution was lost, in places like Scanlonville, South Carolina, the freed pooled their resources and labour to create a commons, purchasing land from a bankrupt plantation. Reporting on

such endeavours in 1873, the *Charleston Courier* rightly called it ‘colored communism’. The paper noted that ‘some of the largest plantations ... are now owned and successfully conducted by colored people, who have united their resources and combine in their labor’ (repr. as ‘Negro Cooperation’, *New York Times*, 17 August 1873). The neighbourhood still survives today in the suburbs of Charleston.

The achievement of the strikers and the commons can be measured within their own time and across modern time. In 1865, Harvard professor Louis Agassiz went on a scientific voyage to Brazil in pursuit of global racial formations (Dos Santos Gomes 2012). The now-notorious set of photographs taken by J. T. Zealy having failed to make race fully visible on the body of the South Carolina enslaved, Agassiz imagined that Brazil would offer clearer visions. Accompanied by the young William James, Agassiz set out to take and collect racial photographs in the plantation colony. Among the pictures he collected were those of Augusto Stahl (1828–77), a German expatriate working in Rio. The results are strikingly similar to those from South Carolina. A woman, known only by what Agassiz presumed to be her racial type ‘Mina Igerichá’, confronts the camera wearing a magnificent headdress. Her head is tilted, her mouth slightly open (but not in a smile), her eyes look askance and defiant. Despite the resistance of the woman’s embodiment, she is engulfed by the racialising name that carries with it the spectre of annihilating murder, the social death of slavery (Ferreira da Silva 2007, 29). For Agassiz she was a ‘pure racial type’, but he had no real idea where she was from. According to colonial thought on slavery, she could not have an interior life and could not be a subject, only the object of colonial representation. This is not to withhold in any way the compelling personhood of the Mina woman: her isolation sends us a message, telling us to constitute a visual commons to which she can belong.

Across the post-Reconstruction (1865–77) United States, such looking was criminalised under the new Black Codes as the offence of ‘reckless eyeballing’ meaning the look of any person designated black at any person designated white, especially from man to woman. Matt Ingram was the last person formally convicted of reckless eyeballing in the state of North Carolina in 1951. Despite having lost official legal force, the concept is still fully active in the prison-industrial complex. The command ‘Don’t eyeball me’ was documented at Abu Ghraib, where sexualised punishment was rife (Greenberg and Dratel 2005, 1294).

Two examples might help explain the distinction between the scene of representation and the visual commons. One is banal, the other extraordinary. It is, to say the least, a common experience to dislike your passport or driver’s licence photograph. People will say that these photographs do not look like them and they are right. Such photographs show you as the state sees you, not as a subject but subjected, according to the careful codes of identification. The police do not, in fact, say ‘hey, you there’, as Althusser puts it (Althusser 2001, 118). They say, in effect: ‘This is you’ and they will add, ‘You are nothing’ (Ward 2013, 249). The photograph depicts your subjection and nothing else.

By contrast, consider this drama of identification. Once in Buenos Aires on a warm night in the garden of Eva Perón’s former mansion, a woman I had just

met told me her story under the dictatorship. Now an editor at a major publishing house, she recounted how, when she was young, her sister disappeared. Through family connections, they were able to communicate with the regime. She was taken to a police station and shown a photograph of a dead person – in itself an astonishing moment of acceptance of state murder. She at once declared that she did not recognise it. Once the regime was over, the site of former detention and torture known as the ESMA was opened as a memorial. It displays photographs of many of the disappeared in its entrance hall. When my new friend entered the ESMA, she again saw the photograph she had seen under the dictatorship. Only now she at once recognised it as being her sister, a fact confirmed by her brother, who had not seen the picture the first time. The photograph was invisible, or perhaps un-visible under autocracy. It could not be seen when offered by the police because the police obliterate and disappear people. It became visible only once there was autonomy. This is not just an isolated example: Argentina and Chile formed the hinge between nuclear deterrence and global counterinsurgency when the Cold War became neoliberalism. And Argentina was where, in 2001, Americans began a new resistance under the slogan ‘they do not represent us’ (Sitrin and Azzellini 2014).

