

Discursive Strategies for Spectacularization: Views on the Great Recession in the World Press Photo Awards*

Marta Martín-Núñez
Maria Soler-Campillo
Javier Marzal-Felici

Universitat Jaume I

mnunez@uji.es

solerm@uji.es

marzal@uji.es



Submission date: April 2021

Accepted date: April 2022

Published in: June 2022

Recommended citation: MARTÍN-NÚÑEZ, M.; SOLER-CAMPILLO, M. and MARZAL-FELICI, J. (2022). "Discursive Strategies for Spectacularization: Views on the Great Recession in the World Press Photo Awards". *Anàlisi: Quaderns de Comunicació i Cultura*, 66, 193-213. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.5565/rev/analisi.3437>>

Abstract

This article analyses winning photographs on the 2008 financial crisis at the World Press Photo (WPP) Contest between 2008 and 2013. Our aim is to analyse the presence of this issue in the contest itself; its depiction in formal and discursive terms; and the differences in how it is depicted when a photographic narrative is involved, based on an analysis of two different classifications established by the WPP contest: the individual photograph ("single pictures") and the series ("stories"). The results show a low incidence of this issue in the contest, and a predominance of the idea of representation as spectacle, especially in the single pictures rather than the stories, which succeed in employing narrative strategies to elicit a more reflective reading of the images.

Keywords: World Press Photo; photography; photojournalism; discourse analysis; financial crisis

* This project has been conducted as part of the research project *Discursive Strategies of Dissent in Contemporary Spanish Documentary Practices* (DOESCO) (code UJI-B2021-32), directed by Dr. Javier Marzal-Felici and Marta Martín-Núñez and funded by Universitat Jaume I through the UJI's competitive call for research projects for the period 2022-2024. I.T.A.C.A.-UJI Research Group, <<http://www.culturavisual.uji.es>>.

Resum. *Estratègies discursives per a l'espectacularització: mirades sobre la Gran Recessió en els premis World Press Photo*

Aquest article analitza les fotografies premiades en els World Press Photo entre 2008 i 2013 sobre la crisi financera de 2008. Els nostres objectius se centren a analitzar la incidència d'aquest tema en el concurs, a examinar la representació que es realitza d'aquest tema formalment i discursivament, i a observar les diferències en la representació que es produeixen quan entra en joc la narrativa fotogràfica a partir de l'anàlisi de les dues modalitats diferents que ofereix el concurs, la fotografia individual (*single*) i la sèrie (*story*). Els resultats constaten una baixa incidència d'aquest tema en el concurs i un predomini de la concepció de la representació com a espectacle, especialment en les imatges individuals enfront de les sèries, que aconsegueixen activar, a través de mecanismes narratius, una lectura més reflexiva de les imatges.

Paraules clau: World Press Photo; fotografia; fotoperiodisme; anàlisi del discurs; crisi financera

Resumen. *Estrategias discursivas para la espectacularización: miradas sobre la Gran Recesión en los premios World Press Photo*

Este artículo analiza las fotografías premiadas en los premios World Press Photo entre 2008 y 2013 sobre la crisis financiera de 2008. Nuestros objetivos se centran en analizar la incidencia de este tema en el concurso; en examinar la representación que se realiza de este tema a nivel formal y discursivo, y en observar las diferencias en la representación que se producen cuando entra en juego la narrativa fotográfica, a partir del análisis de las dos modalidades diferentes que ofrece el concurso: la fotografía individual (*single*) y la serie (*story*). Los resultados constatan una baja incidencia de este tema en el concurso, un predominio de la concepción de la representación como espectáculo, especialmente en las imágenes individuales frente a las series, que consiguen activar a través de mecanismos narrativos una lectura más reflexiva de las imágenes.

Palabras clave: World Press Photo; fotografía; fotoperiodismo; análisis del discurso; crisis financiera

1. Introduction and description of research

In a world of the 'pictorial turn', which has given rise to the 'hegemony of the visible' (Mitchell, 2005), photojournalism is one of the most accessible and widely consumed visual products, but paradoxically finds itself in a difficult position due to its increasingly problematic status in traditional media, the consequences of an era of image overproduction, and a crisis of faith in the photograph. In this context, we argue that the predominant photojournalism is moving towards a kind of spectacularization of the real, promoted in particular by the imaginaries constructed by certain international contests through the photographs they choose as winners. Photojournalism festivals have turned into showcases for news coverage of current events, helping to enhance the prestige of the award winners and to promote their professional work.

In this article, we propose to analyse photographs relating to the 2008 financial crisis that won the WPP Award in the years 2009 to 2013—the five

years immediately after the crisis began and when its consequences were most visible. The consequences of the Great Recession resonated worldwide for nearly a decade, with an especially dramatic impact in Western Europe and the United States, pushing levels of poverty to unprecedented extremes (OECD, 2018) as a result of the austerity policies introduced to address it. Our objectives here are thus focused, first of all, on analysing the presence of this issue in the contest itself; secondly, on examining its depiction in formal and discursive terms; and thirdly, on considering differences in its depiction when a photographic narrative is involved, based on analysis of two different categories established by the WPP contest: the individual photograph ('single pictures') and the series ('stories'). The results of the analysis on the characteristics of the visual representation of the economic crisis can, we believe, be extrapolated to other crises that share characteristics, in terms of their complex structural causes and widespread international repercussion; and at the same time can be interesting to contrast with the visual representation of other crises, such as the one generated by the global pandemic caused by COVID-19 or war conflicts such as the Ukraine War of 2022, with very localized causes and very recognisable iconic motifs.

