Beyond the iconic protest images: the performance of 'everyday life' on social media during Gezi Park

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Beyond the Iconic Protest Images: The Performance of 'Everyday Life' on Social Media During Gezi Park

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Abstract: Using the Gezi Park protests as a case study this article considers the performative component of protest movements including how and why protestors actively produce protest activity 'on the ground' and how this is expressed through visual images. It looks beyond iconic images which appear as emblematic of the protest and instead shifts our focus to consider the more 'everyday' or mundane activities which occur during a protest occupation, and explores how social media allows these images to have expressive and communicative dimensions. In this respect, protests can be performed through humdrum activities and this signifies a political voice which is communicated visually. The research is based on visual analysis of Twitter data and reveals methodological innovation in understanding how protestors communicate.

Keywords: visual, everyday life, protest, Gezi Park, social media, performance

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Introduction

Historically, images of social movements have helped to capture the power and potential of contentious policies in changing laws, overthrowing regimes and fighting perceived injustices. Notably, images of recent protests have circulated widely and rapidly due to social media networks and we argue that it important to understand that social movements produce and evoke images as a result of planned, explicit, and strategic effort but sometimes in an accidental or unintended manner (Doerr et al, 2014). However, social movement research has overwhelmingly privileged text over image with the result that researchers have failed to get to grips with the visual component of protest and how images have been deployed by protestors, how images capture and communicate moments of struggle, and how images produce shared meanings of contentious politics.

By gathering in a public space, such as a square, protestors are 'exercising a plural and performative right to appear… in its expressive and signifying function' (Butler, 2015, 11). The visual realm is thus a site of struggle over expression, representation and visibility (Doerr et al, 2014). Photos, images, and drawings can document events and communicate ideas through their transmission and can have a wide-reaching social and political impact. Social media acts as a mechanism to disseminate images with a huge potential audience and with the possibility to raise awareness of an issue or movement. Activists sometimes engage in spectacular and theatrical displays of protest because they may gain support and sympathy from the public, for example, a clash with police might reflect the heavy handed tactics of law enforcements and allow protestors to communicate a political message (Juris, 2008). At the same time, due to the wide availability of mobile technologies such as tablets and smart phones and ready access to social media sites, manifestations of protests, particularly demonstrations and occupations, has meant that protestors can constitute the movement

through documentation. Through the production and dissemination of 'bearing witness' videos, still images, music, and text, the everyday life of the protest is presented and made visible' (Askanus, 2013), which warrants investigation by social movement analysts. This article argues that everyday activities during a protest are performative and asks how do visual representations of 'the everyday' on social media demonstrate alternative ways of being? What messages do protestors communicate through visual images? How can social media uncover everyday moments, practices, and rituals of protest which are usually hidden or invisible?

The visual documentation of the everyday activities of a protest or occupation serves several purposes: it challenges the idea that protestors are dangerous opportunists who want to wreak havoc; it evokes ideas of normalcy and the everyday where people are captured undertaking mundane activities (praying, sleeping, eating, talking, gardening, doing exercise) in a public space; finally, it communicates ideas of solidarity whereby people who cannot be present have the capacity to share in the struggle. In particular, the images of the occupation of Gezi Park in 2013 in Istanbul captured the heterogeneity of protestors, that people came from different backgrounds (women, football fans, LGBTIQ, Kurds, Kemalists, Alevi, etc) which communicated the idea that the protestors occupying the park were just ordinary people doing something extraordinary, and that the protest 'belonged' to everyone.

The everyday activities undertaken during the occupation of Gezi Park demonstrate how different groups in Turkish society, often marginalized and/or persecuted, can live together in harmony. It is important for protestors to establish alternative ways of being and living in public space to serve as an example of how an inclusive and participatory society could function. Moreover, the spirit of community *forged through* everyday activities taking place within the park, such as eating, exercising and cleaning-up, signifies a 'pre-figurative' form of politics emerging in stark contrast to the activities of the AKP government. The everyday

life documented by protestors is an act of resistance in the context of the park occupation and is emblematic of a wider dissatisfaction with the Turkish government. Following Certeau, the practice of daily life during the occupation is a subversive tactic (1984) which challenges power holders in Turkish society, including the Prime Minister and the police, whose heavy-handed response to the protestors is exposed. Mundane activities performed, documented and shared on social media are acts of resistance to challenge the hegemonic power of the state.