From Resurrection City to Zuccotti Park

The experience of counter-power creates a visual commons that returns and revolutionises itself. It was often said during that period that the Civil Rights Movement was the second Reconstruction and the commons of Reconstruction was powerfully felt on its return. As Elizabeth Abel, Maurice Berger, Leigh Raiford and others have shown, photography was the common ground of the Civil Rights claim to be visible in public space (Abel 2010; Berger 2010; Raiford 2011). It was also the counter to the permanent militarisation of social life, exemplified by Lyndon Johnson’s double war in Vietnam and war against poverty. After the passage of the Civil Rights Act (1964) and the Voting Rights Act (1965), the movement looked beyond formal legal inequality to the structural violence maintaining social inequality in order to create a new commons. In his 1967 book *Where Do We Go from Here?*, Dr King stressed that ‘the inseparable triplets’ of racism, poverty and war required a new Reconstruction (King 1967). In 1962, Michael Harrington’s *The Other America* had highlighted the invisibility of the poor, showing that in 1959 an extraordinary 55 per cent of African Americans lived in poverty (Harrington 1962, 63). The Poor People’s Campaign of 1967–68 was inseparable from the anti-war movement and anti-racist direct action. It explicitly designated the poor as the ‘colonised’ within the settler colony (Goldstein 2014, 137). Connecting the movements produced a new commons.

It was made visible at Resurrection City, where thousands camped along six blocks beside the Reflecting Pool on the National Mall in Washington, DC for six weeks from 13 May to 23 June 1968, just after King’s assassination. Its day-to-day population was around 3,000, coordinated by the Rev. Jesse Jackson. The

600 wooden huts where the occupiers lived were designed by the architect John Wiebenson of the University of Maryland. In the city, Black Panthers mixed with white Appalachians, Native Americans and Mexican-American farm workers at the Many Races Soul Center and the Poor People’s University. Sidney Poitier led a morning clean-up brigade and Robert Kennedy’s funeral cortege stopped there for the exchange of mutual respects (McKnight 1998, 125ff.).

The goal was to make visible Dr King’s 1967 call for a ‘radical redistribution of wealth and power’ which he openly framed as a correction to the failure to redistribute land in 1865 (Sustar 2015). By designating the commons as a city, and with redistribution of wealth as a goal, the campaign understood that common land itself did not create the commons under late capitalism. Land was a decolonial demand of the Poor People’s Campaign for Native Americans and Mexican-Americans rather than a general solution to poverty. The nine Poor People’s Caravans that converged in Washington included a much-photographed Mule Train from Marks, Mississippi, to visualise the connection to Reconstruction. Land rights claims in New Mexico were made alongside Native American calls to respect the treaties and return both land and cultural property. Gender and sexual orientation were configured by residents as they chose. The city created non-violent campaigns for a living wage – not the minimum wage but a basic wage on which a person could live. As the Vietnam War intensified, there were active anti-war protests, including the first burning of draft cards by women (Plate 34). The goal was to generate a visible and photographable commons capable of reimagining the United States from below.

New York photographer Jill Freedman joined the occupation because of her anger at the assassination of Dr King. She lived in Resurrection City from its first days to the eviction. Among the thousands of photographs of the occupation, hers are perhaps the most resonant because she was part of the commons. She called her book of pictures of Resurrection City *Old News*. ‘Poverty’, she wrote, ‘is ancient history’ (Freedman 1970, 18). She was not just an observer, she was there to work:

In our town, work meant demonstrating. And talking man power, woman power, Chicano power, Indian power, black power, white power, people power, soul power. Claiming all our human rights to dignity. Every day. (Freedman 1970, 34)

Most of the media photographs concentrated on the mud, the result of non-stop torrential rain that summer, or moments of violence. Freedman was aware of all that but saw what else was happening (Plate 35):

Dream City had old nightmares. People messing up. Turning their rage on themselves and others, showing how being poor can make you crazy, can kill you long before your body stops. Yet every day I saw incredible acts of kindness and compassion. And I couldn’t understand how they could be so beautiful. (Freedman 1970, 116)

Like the occupations in 2011, Resurrection City attracted the poor, but rather than being praised for offering care, the encampment was criticised for making poverty visible, which was, of course, why it was there.

