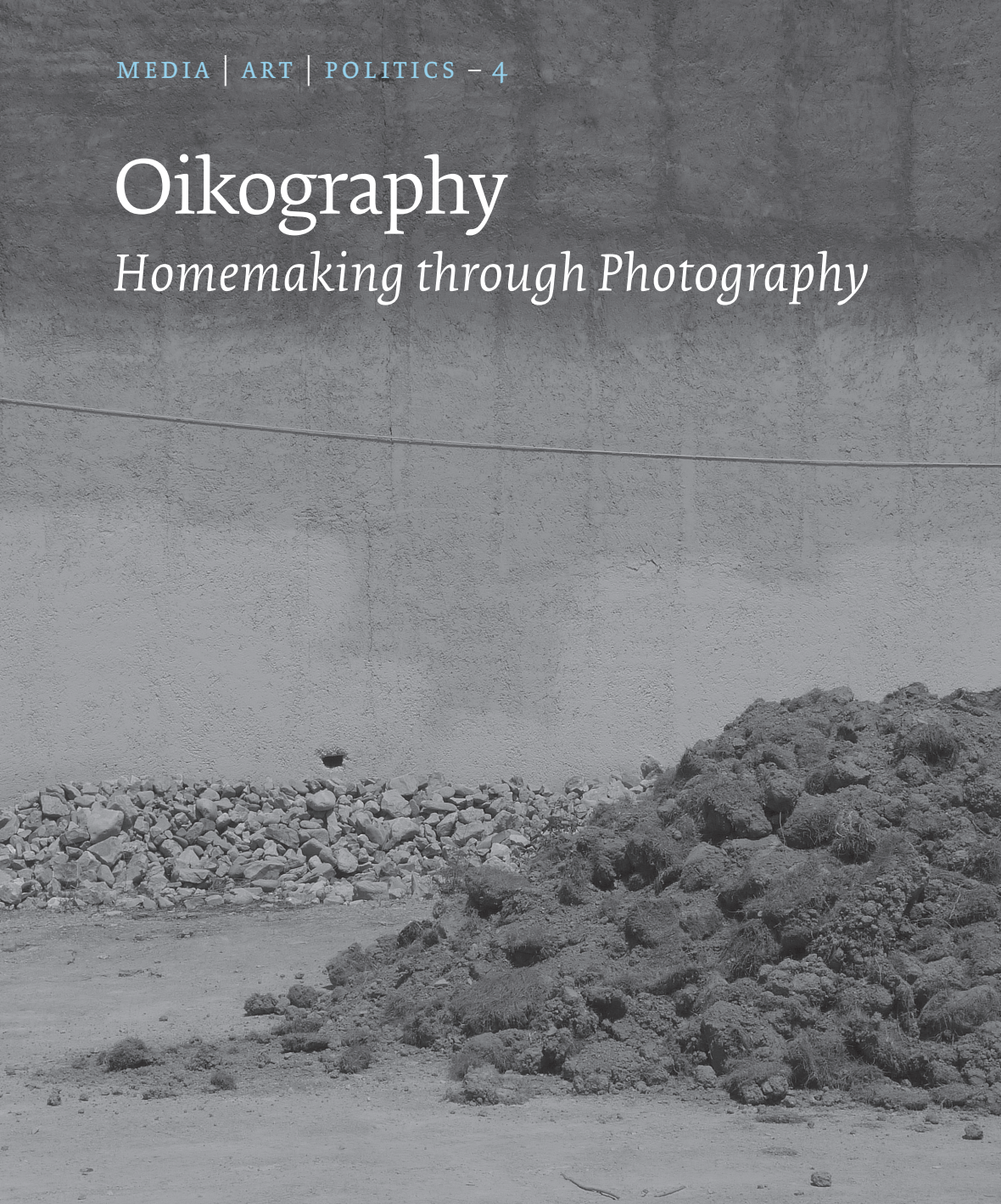
MEDIA | ART | POLITICS – 4

Oikography

Homemaking through Photography



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OIKOGRAPHY

Homemaking through Photography

Ali Shobeiri & Helen Westgeest (eds.)

