Article

'Who likes kidneys?' 'Fried in the pan?' Thoughts on Visual Mediations and Perceptions of Violence

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Abstract

Taking a video of the Serbian paramilitary Scorpions unit recording killing as a starting point and drawing upon my own research on WWII and the German genocide, the purpose of this essay is to probe the methodological and ethical challenges of visual sources (videos, photographs) that mediate acts and experiences of violence. Today's viewers might first notice the striking violence and horror of the Scorpions unit video, reacting in many cases with shock, alienation, or empathy. Once we engage with the gaze of the videographer, it becomes clear that the recorded scenes follow a completely different logic. Despite its indisputably violent content, the video manages to convey the impression of male bonding, fun, and bravado in a fiercely violent and racialised armed conflict, in which ethnic, religious, and national categories were murderously conflated. The Scorpions unit, like many other professional killers, was embedded in a climate of impunity and an economy of violence with significant gendered dynamics at stake that we need to question. The act of recording is a highly performative and self-referential endeavour that calls us for investigating not solely social practices but also postures and gesture as acts of visual mediation. A first section reflects on the social constellations of collective violence of perpetrators as ingroups. In the second part, the focus shifts from the violent action itself to the semantics of violent gestures, before turning in the third section to reflect upon (audio)visual recordings of violence. Visual and audio-visual sources as media hence invite us to think about the complex relationship between artefact and actors. Methodological and heuristic questions about how we deal with images of violence, particularly those captured by perpetrators, constitute, as this essay argues, one of the major challenges of studying the twentieth-century photographic age and even more so, our current digital era.

Keywords

collective violence, paramilitary masculinities, audio-visual mediation, photography, video

Introduction

With this colloquial conversation, which introduces the title to my remarks, two members of the infamous Serbian paramilitary Scorpions killer unit concluded a nineteen-minute-long hunt and execution of six Bosnian Muslim men in the Srebrenica region in the heat of July 1995. Historian Iva Vukušić was the first to draw attention to this unusual and singular audiovisual trace of the wars in the former Yugoslavia (Vukušić, 2018; "Prisoner execution footage" video and transcript available on Sebrenica SENSE, 2016). The casualness of this exchange, after a humiliating and brutal massacre, is disturbing. We can only speculate as to what motivated the men to record this

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killing, but the dialogue about the lunch break is no less baffling. And yet, as I will argue in this essay, both the recording and the callously casual conversation are symptomatic of wartime collective violence and perpetrator sociability. Their visual testimonies constitute valuable sources that tell us not only a great deal about paramilitary masculinities, peer group relations, and violence as work. (Audio)visual media depicting violence also confronts us with the shifting meanings and multidirectional reverberations of this footage. Scholars still struggle to grapple with what visual anthropologist, Karen Strassler (2020), frames as *demanding images,* popular photography and videos that defy fixity (pp. 3–30). Yet, it is precisely the open-ended character of these eventful visual and audio-visual media that should catch our attention.

The original purpose of the Scorpions' amateur tape, as the videographer Slobodan Stojkovic Bugar later stated in court, was to record a souvenir for a more senior commander who wanted to gain insights into the operations carried out on the ground (Vukušić, 2018, p. 42). The footage soon circulated among the unit members, and by the time the commander ordered the erasure of this evidence, it was already too late, with the VHS tape cassettes being shared underground in different Serbian insider circles. Almost a decade after the shootings and recording, the video became known to a larger audience when, in 2004, a former Scorpions member handed a copy to the Serbian NGO Humanitarian Law Center (HLC), making the video a key piece of evidence in the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) (Campbell, 2014, pp. 83–109). Hence, like many visual sources, the video transcended its original function and quickly assumed new meaning.

Obviously, the video was shot for an entirely different purpose, but the question nevertheless arises why the Scorpions special forces taped a killing in the first place, especially at a time when the NATO blue helmet troops were present in the region and when the ICTY had already started investigating war crimes? The act of recording is highly performative and self-referential, with Serbian paramilitaries proudly showing off their conquest of territory and *victory* over Bosnian Muslim men. The video, part of a two-hour collage of scenes, is a triumphant, self-righteous gesture, saying: we can do whatever we want. Yet, this feeling of impunity, as I will argue, is not self-evident but instead constructed collectively by the perpetrators on the ground.