This research focuses on the World Press Photo (WPP) Awards, established in Amsterdam in 1955 and recognised today as among the most influential awards in photojournalism, due to their high international profile. Winners are chosen each year from among thousands of photographs submitted—in 2009, the first year analysed for this study, 96,268 pictures by 5,508 photographers from 124 countries were entered. Each contest category includes three awards under two classifications (single pictures and stories), which are subsequently presented in a travelling exhibition seen by more than four million people in 45 countries, accompanied by a publication with a print run of 30,000. The archives of the WPP website receive three million visits per year. While some previous studies (Andén-Papadopoulos, 2000; Greenwood, 2012) have examined the formulas used to win awards in these contests, or the most recurrent themes of the prize winners (Kim and Smith, 2005; Greenwood and Smith, 2007) and recent studies also show how fidelity to a given visual discourse is above the creative freedom of reporters and their adaptation to the context (Blanco Pérez, 2022). Against this background, our interest here is in analysing the visual strategies used in award-winning pictures to spectacularize the real. In this sense, every photograph expresses a point of view, a gaze (of the spectator and of the enunciative agent¹) that is always ideologically loaded, as 'photography consists in transforming reality into a photographic reality' (Rouillé, 2017: 174). This is precisely one of the questions that interests us most here: the question of

1. The enunciative agent is 'that which takes the reins of the discursive possibilities and potentialities of an enunciation. We refer here to an ideal concept that unfolds in the text as the agent responsible for the process of constructing meaning' (Gómez Tarín and Marzal, 2015: 134).

what the photographs express, what position they place the spectator in, how they construct meaning and, in short, *what they want from us*, as W. J. T. Mitchell (2005) would put it.

2. The spectacularization of the photojournalistic image

Journalism is undergoing a period of profound transformations that demand a re-evaluation of the profession (Deuze and Witschge, 2018). New formats and media are currently emerging that require journalists to develop new skills and ways of working (Ritchin, 2013: 145), while the collapse of the traditional business model based on sales of print copies and advertising has led to a credibility crisis in which political control of news information is habitual, constant and systematic (Casero-Ripollés, 2009). In the ‘post-photographic’ era (Fontcuberta, 2016), marked by the photograph’s loss of reliability (Taylor, 2000; Åker, 2012) as a truthful image and the rise of phenomena like citizen photojournalism (Andén-Papadopoulos & Pantti, 2011) and amateur photography in the media (Becker, 2015), photojournalism is similarly experiencing a transformation. It is paradoxical that in a context where the image is so central to our communicative processes and when professional photographs have been proven to capture more than their non-professional equivalents in terms of emotion, action, conflict and graphic appeal (Mortensen and Gade, 2018), the place of the professional photojournalist has never before been as vulnerable as it is in the digital era (Hadland, Lambert and Campbell, 2016).

In this tumultuous context, the pictures that win awards in contests like World Press Photo demonstrate a particular way of practising photojournalism, and legitimise a particular form of viewing: they emerge as a form of capital that helps to shape the boundaries and definitions of the field. At the same time, winning a photojournalism award represents a milestone in a photographer’s career, and confers reputation and prestige. Photographers (or their editors) submit what they perceive to be their best pictures (Greenwood, 2012), which are generally the most complex, using hybrid strategies with artistic forms to produce more powerful and beautiful images through choices of composition and other artistic criteria (Veneti, 2017). Previous research has found the coexistence in these contests of what is known as ‘conventionalization in feature photography’ (Greenwood and Smith, 2009), especially in relation to the topics chosen, with elements that give the content or the aesthetic certain innovative twists that make them stand out (Mendelson, 2009). Between conventionalism and innovation, how should we interpret the spectacularization of the real?

Beyond Débord’s (2002) analysis of the ‘culture of the spectacle’, referring to a *Weltanschauung* or world-view that has come to be objectified, spectacle refers to an aesthetic ‘wherein the proliferation of recombinant and replicated images, styles and genres augurs the displacement—the thinning down—of meaning and the symbolic’. And understood as a formal aesthetic

concern, it also needs visual motifs or tropes that can reproduce a certain familiarity in order to appeal to the spectator's emotions. In their analysis of the photographs that won the WPP in the years 2009 to 2011, Zarzycka and Kleppe (2013) identify four tropes: 1) presence of the body (dramatic gestures and facial expressions in mid- or close-up shots); 2) recognisability (intertextual connections to Western visual and literary culture); 3) affective powers (provoking emotional responses in their audiences, of outrage, grief or compassion, fear and shock or shame); and 4) symbolic accessibility (representing a larger event or issue, often subsumed by the generic and simplified ideological conditions of meaning). Tropes can thus be a form of expression used to convey meaning or to enhance the discursive effect, and are thus also revealed as necessary to the spectacular.

Alongside the strength and the power of the single photograph, we must also reflect on what kind of narratives are articulated in a photographic reportage (Berger and Mohr, 2013), understood as a series of photographs that delve deeper into a theme. The photographic sequence, both in causal, elliptical or cumulative narrative forms, represents a way of pushing past the limits marked by the single frame and diluting Cartier-Bresson's paradigm of the decisive moment expected of the photograph when it operates on its own (Baetens, 1995). The photo story not only makes it possible to explore an issue more extensively (and, generally, in more depth) but also allows the photographer to work with the elided spaces and/or times between the pictures, creating a new visual syntax around narrative elements that can foster reflection.

In this overview, we cannot ignore the main ethical debates that accompany the practice of photojournalism, especially if we consider it from the perspective of the civil contract of photography (Azoulay, 2008), which dilutes the traditional concept of ownership and authorship to also incorporate the ideological weight of the device and, especially, of the subject represented, and the viewer. In this sense, Azoulay complains that while the photographer wins fame and awards and is protected by contracts and agreements, the photographed individual is abandoned, when usually the importance of a photograph arises from this individual (2008: 102). Particularly sensitive is the case of the representation of pain and horror. There is no doubt that the fact that these images exist draws attention to the news (Taylor, 2000). But against this short-term position, we must also question the long-term impact of their transformative power, due to the 'anaesthesia' produced by overexposure to this type of image. This issue had already been introduced by Sontag in 1973 (2010a), although she herself later questioned it: "I'm not so sure anymore. What is the proof that the impact of the photographs is attenuated, that our spectator culture neutralises the moral force of photographs of atrocities?" (Sontag, 2010b: 90). More recently the issue has been explored by other researchers (Campbell, 2014; Weikmann and Powell, 2019) to explain viewers' responses to distant suffering, including empathy, protest, voyeurism or apathy.