The posting and sharing of images on Twitter acts as a visual trail which can be viewed, preserved, archived and reinterpreted online (Kharroub & Bas 2016; see also Highfield & Leaver 2016). Images are thus expressive and strategic and serve diverse functions depending on the context. In this vein, images are not only a product of movements, but are also 'part of the symbolic practices which constitute the movement and its identity' (Daphi et al, 2013, 76). We acknowledge that there are limitations to focusing on visual imagery alone as other forms of meaning making and communication exist to capture and articulate everyday practices during a protest occupation such as banners and chants. It is important to remember that images, even iconic imagery, do not necessarily amplify specific demands although, we maintain, they always carry a political message.

Even during moments of collective effervescence, such as the mass occupation of a public square in a city, there are moments, practices and rituals which are invisible, or remain relatively hidden. They would remain invisible too if a photo was not taken. Such activities are not necessarily mundane as they are part of the protest, as vital as any piece of graffiti, slogan yelled at the police or banner unfurled on the side of a public building. The everyday activities during the occupation of Gezi Park are part of the broader political resistance, evoking solidarity and community. During the Thai Red Shirt protests in Bangkok in 2010, the chromatic symbolism of red helped to articulate the urban-rural divide at the heart of Thai politics and revealed the power of symbols to communicate ideas (Viernes, 2015, 126).

Similar boundary-setting rituals are important in group identity formation to bolster solidarity (Jasper & Polletta, 2001). This article explores how performing the protest 'mediates the bonding, being and belonging to collectives such as the nation' (Becker, 2017) building on an understanding of pre-figurative politics whereby people enact politics and the life they aspire to through their actions, by taking, and not asking, and by asserting what is proper through the improper (Rancière, 1999). Interventions such as praying, cleaning, eating, etc are performative as they can constitute and reconstitute meaning through their enactment.

This article begins by outlining the case of the Gezi Park resistance in Istanbul before exploring the relationship between visual culture and the performance of protest on social media, and defines what is meant by everyday life and the mundane, as understood in a protest movement, then it outlines the methodology of the visual analysis of the research. Finally, it uses the examples of 'çapulcu' and trash to explore everyday life during the protests as well as meaning making through visual imagery, arguing that both examples demonstrate alternative ways of being and living in a public space.

The Gezi Park Protests

The protests initially started on 27 May 2013 as a reaction to plans to reconstruct military barracks and build a new shopping mall in Gezi Park in the centre of Istanbul. The aim was to stop the bulldozers and demolition machines entering Gezi Park, yet the protest was also a reaction to neo-liberal governance and an authoritarian social political engineering implemented by the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP). According to a survey on the Gezi protests, the incentives behind participation in the protests were: limitations on liberties; discontent with state politics; police violence; and Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's attitude (Konda, 2014: 18-19). Eleven people were killed during the protests and

many thousand were injured. It is estimated by the Turkish Interior Ministry that at least 2.5 million people participated in the protests (House Committee on Foreign Affairs, 2013).

Groups representing a variety of causes, including environmentalists, feminists, Kemalists, socialists, communists, anti-capitalist Islamists, pro Alevi, pro-LGBT, and pro-Kurdish rights, and football fan groups based themselves in different sections of the park and Taksim square (Atayurt, 2013). The Gezi protestors had various political orientations (Romain Örs & Turan 2014) and motivations (Atak, 2013), but they all resisted together. The public buildings, statues, trees and walls were decorated with banners, posters, graffiti, images, slogans, and flags which reflected the multiplicity of the protesters (Romain Örs, 2014).

Much research has focused on who was involved in the Gezi Park protests, how, and why (Konda, 2014), and in reaction to the labelling by the government of all protestors as 'çapulcu' (looters), who supposedly had little regard for their fellow citizens. Other research has explored the Gezi Park protests as a battle over public space (Karasulu, 2014; Inceoglu, 2015), as an event and rupture to the existing political order (Taşkale, 2016; Aytekin, 2017; Ackali, 2018), an opportunity to experiment with a new way of life (Farro & Demirhisar, 2014) as well how protestors used social media (Mercea et al, 2017; Saka, 2017). There has been quantitative research carried out on Gezi Park protests, which has attempted to capture the role that social media played in initiating, promoting and spreading political participation (SMaPP, 2013). This research has measured the frequency of tweets and when protestors used social media such as Twitter and the geo-location of tweets but has been relatively silent on the substance of tweets (SMaPP, 2013). However, Varnali and Gorgulu (2015) revealed the most common use of Twitter during the Gezi protests was retweeting those tweets with a political content and argue that on-line participation was community-level rather than individual-level. There is a general consensus amongst social movement theorists and activists that social media matters in terms of building networks and facilitating mobilization