The purpose of this essay is by no means to deliver an exhaustive tableau, but rather to probe the methodological and ethical challenges of visual sources (videos, photographs) that mediate acts and experiences of violence. Taking the Scorpions unit video as a starting point and drawing upon my own research on WWII and the German genocide, I will firstly reflect on the social constellations of collective violence. In the second part, I shift the focus from the violent action itself to the semantics of violent gestures, before turning in the third section to reflect upon (audio)visual recordings of violence. Methodological and heuristic questions about how we deal with images of violence, particularly those captured by perpetrators, constitute, in my view, one of the major challenges of studying the twentieth-century photographic age and even more so, our current digital era.

Social Constellations of Violent Action

Today's viewers might first notice the striking violence and horror of the Scorpions unit video, reacting in many cases with shock, alienation, or empathy. Once we engage with the gaze of the videographer, it becomes clear that the recorded scenes follow a completely different logic: despite its indisputably violent content, the video manages to convey the impression of male bonding, fun, and bravado in a fiercely violent and racialised armed conflict, in which ethnic, religious, and national categories were murderously conflated (Perica, 2002, pp. 3–16).

When the video was recorded, the Scorpions, named after a type of weapon, originally developed in Czechoslovakia, and later produced in Yugoslavia, were already experienced killers; some of the unit members active since 1991 and continuing their work until 1999 (Vukušić, 2018, p. 39). As a historian of everyday life who pays great attention to allegedly banal things (pauses, flirting, jokes, food, etc.), especially in extraordinarily violent settings, it does not surprise me that the killing sequence ends with a conversation about the lunch menu (Mailänder, 2015a, pp. 81–104). The SS killing squads (*Einsatzgruppen*) in occupied Eastern Europe who massacred the local Jewish population, for instance, regularly took breaks next to mass graves, with food, cake, coffee, and, of course, alcohol (Ingrao, 2013 and 2006) and so did the U.S. soldiers during the *My Lai* massacre in Vietnam. In armed conflict, killing becomes a *job*, and perpetrators, like anybody else, have a rhythm to their workday, with breaks and leisure time.

What particularly interests me in such a violent situational constellation of armed conflict is the performative dimension of homosociability and the key role violence plays in how men

negotiate their same-sex social roles and affective bonds through gender performances. As the Scorpions video clearly demonstrates, there is always a small group of hardened men who set the tone; others try to keep up with them by simply participating and doing their part in the killing, or, in the case of Aleksandar Medić, by overperforming with words and gestures, yet in the end, being unable to pull the trigger (Vukušić, 2018, p. 44). On that particular day in July 1995, Medić did not kill, an act which earned him ridicule and humiliation from his peer comrades. But does this incapacity make such men less violent or less responsible for the killing?

We can observe similar dynamics with perpetrators in Nazi Germany. Thomas Kühne (2017) has given a convincing reading of German military masculinities during World War II, arguing that the experiences of collective killing constituted a system of male bonding based on the "pleasure of belonging through terror" (pp. 107–214). Wehrmacht soldiers and even the SS killing squads were occasionally nauseated by their jobs and repeatedly quarrelled with each other. Yet, strangely enough, despite internal differences and tensions between soldiers, the groups did not fall apart. On the contrary, such differences actually helped to maintain group cohesion between the violent agents and the men who were less committed or unable to kill: "These men stuck together and experienced themselves as a community — not least by coping with their internal disputes" (Kühne, 2011, pp. 234–255). In other words, there was a certain consensus within these conflicts as nobody openly questioned the mission of killing.

The Scorpions unit, like many other professional killers, was embedded in a climate of impunity and an economy of violence with significant gendered dynamics at stake. Even outside of the constraints of a militarised context, masculinity is highly competitive, a fact that sociologist Raewyn Connell demonstrates for the educational system as well as the corporate world. Connell's taxonomy of masculinities shines a sharp light on power relations and in-group hierarchies (Connell, 1989, pp. 291–303; Connell, 1995, 67–86). Clearly, not all perpetrators show equal enthusiasm, but in a culture of *tough* masculinity where brutality and mercilessness are valorised, men who refuse to participate have a distinct function. Ridiculed or marginalised by their peers and superiors, they too help to bring the culturally shared and socially accepted hegemonic martial ideal "into sharp focus" (Kühne, 2011, p. 242). As complicit bystanders or verbally overperforming procrastinators, they facilitate and empower the violent gender performances of their fellow comrades, thus playing a significant role in legitimising humiliation, violence, and ultimately genocide.