Leiden University Press

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Introduction

Ali Shobeiri

It is commonly believed that the first permanent photographic image was made between 1826 and 1827.[1] During this time, Joseph Nicéphore Niépce, the French inventor of photography, set up his camera in front of the bedroom window of his country house and immortalized the view outside. To do this, he coated a piece of pewter plate with bitumen of Judea and placed it in his camera obscura. Then, he opened the lens and waited for several hours before removing the plate and washing it, thus enabling the image of the view outside his window to appear.[2] His experimentation resulted in the first direct positive photograph ever taken, which was later entitled *View from the Window at Le Gras* (Fig. 0.1). At first glance, Niépce's photograph shows nothing of significance, both iconically and symbolically. It represents the following things, from left to right:

> The upper loft (or so-called "pigeon house") of the family house; a pear tree with a patch of sky showing through an opening in the branches; the slanting roof of the barn, with the long roof and low chimney of the bakehouse behind it; and, on the right, another wing of the family house.[3]

Despite being one of the most iconic photographs in the history of photography, Niépce's choice of subject seems (to say the least) underwhelming. Not having included any specific person/object of interest in the photograph, it seems that Niépce is simultaneously pointing the viewer toward everything and nothing in the frame. However, if we admit that photographs encourage us to contemplate exactly when and where they were made, we should ask ourselves the following question: Do we still see a banal view of country life in early nineteenth-century France in Niépce's image? Perhaps, what the first photograph in history is supposed to convey lies beyond the triviality of "a view from the window." Either way, one

[1] Art historians have debated the exact year in which photography was invented. In 1814, Joseph Nicephore Niépce actively pursued the process of making a permanent camera image. In 1816, he temporarily fixed a photographic print for the first time, but it was only between 1826 and 1827 that he managed to fix the first photographic image. For a detailed discussion on the invention of photography, see Robert Hirsch, *Seizing the Light: A History of Photography* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2000).

[2] Ibid., 12-13.

[3] Barbara Brown, "The World's First Photograph," *Western Association for Art Conservation*, vol. 22, no. 3 (2002), np.

Figure 0.1. Joseph Nicéphore Niépce, *View from the Window at Le Gras*, 1826–1827. Public domain.

may rightly wonder: What is the subject matter of Niépce's photograph? What is at the center of its experiential and representational gravity?

To answer these questions, one only needs to imagine being in Niépce's country house, both temporally and spatially, where the first photograph came into being. While we cannot see the exterior of his house, we are placed within its interior through the photograph. It is at the very edge of the window, where the domestic space ends and the public space begins, that Niépce framed the subject matter of the first photograph. Having placed his camera at the boundary of indoor and outdoor, he presents us with the liminality of inside and outside, individuality and communality, and domesticity and sociality. To put it differently, by using the window frame as the camera frame, the founder of photography forces us to simultaneously envision his house *from without* and his home *from within*. In doing so, the first photograph invites us to imagine the morphology of his *house* through the photograph, but it also asks us to reflect on the ontology of *home* through photography.

Since it was invented, photography has been used to better understand our position in the world. As shown by Niépce's image, photography can allow us to inspect the idea of home as well as investigate the practice of homemaking. Not only do we embody the exteriors of our houses and the interiors of our homes in photographs, but we also use them (physically and visually) as a means of homemaking. For

example, once we move into a new house, some of us only need to hang our family photos on the walls to be able to refer to our living spaces as "home." In this case, it is the material presence and symbolic significance of the photographs that individualize the domiciliary space. Whereas architects see photographs as representational tools, for the occupants of houses, photos are essential components of how they emotionally relate to their living environments. On the one hand, photographs can reflect the materialized home captured in the frame; on the other, they can illustrate the complex modalities of inhabitation and domiciliation, which may or may not be confinable to the representational space of the photograph. For the photographer, home may be the space that the camera aims at; for the photographed subject, home can be an ineffable and inexplicable feeling of being in place.

Whether one is in front of the camera or behind it, inside their home or outside their house, photographs have proven indispensable in probing into the idea of home.[4] Moreover, in a time when displacement, migration, and homelessness have become commonplace due to geopolitical conflicts and oppressive ideologies, the role of photography in exploring the process of homemaking has become an irrefutable fact of sociopolitical debates.[5] With that in mind, how can a representational medium deal with home as something that is not necessarily limited to the photographic frame? In other words, can photography embody the emotional and interpersonal aspects of home as well as participate in the social, political, and cultural debates on homemaking? To answer these questions, we first need to know how the concept of home has so far been defined. Afterward, it becomes possible to think of its protean manifestations through the medium of photography.

From House Building to Homemaking

Despite its ubiquitousness, the notion of home does not have a simple definition.[6] While it can denote ontological safety and existential security, it can also signify

[4] For example, see Carole Magee, "Spatial Stories: Photographic Practices and Urban Belonging," *Africa Today*, vol. 54, no. 2 (2007), 109-129; Sara Johnsen et al. "Imag(in)ing 'Homeless Places': Using Auto-Photography to (Re)examine the Geographies of Homelessness," *Area*, vol. 40, no. 2 (2008), 194-207; and Zoë Robertson et al. "Through their eyes: seeing experiences of settlement in photographs taken by refugee background youth in Melbourne, Australia," *Visual Studies*, vol. 31, no. 1 (2016), 34-49.

