
Article:
Ozduzen, O. orcid.org/0000-0003-3639-9650 (2021) From streets to courthouses: digital and post-digital forms of image activism in the post-occupy Turkey. Turkish Studies, 22 (2). pp. 267-289. ISSN 1468-3849

https://doi.org/10.1080/14683849.2020.1870105

From Streets to Courthouses: Digital and Post-Digital forms of Image Activism in the Post-Occupy Turkey

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Abstract

Despite the steady growth of authoritarianism, image activism is persistent and vibrant in Turkey. This paper examines how activists/artists use the production and circulation of political images to combat the institutional exclusion of oppositional voices following the Gezi protests (2013) and the attempted coup (2016). Using visual rhetorical analysis of images and in-depth interviews with courtroom painters, the paper focuses on 'political' drawings produced in enclaves of courtrooms and the strategies of image activists in visually narrating the political prisoners and/or detainees for wider networks, forming intersectional communities and creating spatial and digital visibility. In the context of the image activism in the post-Occupy Turkey, the passage from the digital to post-digital is based on, first, the top-down restrictive regulations in public and semi-public spaces and increasing police presence in places where activists previously met, second, rising surveillance of the digital platforms, including the troll armies of the AKP government.

Keywords

DIY media, post-Occupy, image activism, authoritarianism and culture, political visuals

1.Introduction

Visual images are sites of struggle over representation[i] with agency centred on the way activists use images[ii]. This paper rests on the argument that during the rise of authoritarianism, visual communication gains an extraordinary role and momentum, especially when those who engage in textual political communication in physical places or online platforms, such as creating news stories are threatened, purged from their jobs and/or imprisoned. This article focuses on the agency of image activists and their production and circulation of political drawings to represent other activists in the enclaves of courtrooms in Turkey, where the impact of increasing authoritarianism is most deeply felt. It examines the unique visual political communication proliferating since the Gezi protests, which took place between May and August 2013 in Istanbul and other major cities in Turkey. The protests combined various political groups and agendas against the AKP's authoritarianism and neoliberalism, specifically its top-down intervention to urban spaces and people's lifestyles. The paper focuses on the newer media ecology of image activism springing from the Gezi protests, based on digital and post-digital cultures of image-making. In the context of the image activism in the post-Occupy Turkey, the passage from the digital to post-digital is based on, first, the top-down restrictive regulations in public and semi-public spaces such as courtrooms and increasing police presence in places where activists previously met such as the Taksim Square[iii], second, rising surveillance of the digital platforms, including the troll armies of the AKP government[iv].

The paper provides empirical evidence to the post-Occupy activist context in Turkey where "the Internet could not always be the image activists' main organizational hub"[v]. In the aftermath of the Gezi protests, which the paper refers to as the post-Occupy period, many journalists and academics were persecuted due to 'verbally' narrating the lurch towards authoritarianism such as signing online petitions, writing news stories or sharing testimonies on their social media profiles. The article points out that activists increasingly resorted to visuals in order to narrate the authoritarian situation for wider networks, create easy-to-reach records of state violence, initiate an intersectional activism, and avoid further persecution. To combat mechanisms of institutional exclusion and persecution of oppositional voices, the paper gives context to image activism from courtrooms where artists drew sketches from courthouses following the attempted coup, when cameras and phones were prohibited. To investigate the post-Occupy visual communication and analyse the broader context of the production and distribution of political images, the paper offers a mixed methods approach relying on visual rhetorical analysis of drawings in combination with in-depth interviews with courtroom image

activists. The article examines activist image through the produced images of human rights activists on streets and during the trials and presents the voice of the image activists via their spatial and digital activism from the courtrooms, which illustrates the wider media ecologies within authoritarian regimes. In its aim to explore the visual communication of the activist identity, the paper looks at the broader social power relations, i.e. how state-citizen relations structure the meanings of images produced from courtrooms.