It is precisely here that the allegedly less violent members of the group have a vital function for the overall dynamic. Brutal colleagues serve as negative figures of reference within the group (Welzer, 2004, pp. 15–32). As a result, the less violent peers can perceive themselves as humane, decent, and compassionate. This contrast with the hard-boiled peers allows more moderate members to feel good about themselves. Military buddy culture, I would add with Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick in mind, is not solely about solidarity between men and comrades; it is also about an intimate relationship based on *male homosocial desire*, with a distinct erotic but not necessarily sexual character (Kosofsky Sedgwick, 1985, pp. 49–68; Belkin, 2012, pp. 21–46). Relieved that others had carried out the dirty job, few of the less violent men phrased criticism or dissented because, very often, deep down, they admired the hardliners.

Armed conflict and paramilitary authorities create a structural setting of licentiousness; impunity, however, is negotiated on a local and social level *between* soldiers. Irrespective of their approval or disapproval, tacit or even reluctant soldiers are an integral part of the killing: the more fellow soldiers tolerate, the greater the possibilities for violence and cruelty. There is no out-group in constellations of violence, which makes this shared experience such an important and intimate moment of buddy culture and bonding (Mailänder, 2017, pp. 489–520).

As a historian of gender and everyday life, I explore social dynamics within groups of ordinary killers, rather than the elites or commanding heights of a regime. Of course, ideology (nationalism, racism, cultural othering, etc.) facilitates violence, but ideas and ideological backgrounds alone do not necessarily make people into killers. Being, or more accurately, becoming a perpetrator is not a fixed personal characteristic, but, first and foremost, a social constellation and situational experience. "The social world cannot be adequately analysed unless it is considered to be moving, fluid and changing" (Gudehus, 2018, p. 7). Hence, violent offenders are seldom violent 24 hours a day. People become perpetrators the moment they commit an act of violence, but a few hours later, they can serve as tenderly caring comrades or loving fathers and husbands, and potentially also become victims of violence themselves. This conundrum of multiple, shifting, ambivalent affiliations, and contradictory positionalities makes violent (para)military masculinities so difficult and fascinating to explore.

Semantics of the Violent Gesture

"Violence is a slippery concept — nonlinear, productive, destructive, *and* reproductive," to quote anthropologists Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Philippe Bourgois (2004), who rightly speak of chains, spirals, and mirrors of violence; in short, a "continuum of violence" (p. 1). This continuum encompasses different expressions of radical exclusion, dehumanisation, depersonalisation, and reification based on class, race, gender, (dis)ability, sexual orientation, religion, etc. that ultimately normalise violence toward others.

For those who endure it, violence causes pain and fear; for those who exercise and perform it, violence often brings a feeling of power, achievement, and, in many cases, pleasure or satisfaction. From a humanistic and pacifist standpoint, we tend to dismiss violence and cruelty as signs of people's incapacity to argue with words and thus as a failure. But this does not help us to understand why and how people perpetrate violence or cruelty in specific settings. Nazi society and Nazism at war, the wars in former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, and more recent armed conflicts and terrorist attacks all reveal that violence and cruel gestures are powerful tools of communication between the perpetrators, their targets, and a larger audience.

More than any spoken language, violent gestures, especially towards humans, are a universal form of communication, a "crude *lingua franca*" (Gleason, 2001, p. 66 and p. 83). Archeologist Maud Gleason's work, which studies the semiotics of body language in a time when "political leaders had to control crowds without the aid of tear gas or public address systems" (Gleason, 2001, p. 55), is quite eye-opening for our purposes. Referring to Josephus' writing and the Jewish War, violent gestures and more importantly, violence inscribed on other people's bodies as non-verbal forms of communication and self-expression constituted powerful "semiotic instruments" (Gleason, 2001, p. 51).