[5] For example, see Ariella Aïsha Azoulay, *Civil Imagination: A Political Ontology of Photography* (London: Verso Books, 2015); Christopher Pinney et al., eds., *Citizens of Photography: The Camera and the Political Imagination* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2023).

[6] See Jeanne Moore, "Placing Home in Context," *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, vol. 20 (2000), 207-217; Shelley Mallet, "Understanding Home: A Critical Review of the Literature," *Sociological Review*, vol. 25, no. 1 (2004), 62-89.

traumatic entrapments and veiled threats. A home is not always limited to a fixed locale, and it can indicate one's relationship with oneself as well as the attempt to feel rooted in a transient world. Unlike "home," the term "house" can be relatively easily defined—"A house is a domestic dwelling, a structure in which people live."[7] As a materialized and shielding construction, a house can be a cottage, bungalow, apartment, villa, mansion, manor, or any temporary shelter under which one takes refuge. For the pioneer of modern architecture, Le Corbusier, a house was simply a "machine for living"—a mechanical structure that sustains a person's life. He believed that the prime objective of architecture was making houses that would support (biological) life.

> The problem of the house is a problem of the epoch. The equilibrium of society today depends upon it. Architecture has for its first duty, in this period of renewal, that of bringing about a revision of values, a revision of the constituent elements of the house.[8]

It is true that architecture can provide us with houses, but it does not necessarily create homes, for a home is not simply the physical structure in which we live. That is why the answer to "homelessness (as opposed to rooflessness) is not solely the building of houses."[9] One may feel homeless despite being housed, and one may be unhoused while feeling fully at home within oneself. This is the origin of the vital existential and experiential difference between the terms "homeless" and "unhoused." Since October 2008, the adjective "unhoused" has been steadily supplanting "homeless" because the latter has gained a discriminatory connotation, especially in North America.[10]

In contrast to house building, homemaking refers to a continuous process that involves a complex network of social relationships. As a physical unit, a house can be *finalized*; as a social unit, it can be *localized*. However, home inherently resists completion. This is because home "is not reducible either to the social unit of the household, or to the physical unit of the house, for it is the active and reproductive fusion of the two."[11] Thanks to this fusion, home becomes a vital agent across different territories. The agency of home, however, does not always equally benefit

[7] Rowland Atkinson & Keith Jakobs, *House, Home and Society* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 9.

[8] Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture* (New York: Dover Publishing, 1985), 225.

[9] Joanna Richardson, *Place and Identity*: *The Performance of Home* (New York: Routledge, 2019), 10.

[10] Coined in October 2006 by Beverly Graham, the director of OSL, a non-profit that provides means to food-insecure Seattle residents, the term "unhoused" has been since favored over "homeless." See Jon Heley, "Is it still Ok to use the word 'homeless'—or should you say 'unhoused'?," *The Guardian*, July 2023 (accessed on June 5, 2024).

[11] Peter Saunders & Peter Williams, "The Constitution of the Home: Towards a Research Agenda," *Housing Studies*, vol. 2, no. 2 (1988) 83.

its inhabitants. For instance, the home has historically been seen as a gendered space. Traditionally defined as a woman's place, the home used to be seen as the space where the housewife tidied up and cooked for the man of the house.[12] Over time, this biased and patriarchal understanding has been challenged and radically undermined by feminist activists and scholars across the humanities, who have argued that the home is not always a democratic space or a sanctuary where one finds solace from the turbulent outside world.[13] The home can also be a space where psychological abuse and emotional violence occur. When one is confined at home against their will, the home becomes a site of physical exploitation and emotional depletion. Instead of nurturing its inhabitants, the home can become an environment of psychophysical decline. While one resident may long to go back home, another may be plotting to escape from it, which shows that one's refuge can be another's prison. Moreover, as a physical structure, a home can be intentionally demolished, thus harming its inhabitants in what has been called "domecide"—that is, "the deliberate destruction of home by human agency in the pursuit of specific goals, which causes suffering to the victims."[14] Consequently, home cannot be seen in isolation from the dominant ideologies that govern it, since it is through these ideologies that our identities are constituted in, or deteriorated by, our homes.

> Home as a place and a spatial imaginary helps to constitute identity whereby people's senses of themselves are related to and produced through lived and metaphorical experiences of home. These identities and homes are, in turn, produced and articulated through relations of power.[15]

Home articulates our identities by creating a social space that connects us with others; it also performs these "spatial imaginaries" through the creation of multiple realities, which may not always correspond with one another. Even though home seems to refer to a point in space and time, it exists in a plurality of locations,

[12] Joanna Richardson. *Place and Identity*, 8.