and solidarity (Castells, 2012), with social media acting as a strategic space to communicate, to witness, and to build collective meaning through textual and visual representations. Other quantitative research has gone further to reveal that information sharing was the most common use of tweets during the Gezi Park protests specifically to persuade others to participate, communicate information, spread memes or personal action frames so much so that Twitter was the 'key to communicate inside and outside the movement' (Ogan & Varol, 2016, 5). Moreover, the deafening silence of the mainstream media in Turkey during the protests meant that people looked to social media for information. Whilst millions of tweets have been collected and analysed, this article focuses not on the (then) 140 characters to determine meaning but narrows the focus on visual imagery shared on Twitter. This approach allows us to demonstrate how protestors communicate messages through visual images and enables us to consider how protest communication on social media uncovers everyday life, practices, and rituals of protest which are usually hidden or invisible.

Iconic images are those which become synonymous or symbolic of particular events, issues, or phenomenon. Protestors re-appropriated images such as penguins with a gas mask, the woman in the red dress, the standing man, tents, the whirling dervish dancing with a gas mask, the rainbow flag steps, and the faces of martyrs all of which became potent symbols shared on social media (see Table 2) and were commemorated on the walls, streets and buildings of Istanbul and beyond. Diverse forms of street art existed prior to Gezi Park (Taş & Taş, 2014a) but the protests instigated a flood of creative productions that resulted in banners, tags, stencils, graffiti, street art, performances, across Istanbul (Taş & Taş, 2014b). Social media helped protestors to document and disseminate this artistic production which came to define the protests.

What emerges during the Gezi Park protests is the collective 'we' that speaks and acts together. Humour emerges as a powerful conduit to perform dissent acting as a tool to deliver

messages to authority figures, to fellow protestors and the public meaning that 'humour is an act of challenge in and of itself' (Yanik, 2015, 179). Werbner et al (2014, 7) maintain that 'collectivities transcend their social heterogeneity through a shared aesthetic…through everyday practices of living together, maintaining hygiene and clinics, clearing rubbish, sharing food, endless talk and joyful celebrations'. Arguments about who was involved quickly fell away to explore the emergent collective 'Gezi Spirit' which transcended traditional ethno-nationalist, religious, gender, and football fan cleavages. This article maintains that the Gezi Park protests are a struggle over images as much as a struggle of space and suggests that visual culture and social media in the context of protest have the potential to accommodate diverse voices, spatialities and promote a sense of inclusion.

The importance of performance for activists has been noted, especially those that became iconic such as 'The Standing Man' protest when Erdem Gündüz, an artist, stood passively in Taksim Square facing the Ataturk Cultural Centre. Gündüz's 'gesture', a form of 'radical passivity', helped to challenge the narrative elaborated by the government that protestors were violent opportunistic looters (Nosthoff 2016). This image of peaceful resistance was shared on social media using #duranadam (#standingman) and similar performances referencing Gündüz's were occurring across Turkey and the world, becoming emblematic of the Gezi Park resistance. The emphasis on community and establishing interpersonal ties was key (Tugal, 2013) to the success of the standing man protest, as no demands were ever uttered. Its success, lies not in the outcomes but the performance itself: while protest is, of course, about change in policy and law, 'it is also about intensifying political agency, and consciousness, to reclaim and redefine a people' (Nosthoff, 2016, 331).

INSERT Image 1: The Standing Man

It is argued that what united protestors 'was not an identity, but a novel emphatic practice of citizenship, a public performativity' (Walton 2015: 51). So, the aesthetics of protests facilitated diverse people, ideas, and interests to be part of the movement. In our research we found that demands were not especially prevalent during the protest suggesting that the protests were not particularly outcome-driven (see Table 2); the performance of protest across material and digital spaces drew attention to the agency of protestors and their solidarity rather than to specific demands.