Intersection with the future

The very name Resurrection City implied that it was something the function of which was to return. From our perspective, we can see its interaction of indigenous and urban direct action and demands as part of a transition from a commons of the ground to a grounded urban commons. Since 2008, there has for the first time ever been a global majority living in cities. The commons will have to be urban. At the same time, landless, indigenous and peasant commons from Latin and South America have given the first successful forms to the commons in the era of financial globalisation. The global social movements are a process of imagining how such commons might work in global cities. From Cairo to Madrid, New York and Hong Kong, some of the world's largest cities have taken up this challenge. This interactive process began with the Zapatista uprising of 1 January 1994. The Zapatistas emerged from the Lacandon jungle, at the moment when the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) legalised neo-liberalism across North America, to claim the rights of the indigenous to autonomy. Their cosmology argues for 'one world in which many worlds fit': a version of the 'one culture, many natures' indigenous cosmology of the global present (Sitrin and Azzellini 2014, 15). As this movement spread across South and Latin America, it generated a widespread rejection of hierarchical governance, expressed in Argentina during the 2001 uprising that drove out no less than five presidents, using the slogan: '¡que se vayan todos! They should all go!' Today's movements have rejected the idea that democracy means representation. Rather, as Jacques Rancière has put it, '[o]riginally representation was the exact contrary of democracy' (Rancière 2009, 53). It is instead an 'oligarchic form', precisely the mode of governance that is so palpable under global neo-liberalism. The commons that is endeavouring to emerge is the interaction of indigenous and urban knowledge. Perhaps the most striking example of this interaction was the People's Agreement of Cochabamba (2010), a document drawn up in response to the scientific consensus on anthropogenic climate change that is already visible in countries, like Bolivia, which depend on glaciers for drinking water. Rather than offering a hi-tech design solution, the People's Agreement proposes to the peoples of the world the recovery, revalorisation and strengthening of the knowledge, wisdom and ancestral practices of indigenous peoples, which are affirmed in the thought and practices of 'Living Well' (People's Agreement). In November 2014, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change announced that carbon emissions must cease rising immediately. 'Living well, or making a life, is now a matter of global necessity, not communal imaginings.

What have we learned so far? From the occupations in 1968 to the Zapatista uprising and the social movements of 2011, creating a commons has centred on the practices of care and mutual aid. The kitchen was the heart of Resurrection City, where some families were able to eat three meals a day for the first time. At Zuccotti Park, Kitchen was the first working group to be set up, and the most

important. It used local and organic food wherever possible and fed hundreds. The free library in Zuccotti Park was part of later projects to create a free university. This work centred on learning: on how to learn rather than on an apprenticeship to a profession. Like Resurrection City, Occupy came to learn that 'all our grievances are connected', as the Maypole in Union Square declared in 2012. And one of the first slogans of Occupy was: 'You are not a loan, meaning both that you are part of a commons and that you cannot be equated with the sum of your financial obligations. You cannot build a commons on debt. You cannot survive on a planet with massively unresolved climate debt. In Detroit, Ferguson, Istanbul and many other places, we have learned that each and every one of us has the right to look and the right to be seen. And in Hong Kong in 2014, we were asking: how can a city be different from an empire? What does that change look like? Let's go and find out.

Note

- 1 This is a work-in-progress around the concept of the visual commons. My thanks go to the editors for their interest in publishing it in that format.