[13] For example, see Daphne Spain, *Gendered Spaces* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1992); Jane Rendell et al., eds., *Gender Space Architecture*: *An Interdisciplinary Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2000); Ana Silva Moreira & Hugo Farias, "Gendered Space at Home: Feminine and Masculine Traits in Domestic Interiors," *International Journal of Social Science Studies*, vol. 10, no. 6 (2022), 91-104; and Viky Demos and Marcia Texler, eds. *People, Spaces and Places in Gendered Environments* (Leeds: Emerald Publishing Limited, 2024).

[14] J. Douglas Porteous & Sandra E. Smith, *Domecide: The Global Destruction of Home* (London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), 12.

[15] Alison Blunt & Robyn M. Dowling, *Home: Key Ideas in Geography* (Hoboken, NJ: Taylor & Francis Ltd, 2006).

feelings, identities, and social relations.[16] Instead of being simply a location in the space–time continuum, home operates through spatiotemporal concatenations, allowing a multitude of dispersed and fragmented identities to form. If we admit that home is where a mélange of heterogeneous elements fuse with each other, we must agree with the following words by feminist theorist, bell hooks:

> Home is no longer just one place. It is locations. Home is that place which enables and promotes varied and everchanging perspectives, a place where one discovers new ways of seeing reality, frontiers of difference. One confronts and accepts dispersal, fragmentation as part of the constructions of a new world order that reveals more fully where we are, who we can become.[17]

Not having any homogeneous and homologous core, home can be many things at once for different people. Depending on who approaches it and from which perspective, home can be seen as security and control, a reflection of one's ideas and values, permanence and continuity, relationships with family and friends, a center of activities, an indicator of personal status, a material structure, a refuge from the outside world, or simply a place to own.[18] Home can also be seen as a "socio-spatial" system,[19] a "psycho-spatial" feature,[20] a "warehouse of emotions,"[21] or a combination of the three.[22] While home can be a means of sustaining one's identity,[23] it can also be a site of self-deterioration[24] and domestic violation.[25] For some, home is merely a "domestic dwelling";[26] for others, it can be a place of "alien-

[16] Doreen Massey, "A Place Called Home," *New Formations*, vol. 17, no. 3 (1992), 3-15.

[17] bell hooks, "Choosing the Margin as a Space of Radical Openness," *The Journal of Cinema and Media*, vol. 1, no. 3 (1988), 19.

[18] Carole Despres, "The Meaning of Home: Literature Review and Directions for Future Research and Theoretical Development," *The Journal of Architectural and Planning Research*, vol. 8, no. 2 (1991), 97-99.

[19] Saunders & Williams, "The Constitution of the Home", 83.

[20] Maria Vittoria Giuliani, "Towards an Analysis of Mental Representations of Attachment to the Home," *The Journal of Architectural and Planning Research*, vol. 8, no. 2 (1991), 133-146.

[21] Craig Gurney, "I __ Home: Towards a More Affective Understanding of Home," In *Proceedings of Culture and Space in Built Environments: Critical Directions/New Paradigms* (2000), 33-39.

[22] Peter Somerville, "The Social Construction of Home," *Journal of Architectural ad Planning Research*, vol. 14, no. 3 (1997), 226-245.

[23] Douglas J. Porteous, "Home: The Territorial Core," *Geographical Review*, vol. 66, no. 4 (1976), 383-390.

[24] Pual Meth, "Rethinking the 'Demos' in Domestic Violence: Homelessness, Space and Domestic Violence in South Africa," *Geoforum*, vol. 34, no. 3 (2003), 317-327.

[25] Michael D. A. Freeman. *Violence in the Home* (Westmead: Saxon House, 1979).

[26] Atkinson & Jakobs, *House, Home and Society*, 9.

ation"[27] and "porosity"[28] or a failed promise of protection.[29] Home can be seen as an ongoing "performance of home"[30] or simply as an internalized "feeling."[31]

Regardless of its multifaceted nature, what is evident is that home cannot be restricted to the structure of the house, even though it can include the latter and be combined with it. Unlike a house, which is localized and finalized, home is simultaneously lived, perceived, and conceived across multiple geographies and among myriad subjectivities. It is precisely due to its kaleidoscopic manifestations that home cannot be fully confined to what we see in the photograph (a representation) or to what we build with construction materials (a house). While it may be temporarily and partially captured in a photograph, home inherently and ineluctably exceeds the boundaries of the frame.

To explore the basic aspects of home and the intricate features of homemaking through photography, this book draws on the ancient Greek notion of *oikos*. Oikos encompasses the social, political, cultural, economic, and interpersonal attributes of home; it also synthesizes them into a single heterogeneous spatial vortex.