Gleason's argument also applies to the twentieth-century stylised performance of human violation if we think of videos of beheadings or, as a matter of fact, of the Abu Ghraib torture photographs (Enloe, 2016, pp. 89–102). In the Scorpions video, for instance, the camera zooms in on a member of the paramilitary unit charged with guarding the six captured Bosnian men in the back of a truck on the ride to the place of their execution. The handcuffed captives are in a vulnerable position, lying with their faces down on the truck's floor; they cannot move, yet the guard kicks a young boy's head with his boots, while verbally insulting him. This simple but meaningful gesture dehumanised the adolescent, abnegating his status as a person and reducing him to a sheer object, while through this violent act, the Scorpions member positioned himself in front of his comrades and the camera as the boy's master.

The communicative dimension of violence is always multidirectional and embedded in a triangular web of power relations: perpetrators communicate with their targets, whom they do not perceive as victims, while their violent gestures also address their peers, and, with a camera running, future bystanders, and spectators (Mailänder, 2015b, pp. 231–272). Armed conflict and war open repertoires of action inaccessible in peacetime. Of course, international law and military codes formally forbid violence against civilians and any form of torture. But these norms do not prevent combatants from perpetrating extreme and illegal violence against enemy soldiers or civilians. On the contrary, armed conflict and war are opportunities to live out one's violent fantasies: verbally, physically, and sexually.

From a conceptual and action-centred viewpoint, it is important to differentiate violence from cruelty as two specific forms and practices of violence. Cruelty is not simply a more extreme form of violence; it distinguishes itself from violence by its intensity, motivation, and the semantics of its gestures. Firstly, cruelty has an etymological affinity to blood: the Latin word *cruor* describes blood and raw flesh, or by extension, a bloodbath or slaughter. As an adjective and adverb, *crudus* stands for a ruthless act of violence, which points towards its second trait: the quantitative and qualitative excess that characterises cruelty. According to French anthropologist Véronique Nahoum-Grappe (2002), the act of cruelty aims to inflict physical, psychological, or symbolic pain, and cruelty also degrades and humiliates other human beings (pp. 549–557). For these reasons, cruelty — unlike violence — can *never* be recognised as justified by those who suffer from it.

Yet, when it comes to *mutilated messengers*, not just any body will do, as Gleason cautions. For mutilated bodies to function as a semiotic instrument of communication, there needs to be a shared understanding of the semiotic context "of the ways the human body functioned as a signifier in that time and place" (Gleason, 2001, p. 50). The targets of cruel mutilation, as well as the victims' communities, need to be able to decode the intended humiliation, otherwise the act of communication remains defective. Sexual violence serves as a powerful weapon of

communication and, to build upon Gleason, crude *lingua franca*. As many armed conflicts including the war in former Yugoslavia, the Rwandan genocide, or Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 show, the body does not solely belong to individuals but to collectivities. Sexually humiliated, assaulted, and raped persons, particularly women impregnated by force, become far more effective and long-lasting *mutilated messengers* than victims of simple bombing or killing. Precisely because for their communities or societies, it will take generations to overcome the humiliation and heal (Močnik, 2014, pp. 45–66).

Wartime violence has its own rules and culture; it dominates everyday life, "distorts memory, corrupts language, and infects everything around it" (Hedges, 2002, p. 10). The testimony of Chris Hedges, a war reporter who covered a wide range of insurgencies and war from El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, and Colombia in South America to Sudan and Yemen, the Gulf War, and the war in Bosnia and Kosovo, is eye opening in this regard. Despite the carnage, destruction, suffering, and fear, he argues, war forms an enticing elixir that provides "excitement, exoticism, power, chances to rise above our small stations in life, and a bizarre and fantastic universe that has a grotesque and dark beauty" (Hedges, 2002, p. 10). According to the former war reporter, who qualifies himself a recovering addict, one of the most powerful features of war and armed conflict is that they make the world understandable, a black and white confrontation between *them* and *us* lending purpose, meaning, and justification for the most horrendous acts of violence.

Yet, once the armed conflict is over, the setting violently changes, especially for perpetrators. Suddenly, the mass killings, cruelty, sexual violence, and defilement of corpses, all of which were imaginable and feasible in wartime, and which might have even felt psychologically and emotionally normal or justified, are no longer acceptable. In this new cultural context, the perpetrated crimes often no longer make sense for the veterans themselves (Lifton, 1973, pp. 33–71; Nahoum-Grappe, 2002, pp. 296–297). Sometimes perpetrators cannot recall or describe what they did or felt and why they did it. But the photographs and videos they shot document what political scientist Eduard Weisband (2017) psychoanalytically frames as a voyeuristic desire to bond with each other through self-exhibitionism and desecration (p. 65). The perpetrator's repertory of violence and especially so-called excessive violence remain; however, contingent and polysemous, which brings me to my last point.