3. Materials and methods

This research has been structured in three stages to address the three objectives proposed. The first stage involved a detailed analysis of the full map of single pictures and stories that won WPP awards in the five years studied (2009-2013), which added up to a total of 181 projects. Studies were conducted across the different award categories (*contemporary issues, daily life, general news, people in the news, portraits, spot news*), while omitting specific categories that fell outside the scope of our objective (*nature, arts and entertainment, sports*). The award-winning pictures in the *Photo of the Year* category have been counted twice: once in their original category and once in the main category. This first stage established the thematic focus represented in the contest (Table 1), classified into 17 categories that build on the eight used by Del Campo and Spinelli (2017).

Table 1. Issues covered by World Press Photo award-winning projects (2009-2013)

Conflict/issue	Number of award-winning projects covering these issues			Issues associated with the financial crisis
	Singles	Stories	Total	
Violence against Women	6	4	10	
*Celebrities	4	3	7	
Current armed conflict	15	6	21	
Ethnic/national conflict	5	6	11	
*Natural disasters	9	10	19	
Emigration/refugees	4	1	5	
*Disease and diversity	3	8	11	
Historical memory	0	1	1	
*Metadiscourse	0	2	2	
*Minorities	1	3	4	
*Poverty	7	7	14	8
*Post-conflict	6	5	11	
*Protest against the powers that be	11	7	18	3
*Traditions	2	3	5	
*Tragedies	4	2	6	1
Daily life	12	9	21	1
*Violence and crime	5	10	15	1

Note: Categories marked with an asterisk (*) are the ones we have added to the original list developed by Del Campo Cañizares and Spinelli Capel (2017).

Source: Compiled by the authors.

Projects that address the 2008 financial crisis, whose range of causes and consequences is complex, touch on many different issues: *poverty, protest against the powers that be, tragedies, daily life, and violence and crime*. A total of 14 projects out of the 181 were found to deal with issues associated with the crisis, as detailed in Table 2.

Table 2. World Press Photo award-winning projects (2009-2013) relating to the 2008 financial crisis

Year	Category	I/S*	Author	Project Description	Issue Category
2009	Contemporary issues	S	Carlos Cazalis	Homeless people in Sao Paulo	Poverty
2009	Contemporary issues	S	Massimo Siragusa	Fondo Fucile slum	Poverty
2009	Daily life	S	Brenda Ann Kenneally	Daily life of a single mother with seven children	Poverty
2009	Daily life	S	Anthony Suau	Financial crisis, causes and consequences	Poverty
2009	Photo of the year	I	Anthony Suau	Eviction due to financial crisis	Poverty
2009	General news	I	Luiz Vasconcelos	Resistance against eviction	Protest against the powers that be
2010	Contemporary issues	I	Pierre-Olivier Deschamps	Homeless people in Paris	Poverty Daily life
2011	Daily life	I	Malte Jäger	Couch surfers in New York	Daily life
2012	People in the news	I	Tomasz Lazar	A protester is arrested during demonstrations in New York	Protest against the powers that be
2012	People in the news	S	John Moore	Evicted	Poverty
2013	Contemporary issues	I	Emilio Morenatti	Barcelona Demonstrations	Protest against the powers that be
2013	Observed portraits	I	Nemanja Pančić	Little Survivor	Tragedies
2013	General news	S	Paolo Pellegrin	Crime at the Crescent, downtown Rochester, New York State.	Violence and crime
2013	Daily life	I	Jacob Ehrbahn	At the Dining Hall	Poverty

* I = Individual pictures (singles); S = series (stories).

Source: Compiled by the authors.

Taking the award-winning projects that deal with the financial crisis, we have applied representativeness criteria in order to choose four single pictures and four stories for the textual analysis in the second and third stages. The chosen cases are paradigms that allow us to observe at a qualitative level the mechanisms of meaning that are put into play in the representation of the crisis, emphasising especially the themes of *poverty* and *protest against the powers that be*, which are the two most recurrent, as shown in Table 1. For the single photographs, we have chosen pictures by Anthony Suau (2009), Tomasz Lazar (2012), Jacob Ehrbahn (2013) and Emilio Morenatti (2013). For the stories, we chose series by Carlos Cazalis (2009), Brenda Ann Kenneally (2009), Anthony Suau (2009), and John Moore (2009). For the analysis of the single pictures, our proposed methodology was based on Marzal-Felici's proposition of semiotic inspiration (Barthes, 1989), to analyse the photographic image at four levels of study: contextual, morphological, compositional and enuncia-

tive. To analyse the narrative design of the series of photographs, we will apply a spatial, temporal and structural analysis to the sequences.

The fact that the research only looks at five editions of a single competition for the quantitative analysis and eight cases (four individual photographs and four series) for the qualitative analysis establishes certain limitations in terms of the representativeness of the results. At the same time, this allows us to focus the study on a particular context, on certain visual motifs, and in a specific photojournalistic culture, thereby achieving a profound and rigorous knowledge of this context. As Salvadó et al. (2020: 181) write: “The motif constitutes a privileged space of analysis for the essential condition under which images—their relationship with power, sovereignty and contemporary regimes of visibility— appear under the focus of iconographic studies.”

4. Analysis of results

4.1. Conflict as the thematic core of the contest

The first stage of analysis reveals important conclusions about the focus of subject matter in the contest and representation of the crisis. First of all, it is important to note the low number of projects related directly to the global financial crisis of 2008: only 7.8% (N=14) of projects address this topic. A majority represent it in relation to *poverty* (57%, N=8), a smaller proportion in *protest against the powers that be* (21.4%, N=3), and only a minimal number in *tragedies, daily life* or *violence and crime* (7.1%, N=1 each). Moreover, nearly half of these projects (42.9%, N=6) are from the first year analysed (2009), immediately after the onset of the crisis in 2008, while the others are spread out over the following four years.