Oikos: A Spatial Idea

For the ancient Greeks, society was divided into the spheres of oikos and polis, and it was governed by *oikonomia* (the laws of the household) and *politikon* (the administration of the city-state).[32] The relationship between oikos and polis can be described as one of "mutual desire": "The oikos seeks out the polis, inasmuch as the polis performs structural analogies with regard to the oikos."[33] Initially, the term "oikos" was equivalent to "house" and "household," which were considered familial, agricultural, or artisanal units of production.[34] It included all the residents

[27] Robin Bartram, "Housing and Social and Material Vulnerabilities," *Housing, Theory and Society*, vol. 33, no. 4 (2016), 1-15.

[28] Katherine Brickell & Richard Baxter, "For Home Unmaking," *Home Cultures*, vol. 11, no. 3 (2014), 133-144.

[29] Blunt & Dowling, *Home.*

[30] Richardson, *Place and Identity.*

[31] Alison Ravetz & Richard Turkington, *The Place of Home: English Domestic Environments, 1914-2000*, (Abington: Taylor & Francis Ltd, 1995).

[32] Angela Mitropoulos, *Contract & Contagion: From Biopolitics to Oikonomia* (New York: Microcompositions, 2012), 49.

[33] Evgenia Giannouri, "Matchbox, Knifer and the 'Oikographic' Hypothesis," *Journal of Greek Film Studies*, vol. 1, no. 2 (2014), 169.

[34] Jean-Pierre Vernant, *Myth and Thought among the Greeks*. Trans. Janet Lloyd & Jeff Fort (London: Routledge, 1983).

of the house, their possessions, and the land on which the house was built.[35] The Greek "household," however, went far beyond the sphere of the private family, its living space, and its belongings.[36] It also included the "interpenetration of economic, political, social, moral, and religious aspects of life," thus acting as a combination of the public and private realms.[37] Originally interpreted as indicating the household, the etymology of oikos has been continually reformulated and expanded over the centuries. Oikos has come to denote "a collection of relations, affects, and moralities; and a node within neighborhoods, communities, and larger political-economic and environmental regimes."[38] That is to say, oikos is home seen as a relational nexus between private and public life, family and politics, the individual and the state, and the self and the other. Thanks to its fluid and fluidizing nature, which operates as an intermediary between people, spaces, objects, and social forces, oikos allows new ways of being and becoming to emerge.

> The ancient Greek oikos, with its many senses and significations—house, home, family, estate, patrimony, private space, as well as economic and moral sphere—opens up our imagination to many possible forms of dwelling and becoming in the worlds people make up. The oikos likewise constitutes a set of dynamic relations among bodies, buildings, infrastructures, and other nonhuman elements (be they geophysical, biochemical, building materials, or spiritual entities) and also among intimacy, public space, and the polis. Seen from this perspective, the house is a key *nexus* between material, political-economic, affective, and aesthetic forces at work, as well as a place where public and private life blur and these very terms become recast.[39]

As an amalgamating site, oikos is simultaneously a place (which can be materialized and occupied) and a space (which can be imagined and ostracized). Once seen as a house or household, oikos today denotes a spatial nexus that links "the macrocosm of the world and universe with the microcosm of the human body."[40] Therefore,

[35] See Jacques Le Goff, *Your Money or Your Life: Economy and Religion in the Middle Ages*. Trans. Patricia M. Ranum (New York: Zone Books, 1988).

[36] For a detailed explanation on what constituted the initial idea of oikos, see Robert McC. Netting et al., eds. *Households: Comparative and Historical Studies of the Domestic Group* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1984) & Thomas W. Gallant, *Risk and Survival in Ancient Greece: Reconstructing the Rural Domestic Economy* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991).

[37] D. Branden Nagle, *The Household as the Foundation of Aristotle's Polis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 10.

[38] João Biehl and Federico Neiburg, "Oikography: Ethnographies of *House-ing* in Critical Times," *Cultural Anthropology*, vol. 34, no. 4 (2021), 540.

[39] Ibid., 541 (italics in original).

[40] Shoko Suzuki, "In Search of the Lost Oikos: Japan after the Earthquake of 11 March 2011," in *Hazardous Future: Disaster, Representation and the Assessment of Risk*, eds. Isabel Capeloa Gil & Christoph Wulf (Berlin, Munich, Boston: De Gruyter, 2015), 110.

oikos is not simply an idealized domicile or an ideologized household; it is also a *space* of affect, intimacy, domesticity, spirituality, and identity. This understanding of oikos as a space that shapes us from within and without has been explored by several prominent thinkers during the past centuries. Although they may not always refer to it as oikos, these authors have undoubtedly interpolated a spatial core into the semantic fabric of home.