Visual Culture and the Performance of Protest on Social Media

Social movement scholars in the past have emphasised rationality and instrumentality (Tarrow, 1998) with Tilly (2008) maintaining that performances are an expression of protest, often linked to demands, and need to be disentangled from repertoires which suggests performances are primarily strategic as opposed to expressive. We argue that performance is uniquely placed to fuel political activism as it develops new materiality, the use of bodies, and is often artistically creative, symbolic, and interactive (Alexander, 2011). Performance is ritualised agency expressing a political voice and signifies an attempt to ascribe meaning onto events by at once presenting and challenging narratives (Polletta, 2006). In this regard, the political voice which emanates from the performance of protest cannot be reduced to verbal utterances or background noise, but actually communicates resistance and solidarity (Butler, 2015). Performativity therefore enacts the power of individuals and groups (Certeau, 1984) united in a common message but does not necessarily carry a specific demand. Schober (2016) encourages an understanding of 'the everyday' as political; visual culture on social media captures and amplifies 'everyday life' as a series of moments of resistance and engenders a rupture to the exiting political order. This means that expressing a political voice through the performance of protest is doing politics in a (necessarily) improper way and has both strategic and expressive dimensions.

Rose (2014: 13) argues that visual images are 'a trace of social identities, processes, practices, experiences, institutions and relations: this is what they make visible' and it is here where the social and political world is produced and communicated. We can add an additional layer because visual culture such as photographs of protest can 'speak' about things that are not immediately visible (Schober, 2016). This visual voice can challenge how discursive interventions are made and communicate ideas and issues which are latent or invisible. Visual culture works to record things, to represent, to signify, to make visible, to argue, to create affect, and the form can be frivolous or meaningless (Rose, 2014, 20). If visual culture is rendered meaningful depending on the context of its use, then social movements and protest, at a minimum, challenge where meaning is made. The performance of protest is enacted through the mundane activities and everyday life in the occupation of Gezi Park as well as the capturing and sharing of this everyday life on social media. The visual performance of everyday protest on Twitter helps activists create a particular strategic image of their protest to challenge the government's narrative that they are dangerous opportunistic looters.

Everyday life captures mundane activities such as going to work, family life and leisure; Levebvre (1991) shows that everyday life is not 'natural' or given rather it is the product of ideological, technological and bureaucratic structures. Everyday life uncovers how ordinary people negotiate their day-to-day existence, make decisions, and perform activities in a complex social, economic and political context. Everyday life may be routine but it is interesting because it reveals how people understand and engage with the world around them. Social movement research has attempted to grapple with everyday life. For example, at one end of the scale, quantitative data research on the 2014 Ukrainian Revolution used computational analysis and visualization of content and interactions on social media networks, in this case Instagram, to capture the everyday experiences of people living

through a tumultuous political event, finding that, from the photos and likes and tags on Instagram, one would never know that a revolution was unfolding (Manovich et al, 2014). For academics and journalists, social media provides a window into what takes place during moments of contentious politics but Manovich et al (2014) argue that we should remember that a photo taken and shared on social media is not a transparent representation of social reality. Twitter and Facebook tend to be used by protestors to exchange information regarding mobilization whereas the content of Instagram tends to be highly curated (Hochman & Manovich, 2013; Highfield & Leaver, 2016).

Messages, tweets, images, symbols, and memes all travel across diffuse social media networks. Sumiala et al (2016) argue that the categories between production, representation, and reception becomes blurred. It has been shown that Twitter played a significant role during the Arab Spring, particularly the Egyptian revolution, in allowing protestors to communicate and mobilize often by-passing state media outlets to create new communication channels (Bennett & Segerberg 2013). Discussing the Arab Spring and Twitter audiences, Bruns *et al* (2013, 871) note how 'hashtags were used to mediate a wide range of practices of political participation among a diverse group of social media users' which include both 'internal' and 'external' audiences, from people on-the-ground and local audiences, to audiences that follow events via social media from a wide range of geographical locations. Hashtags on Twitter are a way of increasing the number of people who see and share a tweet. The #blacklivesmatter movement started in response to the indiscriminate killing of a young African American man, Michael Brown, by police in Ferguson, Missouri and was exacerbated by the heavy-handed response of police to protestors who gathered and held signs saying 'Black Lives Matter'. The movement has a strong Twitter presence through the hashtag with individuals able to personalise expressions, such as photos, memes, and quotes reflecting the movement's goals all becoming 'artefacts of engagement shared online' (Clark,

2016). Significantly, these artefacts of engagement gain meaning through online diffusion. In this article, we seek to move beyond conventional understandings of social media as purely a network to exchange information (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013) and instead explore whether the visual regime produced by documenting everyday life during the occupation helps to constitute the movement by expressing ideas and articulating messages through visual culture.