In terms of general topics, the results reveal a clear predominance of issues associated with conflict or war (*Current armed conflict, ethnic/national conflict, post-conflict and historical memory*) (24.3%, N=44). These results are in line with previous research that found that more than two thirds of Pulitzer Prize-winning photographs deal with war or conflict (Kim and Smith, 2005), as do a similar, albeit slightly lower, proportion of Pictures of the Year (POYi) winners (Greenwood and Smith, 2007). Taken together, themes relating to violent conflict accounts for 59.1% of the projects (N=110), making it the principal theme, featuring in the majority of the contest’s award-winning photographic projects. These themes commonly appear in climactic images based on visual spectacle capable of stirring the emotions through the depiction of pain.

Alongside these extremely urgent issues, which are nearly always in locations a long way from the West, are others of a structural nature, featuring less spectacular visual imagery or which are less easily translatable into shocking images. These add up to only one third of the total (33.1%, N=60), while other categories dealing with more *pleasant* topics amounted to only 7.8% (N=14). This distribution seems to suggest that given the complexity of its

causes (which in many cases are invisible) and consequences (affecting geographically dispersed regions over an extended period of time), issues relating to the financial crisis are difficult to frame and capture on camera. Due to this difficulty associated in articulating them visually, they are given less attention.

4.2. Framing at the service of spectacle

The second stage of the research involved a discursive analysis of four single pictures. The photographs chosen portray different aspects of the financial crisis: a violent eviction (Suau; figure 1); a protester being arrested (Lazar; figure 2); the everyday reality of a soup kitchen (Ehrbahn; figure 3); and the violence of street demonstrations (Morenatti; figure 4). Analysis of these pictures reveals common features in certain internal structures which determine the framing, organise the composition, articulate the spatial and temporal dimensions, and conceal the enunciation to evoke a discourse focused on visual spectacle.

Figure 1. *Cleveland, Ohio, 26 March 2008* [Photograph by Anthony Suau] (Cleveland, 2008).



Figure 2. *Harlem, New York, USA, 21 October 2011* [Photograph by Tomasz Lazar] (New York, 2011).



Figure 3. *At the Dining Hall, 12 October 2012* [Photograph by Jacob Ehrbahn] (Youngstown, Ohio, 2012).



Figure 4. *Barcelona Demonstrations, 29 March 2012* [Photograph by Emilio Morenatti] (Barcelona, 2012).



All the pictures analysed here focus on a single character who becomes the centre of attention and with whom the spectator is immediately encouraged to identify. In fact, this has been a recurring pattern broken only by Amber Bracken's winning photo in 2022, which was the first in the history of the contest in which no human figure appears in the image. Almost all the characters appear in moments of extreme tension: the shot always captures a climactic moment of tension or pain, especially evident in Lazar's picture but also in Morenatti's and Suau's. The fact that there is only one character in the frame facilitates the process of identification with the spectator, who is thus at once able to engage empathetically with the subject, especially when we recognise them as victims; this is immediately obvious in the pictures by Lazar, Ehrbahn and Morenatti, as they reinforce the identification with the weak and vulnerable against the powerful. A study by Small and Loewenstein (2003) points out how a single individual is perceived as a coherent psychological unit compared to a group, and is therefore more easily identifiable as a victim. This effectively evokes two of the visual tropes mentioned above: the presence of the body and affective power.

In this respect Suau's picture is perhaps an exception, because the main character is a police officer. This picture renders visible the coercive power imposed on *defaulters*, those who have *lived beyond their means*, criminalising poverty (an idea that has been increasingly questioned in alternative readings offered by social movements as the crisis has worsened). However, isolated from its context and without a caption, this picture—which belongs to a story that will be analysed below—does not offer the spectator sufficient visual information to suggest criminalisation, as the police officer, unlike the officers in Lazar's picture, does not appear to be exercising his authority against anyone (unless the target is located outside the frame), so there is a familiar identification with the law in this case as well.

In general terms, all the pictures are organised around forms of compositional tension that create focal points of visual attraction, and regardless of whether they are indoor or outdoor shots, they all represent an enclosed, angst-ridden and claustrophobic space, especially evident in the cases of Lazar's and Morenatti's photographs. The exception in this respect is perhaps Ehrbahn's picture, organised around a dynamic equilibrium. Nevertheless, the character also functions as the main point of visual attraction, offset by the presence of the large US flag, a powerful symbol in the collective American imagination, evocative here of its ironic depiction by Robert Frank in his series *The Americans* (1958).

All four pictures adopt Cartier Bresson's principle of the decisive moment (2014): they all capture a unique fraction of a second in which there is a simultaneous recognition of the meaning of an event and the meticulous organisation of the forms that express that event. This is in line with the results of previous studies on contest judges' ratings (Lough, 2021), which establish the identification of a *narrative moment* and *emotion* as the most important factors in winning images. By capturing this instantaneous quality,

these photographs are offered as atemporal images that represent a collective, a moment in history. The aim in all four cases is to transcend the situation depicted to become symbols of a crisis, thereby evoking the third trope: symbolic accessibility. Thus, all four pictures present a realistic depiction based on the model of enunciative transparency, where there is a deliberate concealment of enunciative markers. They all share a naturalised point of view of the subject, taken at the level of the protagonist, with no suggestion of a distanced perspective. None of the subjects is looking directly at the camera, giving the impression that the scene is unfolding without the presence of a camera pointing at them, contributing to the erasure of all traces of enunciation. This is especially interesting in Suau's picture, as the fact that the police officer is not looking at the camera—when the photographer could not have been there without his permission—seems to erase the photographer's presence and position the spectator as an archetypal voyeur. This mode of representation is anchored in the tradition established by the Farm Security Administration in the 1930s, that documented the effects of the Great Depression in the United States (Parejo, 2016). It is a mode that establishes the trope of symbolic accessibility by eliciting recognition through intertextual connections.