In her book *Human Condition*, the philosopher, Hannah Arendt, argued that oikos is a space of subjugation for those who are forced to remain in private spaces, tending to the necessities of life, while others are privileged to have a life in the polis—that is, in the public realm of the political community.[41] In *The Poetics of Space*, the phenomenologist, Gaston Bachelard, aspired to detach oikos from the political sphere and conceived of home as a personal space where our thoughts and childhood memories are stored. For him, oikos was "the topography of our intimate being," an endless reservoir of imagination and inhabitation, which could be traversed via the conduit of daydreams.[42] In his seminal essay "Building, Dwelling, Thinking," the philosopher, Martin Heidegger, theorized home as an existential space in which our "being" is never given but created through the "de-distancing" of the Dasein from its environment. By bringing together homes, houses, and the act of building, he argued that every home is simultaneously a place of thinking and a space existing, essentially equating "I dwell, you dwell" with "I am, you are."[43] In *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitude, and Values*, the geographer, Yi-Fu Tuan, focused on affective engagement with places and described home as an experiential space. He argued that it is through our corporeal and perceptual engagements with space that we infuse our homes with meaning.[44] In their influential book *A Thousand Plateaus*, the philosopher, Gilles Deleuze, and the psychoanalyst, Félix Guattari, presented us with an idea of home that opposes any centralization, specification, and stratification. For them, home was to be found in the post-architectural and deterritorialized modes of drifting and cruising in space. They claimed that in the age of techno-capitalism, home is no longer a built structure but a nomadic space that requires pure velocity and continual becoming.[45] While Deleuze and Guattari insisted on the decentralization of home and the dematerialization of homemaking, in *Minima Moralia*, the philosopher, Theodor

[41] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 28-29, 68-69.

[42] Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (New York: Penguin Books, 1964), 26-57.

[43] Martin Heidegger, "Building, Dwelling, Thinking," in *Poetry, Language, Thought* (New York: Happer Perennial, 1971), 141-161.

[44] Yi-Fu Tuan, *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values* (Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1974).

[45] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1981), 410.

Adorno, argued that home was essentially a space of failed ideological dreams. Instead of fostering the subjectivity of bourgeois intellectuals, he contended that home had become a space of nostalgic impossibility and historical alienation.[46] More recently, in *The Perception of the Environment*, the anthropologist, Tim Ingold, has conceived of home as a space that requires simultaneously our imagination and material engagement with the world. Building on the practicality of homemaking, he has proposed that home is a material space where humans and nonhumans work with—never against—each other.[47] According to AI scholar, Shoko Suzuki, oikos can also be a primeval feeling in/with which we find solace in our lives.

> The feeling of well-being and happiness we felt in the past becomes a nucleus of ourselves as a primal experience. Though not sharply defined, this provides us with a reliable fixed point that we continue to recognize within us as a "feeling." Even amid the uncertain and unceasing movement that characterizes human life, we have a place, a fixed point that enables us to keep our balance and allows us to perceive the most stable fixed point from moment to moment. That place can be called oikos.[48]

Therefore, oikos can be an ideological space (Arendt), a phenomenological space (Bachelard), an existential space (Heidegger), an experiential space (Tuan), a nomadic space (Deleuze and Guattari), a nostalgic space (Adorno), a material space (Ingold), or simply an emotional space through which we find our bearings in a tumultuous world (Suzuki). Oikos is a spatial idea, regardless of whether the space is externalized as a dwelling, ontologized as a being, or internalized as a feeling within us. This understanding of oikos (as a space that shapes the core of our existence) has already been put into practice by several photographers and some academics.

Oikography: Homemaking through Photography

Over the past decade, several photographers have investigated the intricacies of home in their practice. They have dealt with home as oikos—a space that shapes the kernels of our social, political, material, mnemonic, and emotive lives. Among many examples, Jacob Burge's photo series *Inside* (2018) presented home as an imaginative space through photo collages in which people can "hide" themselves in private interiors, thus questioning the supposed comfort associated with inhabitation and

[46] Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia* (London: Verso, 1999), 36-39.

[47] Tim Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill* (New York: Routledge, 2000).