Picturing Violence

Vernacular photography or videos shot by combatants on the ground are a valuable source for studying war, because they capture what we might call performative highs and thus offer insights into specific mindsets and violent actions that perpetrators are often unable to explain in the aftermath. More importantly, they confront us with the complexity of visual media as images are not only eventful in that they are taking place when a shutter is closed. As object, source, and medium, (audio)visual images are open-ended which ultimately means that it is impossible to control their meaning, even for the perpetrator society.

The Scorpions video is a good case in point: it was shot with one of the first portable electronic devices, a camcorder, which appeared on the market in the 1980s and was capable of recording analog signals onto videotape cassettes. Nevertheless, in 1995, a video-recording still meant dragging around a 1.5-kilogram heavy compact camera, with sufficient tapes and extra batteries. Indeed, during the nineteen-minute massacre, the battery almost died twice. Without this new technology, the ICTY would have missed, in 2004, a key piece of evidence and scholars, a crucial source. Yet, what was originally intended as a confidential paramilitary insider document ended up circulating as a trophy among Scorpions unit members and in Serbian civilian communities. During this unintended and uncontrollable process of multidirectional copying, sharing, and circulating, a VHS copy ended up at the Serbian NGO Humanitarian Law Center (HLC) and thus at the ICTY.

When we think about violence and armed conflict, images always come to mind: photographs for the mid-nineteenth and particularly twentieth century and paintings for previous centuries, such as Francisco de Goya's drawings of the atrocities committed by Napoleon's soldiers in Spain. If the twentieth century is a resolutely photographic era, the digital twenty-first century, with its tsunami of visual data, further complicates our relation to images. It is difficult to imagine WWII or Vietnam without iconic images, and it is now impossible to comprehend the current war in Ukraine without the unmanageable density of amateur photographs, social media, algorithms, and artificial intelligence.

Yet, social and human scientists often feel uncomfortable with the abundance, polysemic nature, and porosity of visual sources, photography, in particular. We expect (audio)visual sources to "*tell* us something" (Edwards, 2001, p. 102; Evans & Mailänder, 2021, p. 77) even though their readings always remain arbitrary and their interpretations incomplete. Photographs and video recordings are unknowable in holistic terms, which is why they cause so much trouble for historians (Edwards, 2001, pp. 3–14). When it comes to violence, a close analysis of images tells us a great deal about the camera's gaze and the photographer's particular "fears, yearnings, and fantasies" (Dunaway, 2000, p. 209). Here, I build upon Jennifer Evans's claim that it is not the "reality" or the "documentary value" the photo gestures toward that matters most, but rather, what *the viewers see in it* (Evans, 2013, p. 432).

As a visual medium, photographs and video recordings are not only subjective in their process of fabrication, such as the frame, perspective, and motif chosen by the photographers, the posing, or gestures of the photographed for the camera, and the *hors-champ* that does not appear in the frame but is also part of what happens in front of the camera. Photographs and videos also strike the innermost core of the spectator's subjectivity in a very distinct way versus other sources, which is probably also why historians often feel disturbed by such sources, dismissing them as too subjective or unreliable. Yet, they are important traces of the past and influential markers of the historical process, as visual anthropologist Elizabeth Edwards cautions. As scholars or activists, we put photographs on book covers and use them as illustrations for our PowerPoints, but we usually devote little thought to what visual sources actually *do* to us and to the historical field (Edwards, 2021, p. ix).

As visual media, photographic images and video recordings relate the past, present, and future to one another, materialising, among other things, the viewer's relationship to the past. Both allow us viewers to establish a haptic or at least an emotional relationship with the photograph as object as well as with the subject of the image, very often in a single glance (Edwards, 2009). Our eyes and brains only need a few seconds — on average a tenth of a second — to grasp a first impression of the shape and content of an image and cognitively quickly process a photograph (Sachs-Hombach & Schirra, 1999, p. 37). Thus, as photo historian Ulrich Prehn (2022) rightly argues, important foundations for our first interpretation and relation to a photographic image are laid within a moment by an extremely rapid selection process of our perceptual apparatus. The synesthetic experience of sound and moving images makes audio-visual sources even more overwhelming.