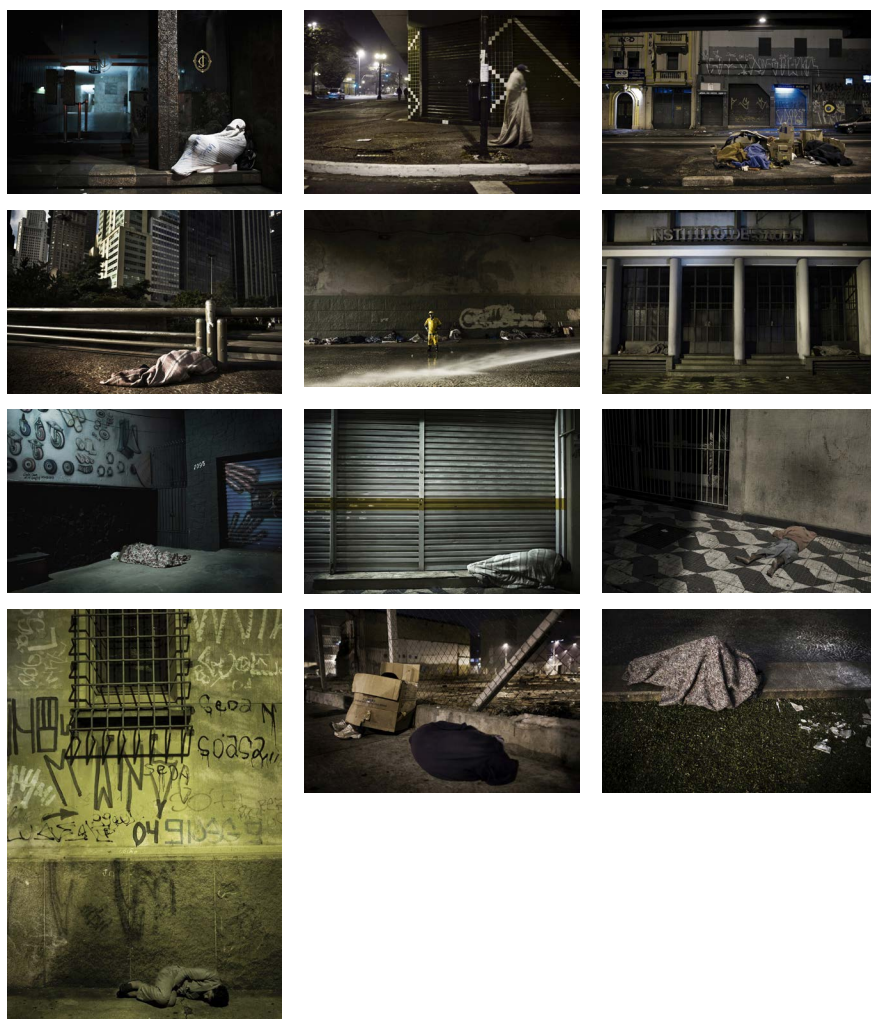
4.3. The series as a mechanism for triggering reflection

Following the analysis of the single pictures, the third stage of the study involved analysing the award-winning series ('stories'), to present a narrative counterpoint to the construction of the individual images. Of the four stories analysed, two are directly related to the effects of the financial crisis (Suau, 2009; figure 7) and the evictions that occurred as a direct consequence of it (Moore, 2012; figure 8), while the other two are related to the crisis only indirectly, through the depiction of poverty in the family home (Kenneally, 2009; figure 6) and in its extreme form of social exclusion in a city (Cazalis, 2009; figure 5).

One of the aspects common to all these photo stories is that the focus of attention is always a group; none of the series features a lone protagonist, as was the case in the single pictures. Kenneally's series is the only one that focuses on a single case: a family whose members appear in multiple pictures, creating a kind of chorus of featured characters. Cazalis and Moore show different cases related to the same issue, with various protagonists. Suau's series also features different characters, without focusing on any one in particular. This diversity facilitates a more complex understanding of the issues presented, enabling the viewer to engage in a process of reflection on each situation without emotionally identifying with a single character.

This process of reflection is helped by the fact that all the stories—except in the series by Cazalis, for obvious reasons—include images that do not have people as the central focus, allowing room for a more thoughtful type of representation—especially through the use of landscape—while minimising the visual tension and articulating moments of balance (Figure 9). In a kind of

Figure 5. Carlos Cazalis, 2009. *Over 10,000 people in the metropolis of São Paulo are homeless*



Barthesian catalysis (Barthes, 1968), these images serve to offer a break from the action and provide spaces for reflection. They also make it possible to construct a more complex spatial network, as each picture shows us a portion of a fragmented visual universe, ranging from the reconstruction of a city such as Sao Paulo (Cazalis, 2009) to the everyday spaces of the Jarron family (Kennelly), the collapse of financial power and its aftermath (Suau), and different houses where evictions have taken place (Moore).

Figure 6. Brenda Ann Kenneally, 2009. *Diana Jarron is a single mother with seven children*

Similarly, the notion of the decisive moment or of instantaneousness that was so important in the single pictures is diluted in the series (Liebman, 2011), creating a new temporal dimension that covers a more extensive narrative, and contributing to the development of a concept of time associated with an elliptical narrative. In this sense, we can observe how different narrative structures are articulated. On the one hand, Suau and Kenneally present narratives that conform to a classical structure. Suau portrays a balance that is broken by the financial crisis, showing its devastating consequences before finally closing the circle by taking us back again to the doors of the stock exchange, where the story began. Kenneally introduces us to the characters and then explores details of their ordinary lives over the course of the day. On the other hand, both Cazalis and Moore adopt quite different structures, based on a kind of piling up of different cases. Each individual image in Cazalis's project is an anecdote that would lack force on its own; it is the combination of eleven images of homeless people curled up in different corners of a city that gives the series its power. Similarly, the accumulation of

Figure 7. Anthony Suau, 2009. *The financial crisis*



details and situations of different eviction experiences creates a highly potent narrative cohesion in Moore’s series, reflecting the complexity and depth of the situation.