[48] Suzuki, "In Search of the Lost Oikos," 116.

domiciliation. Focusing on displacement and dislocation in refugee camps, Angelos Tzortzinis's *Adaptability* (2016–present) shows how daily chores become a means of human resilience and social versatility in the absence of home. Marie Tamanova's photobook *It Was Once My Universe* (2019) framed homecoming as returning to a place that one no longer belongs to, thereby presenting nomadism as an alternative to localized homemaking. More recently, a perceptive photobook called *House Is a House* (2021) gathered the work of thirteen photographers to collectively rethink the process of homemaking.[49] Next to these artistic works, there has been growing academic interest in the topic of home and photography. For example, art historians have explored how the photographs of urban environments can simultaneously reflect a sense of intimacy and alienation.[50] Social scientists have described how "auto-photography" can illuminate hidden spaces that do not typically feature in public imaginations of homelessness.[51] Anthropologists have shown how the photographs taken by youth with a refugee background can provide insight into early settlement experiences.[52] In the field of photography theory, *Civil Contract of Photography*, written by theorist, Ariella Aïsha Azoulay, is the most notable attempt to instill photography with homemaking potentials. For her, "the citizenry of photography" is a means of granting political agency to anyone who can address others through the photograph, whether the person has civil rights or has been deprived of them.[53] Despite several skillful practice-based cases and a few thoughtful academic works, up until now, there has not been a cohesive volume that explores the idea of home through photography. *Oikography* aims to fill this gap by merging the notion of oikos with the medium of photography.

Echoing the word "photography," which is a compound of *phōtós* (light) and *graphé* (writing/drawing), this book defines "oikography" (*oikos* + *graphé*) as *homemaking through photography*.[54] However, the "making" in "homemaking" is

[49] This photo book includes the work of Arzu Sandal, Buck Ellison, Cyprien Clement-Delmas & Lindokuhle Sobekwa, Dannielle Bowman, Drew Nikonowicz, Emine Akbaba, Henk Wildschut, Jochen Lempert, Nanna Heitmann, Noelle Mason, Now You See Me Moria, and Sohrab Hura. See the full photobook here: https://fotodoks.de/publications-2019-2023/ (accessed on June 12, 2024).

[50] Carole Magee, "Spatial Stories: Photographic Practices and Urban Belonging," *Africa Today*, vol. 54, no. 2 (2007), 109-129.

[51] Auto-photography is an ethnographic field research method that attempts to see the world through someone else's eyes. See Sarah Johnson et al., "Imag(in)ing 'Homeless Places': Using Auto-photography to (Re)examine the Geographies of Homelessness," *Royal Geography Society*, vol. 40, no. 2 (2008), 194-207.

[52] Zoë Robertson et al., "Through their Eyes: Seeing Experiences of Settlement in Photographs Taken by Refugee Background Youth in Melbourne, Australia," *Visual Studies*, vol. 31, no. 1 (2016), 34-49.

[53] Ariella Aïsha Azoulay, *Civil Contract of Photography* (New York: Zone Books, 2008).

[54] Although the term "oikography" has been used in other disciplines, its usage has not been applied to photography; that is: "homemaking through photography."

not a means to an end (i.e., building houses that can be finalized and localized). Instead, this making refers to a means without an end. The aim of home*making* is to sustain the ever-evolving idea of home. In other words, the homemaking of oikography is as much about constructing, deconstructing, and reconstructing home as it is about spatializing, despatializing, and respatializing it. Therefore, this book considers "oikographs" as photographs whose principal function is twofold: reflecting on the idea of home and dwelling on the process of homemaking. To put it differently, oikographs are photographs whose being and becoming are entangled with home and entwined with homemaking. With the concept of home at its methodological and theoretical core, *Oikography* aims to show how photography envisages, embodies, and apperceives home as a spatial idea, regardless of whether that space is idealized or ideologized, ontologized or theorized, materialized or dematerialized, territorialized or deterritorialized, or internalized within us or externalized around us. To this end, *Oikography* asks: *How can photography represent the lived, perceived, and conceived experiences of homemaking*? To answer this question, *Oikography* conducts an extensive theoretical study of homemaking in photography; it also gives birth to an interdisciplinary field that invites scholars of photography, art history, anthropology, and architecture to rethink the idea of home and imagine homemaking anew.

The Content of the Book

To account for the multifaceted manifestations of home in contemporary photographic practices and discourses, *Oikography* is divided into three parts and twelve chapters. While each chapter traverses the geography of home with different methodologies and theoretical frameworks, the central tenet of the volume remains the same: how the medium of photography can redefine the notion of oikos and thus reexamine the process of homemaking.