Sketch-drawing from courts is nothing new as it is a professional practice and a paid job in courtrooms such as in the USA or UK. In these contexts, courtroom artists draw from courtrooms especially when the case is controversial and the court decides to prohibit the use of photos and/or videos during the trial. Using it as an activist practice is a unique strategy springing from non-conventional modes of creative expression and the key role that visual political communication plays in protest movements today. The article also shows that image activists visually communicated the activist identity trapped in courtrooms and prisons to the wider public, effectively using alternative newspapers like *Cumhuriyet* or *BirGün* and more widely through tweets, Instagram posts/stories and Facebook images, although at times their profiles were suspended. The case study of courtroom image activism exemplifies the multi-faceted character of bottom-up media ecology[vi], specifically in the post-Occupy and Arab Uprisings period, which challenge dichotomies such as online and offline media or new and old media. The Arab Uprisings started in Tunisia in December 2011, spreading to Egypt, Yemen, Syria and Bahrain, 'as an expression of citizens' frustration over economic issues like high unemployment, and lack of political freedoms'[vii]. The Occupy extended to the world after the first occupations happened in Zuccotti Park (New York) and St Paul's Cathedral (London) in September-October 2011. Post-Occupy refers to contemporary urban mobilisations that use the tactics of Occupy movements or Arab Uprisings such as occupations or creative methods, for example the Extinction Rebellion or Northern Forests Defense (Turkey).

Existing research on images and their roles in social movements generally concentrates on the peak of the abovementioned protests[viii]. This includes an analysis of the use of political cartoons in Kuwait during the Arab Spring, to make critical social commentary in a less direct way[ix], or an examination of Occupy-related memes to capture the influence of the user-generated visual rhetoric in understanding the purpose, demands, and influence of grassroots social movements[x] This paper focuses on the social commentary of activist images not in the context of social movements but goes beyond this frame and extends it to the larger context of

political mobilisations during authoritarianism, where grassroot activists feel isolated due to the decrease in the density of large solidarity networks or street movements, but they continue to find new avenues and modes of visual expression including courtrooms and digital platforms. Despite being produced in the enclaves of courtrooms, these visuals create an imaginary contact with other activists and potential new activists[xi], as they facilitate a vehicle for citizens to claim the rights to the national and popular memory from the authoritarian state[xii].

The paper brings to the fore current conditions of possibility for image activism in Turkey to actualize counter-dominant practices of capturing, mobilizing, and archiving the visual documentation of people's struggles for justice[xiii]. While "eye-witness videos" are common to image activism[xiv], this paper fills a gap in its study of "eye-witness drawings", which are not as widespread and not widely studied in visual studies. The paper argues that the forceful revival of non-digital techniques in authoritarian settings exemplifies post-digital cultures, whereby artists create drawings that rely on analogue aesthetics. On this background, the paper first introduces the methodological perspective and methods used to study the specific image activism. This is followed by the context to Turkey's authoritarianism where the paper also conceptualizes creativity and humor as weapons against authoritarianism. Finally, the article engages in an analysis of courtroom drawings within the literature in image activism, whilst juxtaposing interview material with the courtroom artists.

2.Methods on Image Activism

Dealing with both the post-Occupy activism[xv] and digital and post-digital imaginings of visual activists in Turkey, the paper's methodology rests on the political and social conditions and effects of images and their modes of distribution[xvi]. Aiello[xvii] studies the visual communication of the European identity through fieldwork with image-makers and an analysis of visuals to capture how meanings of Europe are fiercely produced and reproduced via transnational flows of images. The aim is not to ask how accurately an image produced from a courtroom replicates the real world. Rather, the paper examines how an image produces a particular representation of the world, inquiring into its significance, whilst elucidating through interviews the ways in which particular social power relations structure the meanings of an image[xviii]. The paper combines visual rhetorical analysis of images and interviews with image activists. Visual rhetorical analysis "goes against identifying the concept of rhetoric as propositional and verbal text in which public controversy takes oral or written form"[xix]. Rhetorical practice also involves

an analysis of visual symbols[xx]. Foss[xxi] looks at the functions of visual imagery to assess the support provided for the function and evaluate the legitimacy of that function. Transcending early visual rhetorical studies, the paper conceptualizes the rhetorical analysis of widely circulated images of courtroom painters, by focusing on two distinct but equally important moments in the life of political images; production and circulation.