Finally, the series also evoke enunciative transparency as a paradigmatic photojournalistic code. Indeed, the presentation of different points of view here only serves to enhance the sense of omniscience that allows us access as spectators to worlds that we would never be able to see otherwise.

Figure 8. John Moore, 2012. *Evicted*

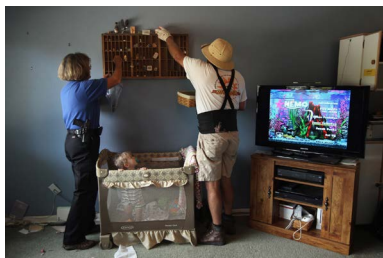


Figure 9. Images taken from the stories with minimal compositional tension. Kenneally, 2009; Suau, 2009; Moore, 2012



5. Discussion: Photographic Analysis in the Society of the Spectacle

Analysis of the winning photographic projects in the WPP contest in the five years following the outbreak of the economic crisis of 2008 (i.e. 2009-2013) on the subject of the crisis and its consequences shows a low incidence in the contest: only 7.7% of the projects analysed address this issue, and the projects are spread across different categories of subject-matter, such as *poverty*, *protest against the powers that be*, *tragedies*, *daily life*, and *violence and crime*. Moreover, it is remarkable how almost half of these projects are concentrated in the first year analysed, 2009. The preponderance of themes linked to violent and traumatic conflict and usually visualised in climatic images based on visual spectacle suggests reasons for the low incidence of the subject of the financial crisis among winning projects: it is an issue whose causes and consequences are structural and complex, and spread over a wide temporal and geographical range. The consequences of the crisis are not identified with the idea of violent conflict, and so the subject remains outside the main focus of the competition.

Our formal and discursive analysis of single pictures has revealed a set of shared stylistic features and formulae designed to seize the spectator's attention: they focus on climatic or even violent moments, with a single character with whom the viewer can connect emotionally and can identify as a victim, and are constructed in tension with enunciative transparency. Taking up the theory of Hutchison, Bleiker and Campbell (2014), as researchers we need to understand and critique how images of the crisis use shock, horror and cultural stereotypes. Representation is political, and when a crisis is expressed in images, simplifying mechanisms come into operation that often evoke and feed off seriously problematic images that serve to reproduce power relations. As other studies have confirmed, WPP award-winning photographs tend to focus on displaying the pain of their subjects and/or situations (Galán-Fajardo and Trabadela-Robles, 2005: 656), relying to this end on the recurrence of visual motifs like 'the fighter', 'the demonstrator' or 'the victim' (Zarzycka and Kleppe, 2013), and on the appeal to powerful values such as 'vulnerability' or 'innocence' (Manneuvuo, 2014) that elicit the unequivocal sympathy of the audience.

On the other hand, in contrast with these single pictures focusing emotion on a single character, the series show a choral protagonism of a group of characters to enable a broader understanding of the issues involved. The

inclusion of landscapes allows us to escape from visual tension and to articulate moments of equilibrium that expand the timeframe. Both classic narrative structures and structures that work by accumulation are used, allowing for a more profound expression. Photo stories can also fill out a context in a way that would be difficult for the individual picture (except perhaps through a caption), and this changes the meaning of images which, when part of a sequence, are not read in the same way as when they are viewed on their own. An example of this is the winner of the 2009 World Press Photo of the Year, by Anthony Suau, which we have studied both individually and as part of the series in which it functions as a piece in a larger story. The series thus offers a more thoughtful representation which invites us to reflect more than the immediate emotional response evoked by the spectacle of the single picture.

In contrast to these conclusions, it is worth noting that in the 2022 edition, the WPP made important changes to its award structure and categories, eliminating thematic sections to give more presence to global regions, and to allow for more local and underrepresented geographies to be seen. However, despite these efforts to open up to other ways of seeing we need to be conscious of the fact that press photography is underpinned to a large extent by a discursive strategy associated with the classical idea of the photograph. For these kinds of images to succeed in moving the spectator, it is essential to evoke enunciative transparency to prevent viewers from considering its representational nature and to focus their attention instead on the event photographed, following a hegemonic model of representation where it is assumed that the enunciative marker (of the photographer) has to be *ethically* honest to the event photographed and to the audience (López del Ramo and Humanes Humanes, 2016). Therefore, qualitative analysis of the process of signification of images is necessary to understand the position and ideology implicit in the construction of the world that images reveal, and even more necessary at the present time when images are widely used in political communication for the purpose of spreading disinformation (Rodríguez-Serrano, Soler-Campillo, Marzal-Felici, 2021). Thus, this study also shows how major festivals such as the WPP continue to promote a classical approach to photojournalism, legitimising a way of looking that leaves out other less conventional and critical ways of looking at social reality. This is precisely one of the main issues that reflect the distance of photojournalism from other discourses which take an artistic (Martín Núñez et al., 2020) or documentary approach to portray the crisis, whether photographically (Martín Núñez, 2015; Martín Núñez, 2022), audio-visually (Deltell, 2020) or interactively (Arnau, 2016); and which employ strategies to make the authorial voice visible, and to threaten the dominance of institutional representation.

Use of images

The images used in this paper are central elements to the analysis for the purposes of criticism and review, carried out solely for scientific purposes within

the academic field. They have been reproduced from the WPP Online Archive and their copyright belongs to their authors.