Our research focuses on user-generated content shared on Twitter. We look beyond words and consider images in various forms: banners; photos; screenshots; drawings; and other digital artefacts in order to uncover hidden representations, narratives, ideas, actors, demands and symbols 'that contribute to creating different types of social imaginaries of solidarities, belongings, and exclusions' (Sumiala et al, 2016, 105). The advantage of this approach is the possibility to excavate diverse meanings produced through the performance of protest, which are negotiated through multiple actors in a given context. The actor is usually on the ground and participating in the rituals of the protest. Their participation is documented and carries a political message; in Turkey the government could confiscate mobile phones and use photos found to prosecute protestors. Twitter, and other social media platforms, can facilitate the creation of counter publics and new concentrations of power in the digital sphere because, it is argued, the control of social meaning has devolved into the hands of ordinary people (Gross 2007) and does not have to be refracted through mainstream media and politicians. Inevitably, the Turkish government tried to close down Twitter during the protests, and again in 2014, but this intervention was ruled as unconstitutional.

The performance of protest is not only in the bodies and actions of protestors in the materiality of the park but is negotiated in digital spaces once the image is shared. Of course, questions of anonymity are important but visibility should be understood as part of the performance. It is through the sharing and distribution of images that social media platforms,

and the humans who control them, are able to witness and inscribe meaning onto the protests. Social media is a 'technology of truth which is harnessed by protestors to inform, curate and manage information because devices make it easier and more cost-effective to capture, share and store images' (Allan & Peters, 2015, 1353). Whilst social media enables participation in protest across diverse spaces, we would urge caution heralding the democratic potential of digital technologies given inequalities of access, as well as how prescribed and directed activity on social media platforms is.

Methodology

In order to conduct the research we collected and analysed tweets shared during the Gezi Park protests. The Twitter API was queried using the *Gezi Parkı* keyword, as it would be written in Turkish. The time period defined for this query was between the 27th of May and the 30th June 2013 as this was the time period wherein *Gezi Parkı* was a regularly trending topic on Twitter and Gezi Park was occupied. *Gezi Parkı* was chosen as the keyword since it was an unstructured and neutral term, unlike hashtags such as #occupygezi or #direngezipark which located the tweeter's political leaning, included information concerning the park itself, and was used in tweets both by pro and anti-Gezi activists. The data collection process was undertaken by a social media monitoring agency in December 2016 and January 2017 which compiled the data into large spreadsheets. The spreadsheets were later converted into comma-separated value (csv) format. Once the data was reformatted, the spreadsheets were broken down into smaller, more accessible files. Data retrieval operations were performed on these files using Bash, PHP and Python, three programming languages. To collect images, Bash was used to download the tweets from the Twitter API. Once collected, the images embedded within the downloaded tweets were extracted using a purpose-built PHP script. Duplicates were eliminated leaving 714 images which were subsequently coded. In Table 1 the type of tweets and the percentage of those with images is presented.

INSERT: Table 1. Type of tweets collected

The images that were related to the Gezi Park protest and were still accessible (many people deleted their Twitter accounts for fear of government surveillance) were downloaded. Later they were imported into Nvivo for qualitative data analysis. The computer software was used to systematically code and analyse the raw data and to develop and integrate the emerging analytic categories and themes. The first stage of open coding was carried out on 100 images by the research team working together to generate descriptive and summarative codes for the visual images and agree on the most salient categories and codes. One researcher then coded the remaining 614 images in January – March 2017 and discussed any newly created codes with the rest of the research team. The project team sought to reach consensus during the process of coding and agreed on the creation of each code, developing a list of codes which were attributed to each image. Codes determined: where the image was taken (i.e. location); the object of the visual image (documentary, poster, cartoon, screenshot); the actors involved (football fans, Kurds, police etc); the side (pro-government or anti-government); evocation (affect, demand, humour); written message (banner, graffiti, etc); language (Turkish, English, other); confrontation (peaceful or violent); composition (crowd, nature, buildings etc); and iconography (standing man, woman in red, AKM, flag, penguin etc). Each image had typically 6-12 codes attributed to it. Images, including those which are digital, are extremely 'mutable' (Rose, 2016) meaning they change and are open different interpretations. To mitigate against this, we randomly selected 100 images to verify and collectively agree on the accuracy of the coding. We used written memos to interpret both what was obvious in the image and the subtext or what was not obvious / what was hidden, and served to guide the 'naming' of codes. Writing memos alongside the images on NVivo during the coding helped

move the analysis from content reflection to content interpretation and facilitated the process of raising focused codes to conceptual categories, and it also enabled communication among the project team. The code of 'everyday life' emerged as a sub theme from the 'object' and 'documentary' codes and reflected the use of handheld mobile devices during the occupation of the park. Digital technologies retain a materiality which inform what is possible and encourage us to engage with technology in prescriptive ways because of how they have been designed.