References

- Abel, Elizabeth. 2010. *Signs of the Times: The Visual Politics of Jim Crow*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Althusser, Louis. 2001. *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*. Translated by Ben Brewster. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Berger, Maurice. 2010. *For All the World to See: Visual Culture and the Struggle for Civil Rights*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Boggs, Grace Lee, and Scott Kurashige. 2012. *The Next American Revolution: Sustainable Activism for the Twenty-First Century*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Colectivo Situaciones. 2005. 'Something More on Research Militancy.' *ephemera* 5(4): 602–14.
- Conrad, Robert. 1972. *The Destruction of Brazilian Slavery 1850–1888*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Dos Santos Gomes, Flávio. 2012. '“Pure Race” African and Ethnic Diversity in Nineteenth Century Rio de Janeiro.' 8 May. Accessed 4 December 2015. <http://mirrorofrace.org/gomes/>.
- Ferreira da Silva, Denise. 2007. *Toward a Global Idea of Race*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Freedman, Jill. 1970. *Old News: Resurrection City*. New York: Grossman Publishers.
- Goldstein, Aloysha. 2014. *Poverty in Common: The Politics of Community Action during the American Century*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Goodway, David. 1982. *London Chartism, 1830–1848*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Greenberg, Karen J., and Joshua L. Dratel, eds. 2005. *The Torture Papers: The Road to Abu Ghraib*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Gutiérrez Aguilar, Raquel. 2014. *Rhythms of the Pachakuti: Indigenous Uprising and State Power in Bolivia*. Translated by Tracy A.D. Skar. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Harrington, Michael. 1962. *The Other America: Poverty in the United States*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Honour, Hugh. 1989. *Image of the Black*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- King, Martin Luther, Jr. 1967. *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?* Boston: Beacon Press.
- Kossoy, Boris. 1976. 'Hercules Florence, Pioneer of Photography in Brazil'. *Image* 20(1): 12-21.
- McKnight, Gerald D. 1998. *The Last Crusade: Martin Luther King Jr., the FBI and the Poor People's Campaign*. Boulder, CO: Westview.
- Marx, Karl. 1852. *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*. Accessed 4 December 2015. www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1852/18th-brumaire/ch07.htm.
- Mirzoeff, Nicholas. 2003. 'The Shadow and the Substance: Race, Photography and the Index'. In *Only Skin Deep*, edited by Coco Fusco and Brian Wallis, 111-28. New York: Abrams.
- Mirzoeff, Nicholas. 2011. *The Right to Look: A Counterhistory of Visuality*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- New York Times*. 1873. 'Negro Cooperation', 17 August.
- Raiford, Leigh. 2011. *Imprisoned in a Luminous Glare: Photography and the African American Freedom Struggle*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Rancière, Jacques. 2009. *Haired of Democracy*. New York: Verso.
- Sitrin, Marina and Dario Azzellini. 2014. *They Can't Represent Us: Reinventing Democracy from Greece to Occupy*. New York: Verso.
- Smith, Andrea. 2014. 'Native Studies at the Horizon of Death: Theorizing Ethnographic Entrapment and Settler Self-Reflexivity'. In *Theorizing Native Studies*, edited by Andrea Simpson and Andrea Smith, 207-34. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Sustar, Lee. 2015. 'The Evolution of Dr. King'. *Jacobin* 1(19). Accessed 4 December 2015. www.jacobinmag.com/2015/01/martin-luther-king-socialist/.
- Viveiros de Castro, Eduardo. 1998. 'Cosmological Deixis and Amerindian Perspectivism'. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 4(3): 469-88.
- Ward, Jesmyn. 2013. *Men We Reaped: A Memoir*. New York: Bloomsbury.
- Winters, Paxton. n.d. 'Bororo - Mato Grosso, Brazil'. Television report available at World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth, Cochabamba, Bolivia, 22 April. Accessed 13 October 2014. <http://pwccc.wordpress.com/2010/04/24/peoples-agreement/>.

Afterword

James Elkins

The conference from which this book grew was one of the most memorable and challenging of recent years. Its brief was to consider the concept of 'image operations'. It was from the start a double subject: on the one hand, Charlotte Klonk and Jens Eder were interested in photographs and videos that 'intervene directly in the world and change it in far-reaching ways', including terrorist videos and other images of warfare that impact 'immediately and concretely on people and bodies'. On the other hand, they were interested in images that are 'components of media practices', existing as parts of complex, integrated, multimedial, networked operations.

The conference also included a number of papers on medical imaging, including laparoscopies, endoscopies and Sun Microsystems' Da Vinci Machine, which permits surgeons to operate remotely using virtual reality. The binding idea was that both the Da Vinci Machine and a video made by a drone involve operations and potential casualties. In both cases the images 'operate', and in both the contexts and outcomes are matters of life and death. I mention this, even though this book focuses on warfare and journalism and not on medicine, because it shows how volatile and pertinent this subject is, and how important it is to find analytic and historical terms with which to discuss it.

In this Afterword I will concentrate on five fundamental issues that are threaded through the contributions to this book and to the originating conference. I do this, rather than attempting to discuss each chapter individually, in hopes of continuing the very important questions raised by Charlotte Klonk and Jens Eder.

What is the history of the interest in image operations?

A first order of business is to consider the reasons the concept of image operations became visible and urgent in the years just before 2014. It is important, in other words, to historicise our own interests, in order to see our academic affiliations, our politics and our philosophic resources.