Bibliographical references

- ÅKER, P. (2012). "Photography, objectivity and the modern newspaper". *Journalism Studies*, 13 (3), 325-339.
<<https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2011.629097>>
- ANDÉN-PAPADOPOULOS, K. (2000). "The Picture of the Year and its view of the world". In: BECKER, K.; OLSSON, T. and EKECRANTZ, J. (eds.). *Picturing Politics: Visual and Textual Formations of Modernity in the Swedish Press*. Stockholm: Stockholm University, 196-219.
- ANDÉN-PAPADOPOULOS, K. and PANTTI, M. (eds.) (2011). *Amateur images and global news*. Chicago: Intellect Books.
- ARNAU ROSSELLÓ, R. (2016). "Estrategias transmedia y enunciación desde los márgenes: El universo narrativo de *The undocumented*, Marco Williams, 2013". *Icono 14*, 14, 233-257.
<<https://doi.org/10.7195/ri14.v14i1.931>>
- AZOULAY, A. (2008). *The Civil Contract of Photography*. New York: Zone Books.
- BAETENS, J. (1995). "John Berger and Jean Mohr: From photography to photo narrative". *History of Photography*, 19 (4), 283-285.
<<https://doi.org/10.1080/03087298.1995.10443579>>
- BARTHES, R. (1968). "L'effet de réel". *Communications*, 11, 84-89.
<<https://doi.org/10.3406/comm.1968.1158>>
- (1989). *La cámara lúcida: Nota sobre la fotografía*. Barcelona: Paidós.
- BECKER, K. (2015). "Gestures of seeing: Amateur photographers in the news". *Journalism*, 16 (4), 451-459.
<<https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884913511566>>
- BERGER, J. and MOHR, J. (1982). *Otra manera de contar*. Barcelona: Gustavo Gili, 2013.
- BLANCO PÉREZ, M. (2022). "El discurso fotográfico en los premios World Press Photo (1955-2021): tecnología, política y medios". *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*, 80, 241-258.
<<https://doi.org/10.4185/RLCS-2022-1543>>
- CAMPBELL, D. (2014). "The Myth of Compassion Fatigue". In: KENNEDY, L. and PATRICK, C. (eds.). *The Violence of the Image: Photography and International Violence*. Londres: I.B. Tauris, 97-124.
- CAMPO CAÑIZARES, E. del and SPINELLI CAPEL, L. (2017). "Fotoperiodismo contemporáneo, entre el documento y el arte: The Aftermath Project". *adComunica: Revista Científica de Estrategias, Tendencias e Innovación en Comunicación*, 13, 25-49.
<<http://dx.doi.org/10.6035/2174-0992.2017.13.3>>
- CARTIER-BRESSON, H. (2014). *Fotografiar del natural*. Barcelona: Gustavo Gili.
- CASERO-RIPOLLÉS, A. (2009). "El control político de la información periodística". *RLCS: Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*, 64, 354-366.
<<https://doi.org/10.4185/RLCS-64-2009-828-354-366>>
- DEBORD, G. (1967). *La sociedad del espectáculo*. Valencia: Pre-Textos, 2002.
- DELTELL ESCOLAR, L. (2020). "Breve cartografía del cortometraje documental en España durante las dos primeras décadas del siglo XXI". In: GARCÍA FERNÁNDEZ,

- E. C.; MANZANO ESPINOSA, C. and DELTELL ESCOLAR, L. (ed.). *Nuevos márgenes del cortometraje*. Madrid: Fragua, 102-156.
- DEUZEE, M. and WITSCHGE, T. (2018). "Beyond Journalism: Theorizing the Transformation of Journalism". *Journalism*, 19 (2), 165-181.
<<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1464884916688550>>
- FONTCUBERTA, J. (2016). *La furia de las imágenes: Notas sobre la postfotografía*. Barcelona: Galaxia Gutenberg.
- GALÁN FAJARDO, E. and TRABADELA ROBLES, J. (2005). "Análisis de las fotografías galardonadas con el premio Fotografía del Año en el concurso World Press Photo (1995-2004)". In: LÓPEZ-LITA, R.; MARZAL-FELICI, J. and GÓMEZ-TARÍN, F. J. (eds.). *El análisis de la imagen fotográfica*. Castellón de la Plana: Servei de Publicacions de la Universitat Jaume I, 644-657. Retrieved from <http://www.analisisfotografia.uji.es/root2/intr_ingl.html>.
- GÓMEZ TARÍN, F. J. and MARZAL-FELICI, J. (2015). *Diccionario de conceptos y términos audiovisuales*. Madrid: Cátedra.
- GREENWOOD, K. (2012). "Picturing defiance: Visions of democracy in Iran". *The International Communication Gazette*, 74 (7), 619-635.
<<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1748048512458558>>
- GREENWOOD, K. and SMITH, C. Z. (2007). "How the world looks to us: International news in award-winning photographs from the Pictures of the Year, 1943-2003". *Journalism Practice*, 1, 82-101.
<<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17512780601078886>>
- (2009). "Conventionalization in feature photography". *Journalism Practice*, 3 (2), 140-161.
<<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17512780802681173>>
- HADLAND, A.; LAMBERT, P. and CAMPBELL, D. (2016). "The Future of Professional Photojournalism". *Journalism Practice*, 10 (7), 820-832.
<<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2016.1163236>>
- HUTCHISON, E.; BLEIKER, R. and CAMPBELL, D. (2014). "Imaging Catastrophe: The Politics of Representing Humanitarian Crises". In: ACUTO, M. (ed.). *Negotiating Relief: The Dialectics of Humanitarian Space*. London and New York: Hurst & Co. and Columbia University Press.
- JENKINS, J. and VOLZ, Y. (2018). "Players and Contestation Mechanisms in the Journalism Field: A Historical Analysis of Journalism Awards, 1960s to 2000s". *Journalism Studies*, 19 (7), 921-941.
- KIM, H. S. and SMITH, C. Z. (2005). "Sixty years of showing the world to America: Pulitzer Prize-Winning photographs, 1942-2002". *Gazette: The International Journal for Communication Studies*, 67, 307-323.
<<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0016549205054280>>
- LAVÍN DE LAS HERAS, E. and RÖMER PIERETTI, M. (2015). "Fotoperiodismo con el móvil: ¿El fin o reinención de los fotógrafos de prensa?". *Fotocinema: Revista Científica de Cine y Fotografía*, 11, 189-214.
<<https://doi.org/10.24310/Fotocinema.2015.v0i11.6080>>
- LIEBMAN, S. (2011). "El retorno, de Cartier Bresson, o algo no cuadra en esta fotografía". *L'Atalante: Revista de Estudios Cinematográficos*, 12, 14-21. Retrieved from <<http://www.revistaatalante.com/index.php?journal=atalante&page=article&op=view&path%5B%5D=71&path%5B%5D=50>>.
- LÓPEZ DEL RAMO, J. and HUMANES, M. L. (2016). "Análisis del framing visual y sus componentes en el tratamiento fotográfico de la crisis de los refugiados sirios