Part I, "Domiciliation and Inhabitation," focuses on how photography can make us feel ensconced in the world during times of sociopolitical upheaval, cultural change, and technological transformation. In Chapter 1, Cole Collins studies the representation of drag culture in the photo project *Tunten, Queens, Tantes. Ein Männerfotobuch* (1988) by the German photographer, Jürgen Baldiga. By exploring the queer potential of the domestic space, Collins demonstrates how the occupants of this space can redefine and reclaim home thanks to the roles that they play in it. In Chapter 2, Flavia Matitti concentrates on a photo project by the Italian photographer, Sonia Lenzi, entitled *Take Me to Live with You* (2021). By photographing the home interiors of a number of personalities who influenced Italian society between 1907 and the 1990s, Matitti argues that Lenzi negotiated a relationship between

the living and the dead and, by extension, between private and public memory. In Chapter 3, Monique Miggelbrink examines the contradictory aspects of early home-computer culture in interior design magazines and catalogues from the late 1970s to the 1990s. Drawing on the Freudian notion of the *unheimlich* (the uncanny) Miggelbrink shows how studio photography for magazines and catalogues, such as *Schöner Wohnen* and *IKEA*, depict home environments as scenes of the uncanny. In Chapter 4, Anuja Mukherjee elaborates on the spatial journeys of Indian passport-sized photographs outside the photo studios, illustrating how, as official documents, these photos have the potential to physically leave people's houses. If their movement is taken into consideration outside the bureaucratic space, according to Mukherjee, passport-sized photos can become unique elements in the process of homemaking. In Chapter 5, Katherine Mato explores the photographic oeuvre of the Chicanx artist, Laura Aguilar, arguing that these photos form an alternative visual space for queer Latinxs who do not fit neatly in traditional Latin American or Western notions of family and nationhood. Mato suggests that these photographs construct a novel archive in which the narratives of queer kinship, and those who make it up, are deemed worthy of inclusion and belonging.

Part II, "Displacement and Dislocation," concentrates on the potential of photography to embody homemaking during transition and displacement, when home is no longer anchored to a specific time and place. In Chapter 6, Helen Westgeest explores the relationships between home, objects, and photography through the photo series *Homeless People's Family Stuff* (2003–present) created by the Chinese photographer, Huang Qingjun. By drawing on the concepts of "framed spaces," "framing loneliness," and "replacements," Westgeest shows how photography can create a sense of hominess through the reconfiguration of spatial relationships between humans and objects. In Chapter 7, Aline Frey draws on the role of photography in spatial and temporal disembedding in the context of migrant experiences. While mainstream portrayals often stereotype migrant lives with images of poverty and isolation, Frey argues that self-representation can empower migrants to assert agency over their narratives, allowing them to present nuanced perspectives on their lives. In Chapter 8, Kateryna Filyuk examines the work of the Ukrainian photographer, Igor Chekachkov, namely *Daily Lives* (2014) and *Daily Lives of the Displaced* (2022), and she exposes alternative ways of understanding homemaking in contemporary Ukraine. Filyuk maintains that these photographs capture the fragile intimacy of people united by the same distress and show that home is not a given structure but something that is built collectively. In Chapter 9, Aleena Karim investigates the sociopolitical ramifications of destroyed Palestinian houses through vernacular photography. By analyzing the aftermath photos of wrecked houses and displaced residents, Karim shows how these images can reveal hidden visual narratives and inform us about the relational nature of housing.

Part III, "Home Dreams and Ghosted Homes," investigates the imaginary features of home and the performative aspects of homemaking. In Chapter 10, Stanka Radovic examines the photographic representations of homes for sale in the overvalued Toronto housing market. Radovic highlights the narrative that underpins these real estate photographs as well as the speculative fiction that they seek to articulate. Radovic argues that the material facts of the real estate economy are ultimately repressed in favor of a dream estate, the fictional expectation that the purchase of a house aims to fulfill. In Chapter 11, Santasil Mallik traces the possibilities of alternative visual configurations that address the socioeconomic anomalies underlying the architectural imaginary of global cities, with reference to the Indian cities of Gurgaon and Noida. By discussing different modalities of documentary esthetics in photography, Mallik zeros in on the relevance of documentary esthetics in enunciating the experiential dynamics of alienation and fragmentation embedded in landscapes of rapid urbanism. In Chapter 12, Suryanandini Narain shows how the work of the Indian photographer, Dayanita Singh, can be conceptualized as artistic labor in contrast to the housework performed by women across the globe. Narain argues that Singh's oeuvre challenges the divide between personal (interior/private) and professional (exterior/public) spaces and opens novel possibilities through an osmotic relationship with them.

Regardless of their methodological differences, each chapter of *Oikography* focuses on a contemporary photographic case study that is either explicitly or implicitly about home. While some chapters consider home as a politicized space that effects oppression and repression or an ideologized space that hosts resistance and resilience, others may view it as a materialized space that can be decorated by photographs or be simply captured in them. Despite their polyvocal approaches and diverse analyses, all the coming chapters reflect on photographs and photographic practices whose *being* and *becoming* are enmeshed with home and homemaking, respectively.