It should be noted that 619 out of 714 images were documentary whilst 160 images captured everyday life in the park. We do not apply a reliability measure for the coding rather this qualitative analysis intends to focus on the substance rather than the significance as we seek to document how protestors captured images during the protest and analyse content from the image (for a discussion on image collection and analysis see Olesen 2018, 662-664). For this reason, we sought to explore how protest was performed (Juris 2008) through everyday life. The difference between those images coded as 'documentary' and those coded as 'everyday life' is their performativity. Protestors presented alternative ways of being during the occupation and we selected cases of everyday life which show how mundane activities can become acts of resistance through expressing solidarity (such as the re-appropriation of 'çapulcu') and how protestors enacted civility (clearing trash). In these instances, the use of social media allowed everyday activities to challenge the government's assertion that protestors were dangerous opportunistic hooligans out to cause trouble.

INSERT: Table 2: Coding of 714 images

The research has some limitations in that we focused exclusively on images shared on Twitter. The reason for this is partly because of how prevalent Twitter was during the Gezi Park protests, but an added practical reason is that Twitter scraping allows for access to historical visual images much more readily than, for example, Facebook. We did not focus on images shared in mainstream newspapers as those photos are often produced by photo journalists who tend to focus on dramatic images of protests such as confrontation or large crowds. The majority of the images disseminated on Twitter are produced on the ground by protestors themselves and have the potential to reflect everyday activities happening in the park during the occupation which allowed us to answer the research questions.

Performing the Everyday Life of Protest on Social Media

Media visibility has become increasingly important for social movements, at the same time as the competition for attention in a saturated media landscape (Cammaerts, 2012, 118) has impelled activists to step up their tactics and communication strategies. This, in combination with the emergence of activist self-mediation using mobile and social media technologies, has resulted in a new and multifaceted spectrum of protest communication. Present-day protest strategies combine on-line mediated communication with the mobilisation of a presence in a physical space and the two spheres are intrinsically intertwined. Cammaerts (2013, 11) argues that because mass demonstration has become part of the conventional repertoire of activism, increasingly 'activist [are] becoming more creative and more agile at creating independent media spectacles or events, providing the media with spectacular images'. We have found evidence of these types of tactics in the twitter data collected for this research project. This was perhaps expected, even, as the Gezi Park protest was as an example of contemporary activism that displays a particular noteworthy level of

creativity and humour on display. For example, the case of the whirling dervish with a gas mask illustrates how street performance has a dual function both as theatrical protest activity, a gesture of cultural and religious dissidence in a public space, and as 'image event' (DeLuca, 1999) that predominantly works as a mediated visual rhetorical message.

The Gezi Park occupation has been noted for its creative production as well as its use of social media. The creative outputs on the streets of Istanbul – graffiti, performances, banners, street art and protestors' self-styling – have been captured and re-circulated across both traditional and social media and a number of striking images have become synonymous with the Gezi Park protest. The iconic or leitmotif images associated with the Gezi Park protests include the woman in red, gas mask, the standing man and the penguin which by now have been replicated across so many different media, styles and modes of expression - and more or less completely absorbed by mainstream popular culture. However, the images we are focusing on in this case study are distinct from these iconic images in that they depict the non-dramatic and the everyday. In the dataset of images extracted from a corpus of almost 250,000 tweets, a category of images that document everyday life in the park in a seemingly spontaneous and effortless way emerges. They capture the 'non-action' of protest, the in-between moments, the down time, and the respite periods. These images are interesting to us for a number of reasons.