Undeniably, photographs and films have a strong emotional force, as the act of looking is highly affective. According to visual scholar Marianne Hirsch (2008), when we look at photographic images from a strange, past world, we are not solely looking "for information or confirmation, but also for an intimate material and affective connection" (p. 116/117) to the past they presumably reveal. As objects that suggest an embodied living connection between the viewer and the photographed, historical photographs and videos made by perpetrators are thus visual and material performances that allow us to establish, sometimes at a brief glance, a tactile and emotional relationship with the past. In contrast to official propaganda photos or images of atrocities, amateur videos and photographs from the Nazi era or the war in former Yugoslavia reduce emotional distance or ideological inhibitions and might even facilitate empathy or identification with the perpetrators.

The photographic or cinematic viewing of pain and discrimination holds the possibility of creating social solidarity and empathy, but it is not a given. Amateur photography and videos can mediate solidarity with the victims of violence, provided that people are able and willing to recognize each other as a community of interdependent, interrelated human beings (Butler, 2004, pp. 50–100, pp. 128–151; Hark, 2017, pp. 41–52). Armed conflicts and wars often undermine this ability to experience the violation and endangerment of others as a potential violation and exclusion of oneself — "while we venerate and mourn our own dead, we are curiously indifferent about those we kill" (Hedges, 2002, p. 18). Particularly, war related images can create an effective simplistic reality of binary oppositions of otherness. Hence, alternative ways of seeing might lead viewers, then and now, to identify with the perpetrators or simply find the footage amusing or titillating.

Visual and audio-visual sources as media invite us to think about the complex relationship between artifact and actors. By shifting our attention from the content to the performative long-term effects of visual objects like videos or photographs, we nuance our understanding of politicisation. The focus is no longer exclusively on the cohesion of the perpetrators' in-groups during acts of violence but rather on larger communities *after* the conflict. Images, as we have

seen, mediate something about the past world they depict, but they also address the needs, desires, and projections of the past, contemporary, and future viewers. We might use the Scorpions video or even trophy photographs of SS killing squads or German soldiers during WWII as evidence that massacres and violence happened and as sources for a critical in-depth reading. But they are so much more. For the perpetrators' families and post-war societies, for instance, videos and photography convey the emotional *presence* of Nazism, or, in the case of the Scorpions video, Serbian supremacy and nationalism, raising questions about possibly positive, and thus highly disturbing, legacies of violence.

Closing Thoughts: The Ethics of Seeing

Violence defies easy categorisation, and even though it cannot solely be understood in terms of physicality (force, physical assault, killing), the attack on a person's dignity, health, and wellbeing is key. I believe that the essence of violence boils down to harm, physical or psychological, with an instant and/or long-term impact. Violence affects bodies, souls, or things: it coerces, bends, breaks, destroys, and ultimately kills. An essential distinctive feature of violence is that it — whether physical, symbolic or psychological, direct or indirect, instantaneous or delayed — always brings into play a multiplicity of different agents.

What we define as violence lies in the eye of the beholder, and videos and photographs mediate this specific dilemma better than any other sources. Visual and audio-visual images pose methodological challenges what Jennifer Evans (2018) frames as the "ethics of seeing," the historically rooted ever-changing ways of "viewing and engaging the world" through photographs and videos (p. 3). As visual media, they are sensuous yet cognitive, voluptuous yet analytical. They have an abundance, as Elizabeth Edwards (2021) rightly put it, whether we like it or not (pp. 43–55). And it is precisely their polysemic and affective nature that we should place at the core of our interdisciplinary discussions. Only then can we take seriously a simple but meaningful question: what do (audio)visual images *do*?

Particularly in a digital age of furious reproductivity, sharing, and reposting, we should pay more and closer attention to visual sources because this is how violence will (in)directly reach a large majority of people, overwhelmed with images, both private and official. Since an image can be appropriated and apprehended in multiple, uncontrollable ways, we must be equipped with methodological tools and epistemological questions to be ready for discussions and debates that are yet to come, over and over, again. No end of history.

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