- en medios de prensa internacional”. *Scire: Representación y Organización del Conocimiento*, 22 (2), 87-97.
- LOUGH, K. (2021). “Judging Photojournalism: The Metajournalistic Discourse of Judges at the Best of Photojournalism and Pictures of the Year Contests”. *Journalism Studies*, 22 (3), 305-321.
<<https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2020.1867001>>
- MANNEVUO, M. (2014). “Reading the faces of hunger: Disturbing images of child malnutrition in the World Press Photo competition”. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 17 (2), 134-148.
<<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1367549413508099>>
- MARTÍN-NÚÑEZ, M. (2022). “Entre la narración, la poética y la cinética. La complejidad discursiva en el fotolibro español contemporáneo”. *Bulletin of Spanish Studies*. <<https://doi.org/10.1080/14753820.2021.2021681>>
- MARTÍN-NÚÑEZ, M. and GARCÍA CATALÁN, S. (2015). “Un segundo más y los caciques desaparecerían: El flash político de Julián Barón”. *Fotocinema: Revista Científica de Cine y Fotografía*, 10, 327-351.
<<https://doi.org/10.24310/Fotocinema.2015.v0i10.5989>>
- MARTÍN-NÚÑEZ, M.; GARCÍA-CATALÁN, S.; RODRÍGUEZ-SERRANO, A. (2020). “Conservar, conversar y contestar. Grietas y relecturas del álbum familiar”. *Arte, Individuo y Sociedad*, 32 (4), 1065-1083.
<<https://doi.org/10.5209/aris.66761>>
- MARZAL FELICI, J. (2007). *Cómo se lee una fotografía: Interpretaciones de la mirada*. Madrid: Cátedra. Retrieved from <<http://www.analisisfotografia.uji.es>>.
- MENDELSON, A. (2009). “What Makes a Winner?: The role of novelty in the Pictures of the Year competition”. *Visual Communication Quarterly*, 6 (4), 8-9, 14.
<<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15551399909363417>>
- MITCHELL, W. J. T. (2005). *What Do Pictures Want?: The Lives and Loves of Images*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- MORTENSEN, T. M. and GADE, P. J. (2018). “Does photojournalism matter?: News image content and presentation in the Middletown (NY) *Times Herald-Record* before and after layoffs of the photojournalism staff”. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 95 (4), 990-1010.
<<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1077699018760771>>
- OECD (2018). *Policy brief on child well-being. Poor children in rich countries: Why we need policy action*. Retrieved from <<https://www.oecd.org/els/family/Poor-children-in-rich-countries-Policy-brief-2018.pdf>>.
- PAREJO, N. (2016). “La puesta en escena de la FSA: La crisis del 29 desde la literatura, la fotografía y el cine”. In: PAREJO, N. and SÁNCHEZ-ESCALONILLA, A. (eds.) (2016). *Imaginario audiovisual de la crisis*. Pamplona: EUNSA, 111-126.
- RITCHIN, F. (2013). *Bending the Frame: Photojournalism, Documentary, and the Citizen*. New York: Aperture.
- RODRÍGUEZ-SERRANO, A.; SOLER-CAMPILLO, M. and MARZAL FELICI, J. (2021). “Fact checking audiovisual en la era de la posverdad: ¿Qué significa validar una imagen?”. *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*, 79, 19-42.
<<https://doi.org/10.4185/RLCS-2021-1506>>
- ROUILLÉ, A. (2017). *La fotografía: Entre documento y arte contemporáneo*. Mexico D. F.: Herder.
- SALVADÓ, A.; OLIVA, M. AND PINTOR, I. (2020). “La pantalla que todo lo ve: el motivo visual de la sala de control en la ficción contemporánea”. *L’Atalante*.

- Revista de estudios cinematográficos*, 30, 167-181. Retrieved from: <<http://www.revistaatalante.com/index.php?journal=atalante&page=article&op=view&path%5B%5D=798>>.
- SMALL, D. A. and LOEWENSTEIN, G. (2003). "Helping a Victim or Helping the Victim: Altruism and Identifiability". *Journal of Risk and Uncertainty*, 26, 5-16. <<https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1022299422219>>
- SONTAG, S. (2010a). *Sobre la fotografía*. Barcelona: DeBolsillo.
- (2010b). *Ante el dolor de los demás*. Barcelona: DeBolsillo.
- TAYLOR, J. (2000). "Problems in Photojournalism: Realism, the nature of news and the humanitarian narrative". *Journalism Studies*, 1 (1), 129-143. <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/146167000361212>>
- VENETI, A. (2017). "Aesthetics of protest: An examination of the photojournalistic approach to protest imagery". *Visual Communication*, 16 (3), 279-298. <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1470357217701591>>
- WEIKMANN, T. and POWELL, T. (2019). "The Distant Sufferer: Measuring Spectatorship of Photojournalism". *International Journal of Communication*, 13, 2899-2920.
- ZARZYCKA, M. and KLEPPE, M. (2013). "Awards, archives and affects: Tropes in the World Press Photo contest 2009-11". *Media, Culture & Society*, 35 (8), 977-995. <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0163443713501933>>