First, they are somewhat unexpected in such significant numbers. Images that document the everyday or the mundane aspects of protest are unusual to see in a heavily mediated world where the competition for audiences' attention is fierce. As Cammaerts (2012, 130) notes about the visual representation of protest, 'mainstream media predominantly tend to focus on violence and on the spectacular rather than the message that is being conveyed, such are the structural journalistic routines'. And subsequently, he concludes, 'this partly explains why the performative, the political gimmick and the media stunt play such predominant roles in

present day activism as means to secure visibility' (2013, 11). In other words, what he describes here as the dominant visual regime of protest differs significantly from the images in this case study; these images are not 'iconic' or dramatic and in comparison to press images they are, at first glance, even irrelevant or dull. Secondly, we argue, images of everyday life play an important role in communication pertaining to the protestors' (counter culture) self-image and to their world making or cultural meaning making processes, as well as their re-signification of political discourse that has been used against them. In all these respects the images of quotidian life in Gezi Park are performative and ascribe meaning therefore these images of eating, sleeping, cleaning, reading, exercising, gardening, praying and so on, cannot be overlooked. In what follows we will discuss how everyday life is 'politicized' through the mediated discursive struggle over the term 'çapulcu' (looter); how images from the occupied park are communicating an alternative way of life; and how everyday images even are implicated in 'tactical media interventions' (Lovinik, 2002 cited in Cammaerts et al, 2013:12), not least through engaging the emotional imperative of visual representation.

'Everyday I'm Çapuling': Gezi Spirit and Çapulcu

In the early days of the Gezi Park protest, the then Prime Minister, Erdoğan refused to recognize it as a civil movement and denounced the protestors as 'Çapulcu', which can be translated as 'marauder, low-life, riffraff, or bum' (Gruber, 2014, 31), a deliberately derogatory term which aimed to delegitimize the protest by dismissing it as pure vandalism. The term was re-appropriated by the protestors who started to use the term 'looters' about themselves, as well as the verb 'looting' about a range of their activities, in humorous and imaginative ways. This subversive use of humour is something that can be argued is emblematic of the Gezi Park protests with the penguin coming to symbolize a condemnation of the state. Çapulcu was also used as a collective term to strengthen the sense of 'us' as in

the meaning 'we the çapulcu' and as a gesture of solidarity as in 'we are all çapulcu', expressed by supporters who were not present in the park itself.

Reversing pejoratives is not a new activist strategy, but can be very effective. For a moment in time at least, an alternative discourse suspends or replaces the dominant meaning and the ideological workings of the discourse of power are exposed such as the çapulcu insult that quickly was re-appropriated as a positive term of self-identification. We can note how this gesture of self-empowerment was very much substantiated by applying it to not just the more ideological register of activist vocabulary, as in the new connotation of çapuling to mean 'resisting dominant dogmas', but by applying it to a range of everyday activities. We see this exemplified in the types of images discussed here. The everyday activities in the park, such as talking, enjoying music together, sharing food, listening to a lecture, gardening or doing crafts gain a particular meaning when read through the notion of constituting 'çapuling'. Mundane activities become acts of resistance, and particularly so perhaps, in the moment of producing and organising the visual representation of these activities under hashtags such as #capuling or #occupygezi #direngezipark etc.

In the image below we see writing sprayed on to the pavement that reads 'Çapulcu dershanesi' which means 'looter classroom' – a satirical reference to the perceived bad influence of the activists, but also a symbolic gesture to the 're-schooling' which protestors are undertaking themselves in exploring new ways of living and being, and new ways of expressing oneself in the public space, enacting more emphatic practices of citizenship. But the neologism 'çapuling' has also come to stand for what we may want to call awareness raising or one's political awakening on issues such as the environment, rights of women, and democratic rights, which is also indirectly implied in the graffiti on the pavement. Activists' identification with the term was further manifested when individuals added 'çapulcu' as a prefix to their Twitter name.

INSERT Image 2: 'Looter Classroom'

Trash and Counter-spin

We also see how images of such mundane activities as litter picking or cleaning up are more directly employed in the protestors' political rhetoric. For example, in the data we found several images that work to emphasise the difference between the AKP followers and the Gezi Park protestors that essentially revolve around civic behaviour in public spaces. The Gezi Park protestors are portrayed as good citizens who care for the park and keep their protest camp tidy, whilst the images from Kazlicesme Square (where Erdogan held his rallies) depict a scattering of litter, empty bottles just dropped on the ground, connoting a loutish, selfish crowd who have left a mess behind for someone else to clean up, but also, significantly, symbolically portraying the Erdoğan rallies as chaotic not just in practice but also in terms of their politics.

