

This Bachelor's thesis explores the origin and structure of an independent photo agency VII. It derives its name from the number of photojournalists, who founded the agency in September 2001.

The VII photo agency is collectively owned by its members, world renowned photojournalists. Alexandra Boulat, Ron Haviv, Gary Knight, Antonin Krutochvil, Christopher Morris, James Nachtwey and John Stanmeyer were joined in 2002 by Lauren Greenfield and in 2004 by Joachim Ladefoged. Eugene Richards joined in April 2006. Together they document conflict in the broadest sense of the word: political, social and cultural, both violent and non-violent. The idea of the VII photo agency is based on a tradition of other independent picture agencies such as Magnum Photos, whose members work on long-term "picture stories" instead of covering "spot news", as wire services do. This tradition of so-called "picture story", "photo essay" or "photographic reportage" was founded in Germany between the world wars and was then brought to the USA, where it was further developed within the Life magazine.

As the market has been dramatically changing with the expansion of the Internet in the last decade, big stock agencies such as Corbis and Getty Images have been buying out all available archives. This quantity allowed them to lower the prices of photo images. Their strategy is ruining independent agencies that cannot sell pictures at such low prices. The purpose of the VII photo agency was to create a small elite organization that would find new outlets for photojournalists who are busy working on their long-term projects. So far the agency has been a success and has proved that quality photography, although in a small scale, can compete with organizations of mass production.