INSERT Image 3: Trash contrast

The contrast is emphasized by the arrangement of the images next to each other with the simple headings 'After the Kazlicesme rally' and 'After the Gezi Park resistance', which rhetorically provides a comparative frame and encourages the audience to invest meaning

into the visual representation, drawing on the trope of documentary photography as 'evidence' and evoking the cliché of 'a picture is worth a thousand words'. This image should however not be simply be read in isolation, and not simply as an attempt by Gezi activists to discredit their political opponents, but as part of a continuum of numerous similar images depicting the self-organizing and housekeeping activities of the protestors. The protestors are performing an alternative way of life through civic activities, suggesting a future Turkish society which is built on respect. The messages of the more crafted examples of visual communication, like the montage discussed here, resonate across the more spontaneous quotidian images, which understood in this context produce distinct meanings.

Alternative Way of Life and Ways of Being in Public Space

It is useful to further consider the audiences for these mundane images. Twitter audiences are complex and change over time and it is beyond the scope of this paper to undertake any detailed audience analysis or mapping of the diffusion of information. But it is nevertheless pertinent to ask who these images speak to and to what end? We suggest there are at least two distinct functions of the visual representation of quotidian ordinariness: first, they help to foster a sense of collective identity among a very diverse mass of activists, by visually celebrating the polyphony of the park and emphasizing activities that perform a collective inclusive identity and can be described as the social glue of the movement, such as *sharing* food and other provisions, *participatory* activities such as group yoga or praying together, or the *concerted* efforts to keep the park tidy. In this respect, 'Gezi Spirit' is performed through everyday activities as the protestors attempt to transcend their social heterogeneity and traditional ethno-nationalist, gendered and religious cleavages. Secondly, the images constitute an important part of the production of the activists' self-image. They depict a sense of a freer life in public spaces and convey a set of liberal cultural values that broadly underpin the more specific issues of conflict at stake. In a sense, in both these instances, these

images communicate to the activists themselves about themselves, a mediated process of constructing the self in the everyday. As such they are performative and enact the pleasures of social ties (Tugal, 2013) and make material (and visualize) the connectivity between activists.

INSERT

Image 4: Eating   Image 5: Praying

Image 6: Talking

In the depiction of everyday life there is an opportunity to communicate a vision of (or even a concept of) a different society in an embodied and practical way that is perhaps transient but nonetheless not completely intangibly 'utopian'. Thus, the visualization of the everyday serves a performative function as a form of lived 'world-making' and the seemingly inconsequential images of everyday life in the park bring attention to the ordinary as a crucial site of cultural politics. There is a clear strategic intervention with protestors attempting to shape how the protest is understood through the performance of protest; these everyday activities are resistance. Everyday life is performed, documented and shared on social media which become acts of resistance to challenge the hegemonic power of the government and the narrative which the government presents of the protestors.

Conclusion

In this article, we have demonstrated how protestors attempted to capture and communicate their messages through sharing images of the protest on Twitter. In our analyses of visual images that were captured and re-circulated across social media we found images that document the everyday life or the mundane aspects of the protest and sought to show how these images of everyday life: eating, sleeping, cleaning, reading, exercising, gardening, praying, play an important role in communicating protestors' self-image and their understanding of protest. Also, we showed, how all these mundane ways of living are politicized by the protestors or by the government via the creation of 'us / them' binary and via its portrayal as alternative ways of life. Therefore images during Gezi Park reveal everyday moments, practices, and rituals of protest which are usually hidden or invisible, and help construct diverse ways of being and citizenship in Turkey. Further research may productively delve further into how diverse audiences or publics react to or decode this type of visual communication. We have contributed to the burgeoning literature on visual culture and imagery in social movement research (Doerr et al 2014; Olesen 2018) by demonstrating that visual culture has a creative, performative and communicative function for protestors. We hope to have demonstrated how the seemingly insignificant images of quotidian life (Rancière 1999) in the park do play a part in the activists' political communication as well as serving important functions when it comes to articulating a sense of solidarity. The use of images depicting everyday life can be seen as a form of 'life-style activism' (Olesen 2018: 669) which is performed across social media platforms, and which could be particularly empowering in an increasingly authoritarian political environment, such as in Turkey post-2016's coup d'état.

This article highlights how visual culture remains important in the digital age as ways of challenging prevalent voices, truth-claims, as well as fostering solidarity. This article also challenges the hegemony of text in social movement research because showing up, standing,

eating, cleaning, or gardening at an assembly, cannot be reduced to mere demands and should be understood as 'a form of political performativity' because those assembled '"say" we are not disposable even if they are silent' (Butler, 2015, 18). This expressive dimension challenges the importance of verbalization in articulating a political voice and shows how visual images help to capture and communicate the performance of protest.

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