To do this, activist images were collected during the Gezi protests to identify the trajectory of emergent visual activism, followed by the collection of images during the trials of journalists, hunger strikers, revolutionary lawyers, academics for peace, Kurdish politicians and alleged Gezi leaders from 2016 to 2019. To compliment the collection and analysis of visual material, the paper uses in-depth interviews with three image activists, taking place from April-June 2019, preceded by the author's interviews with video activists and political filmmakers to examine the ways they dealt with restrictions in physical and digital spaces in Turkey[xxii]. Among 9-10 courtroom artists drawing from trials in courts, the three artists interviewed were at the forefront of the organisation of the community and online circulation of illustrations, whilst producing some of the most circulated activist images from the courtrooms as well as the streets in this period. What courtroom painters have in common is their political belonging to human rights movements, urban social movements and feminist movements, and their references, both in their artwork and public discourse, to cartoonist Musa Kart, who was imprisoned as part of the trial of the *Cumhuriyet* newspaper in 2017 for his satirical depiction of Erdoğan as a cat. The author asked interviewees to speak about their roles in image activism from streets and courthouses and to reflect on a series of themes such as relations between visuals and human rights activism, participation, solidarity and democracy, interpretations of the limits of image activism in relation to increasing state violence.

3.Turkey's authoritarianism and contentious politics as a response

Authoritarianism has dominated Turkey's political scene, social domain and cultural fabric especially since the 1980s. It goes back to prior military regimes especially the one coming to power after the most severe coup d'état (1980-1983). Bozkurt-Güngen[xxiii] argues that a deeper authoritarianism is located in the neoliberal experience in Turkey facilitating the expansion and consolidation of the authoritarian repertoire under the AKP governments. A combination of neo-liberal and Islamist ideologies dates to the president Özal's era (1983-1989) - the most critical figure in Turkey's neo-liberal development model following the coup. Özal's vision was characterized by the absence of checks and balances to the benefit of a functioning market

economy, providing enormous powers for the key individuals in charge[xxiv]. The upsurge in authoritarianism has been more visible since the AKP's (Justice and Development Party) second term in power (2007), and even more so following the attempted coup in 2016[xxv]. The strong powers granted to key individuals and subsequent corruption and repression have continued to this day. Yilmaz and Bashirov[xxvi] define 'Turkey's current political regime as Erdoğanism, with four main dimensions: electoral authoritarianism as the electoral system, neopatrimonialism as the economic system, populism as the political strategy and Islamism as the political ideology'.

Authoritarianism is not a one-way street so to speak. The tactics of the Arab Uprisings and Occupy movements fed creative strategies of political mobilization against authoritarianism during the Gezi protests. For Castells[xxvii], new social movements facilitate new avenues of political change through autonomous capacity to communicate and organize beyond the reach of the usual methods of corporate and political control. Especially since the early 2010s, left-wing communities coalesced on online and offline platforms to challenge the violation of fundamental rights and freedoms, for example by protesting against the Internet bans[xxviii]. The Gezi protests initially burst out as a reaction to a 'mundane' event of the government, e.g. cutting down trees in Istanbul, which is an activity that the government or government affiliated companies regularly carry out to build shopping malls or profitable housing developments. This time, the government attempted to cut trees in Gezi Park -a symbolic and central park in Taksim, in order to transform the park into a shopping mall, a mosque and a replica of an Ottoman artillery barracks. The Gezi protests were one of the most important recent reactions to authoritarianism, including the top-down urban regeneration programs, the repression of political freedoms, the imposition of conservative lifestyles, and the authoritarian culture promoted by the mainstream media, schools and other state institutions.

Different from conventional social movements with identifiable membership organizations using common banners and collective identity frames, new social movements use more personalized and digitally mediated collective action, scale up more quickly and bridge different issues[xxix]. Rather than using conventional strategies, such as establishing civil society organizations or political parties, choosing a leader, and making official declarations, the Gezi protestors were largely organized through social media and propagated political action using unique methods such as creative banners, memes or jokes[xxx]. Previous research on the Gezi examined the use of humour and creativity, how the Gezi humour inverted the popular

culture and put it in an anti-authoritarian format to disrupt the status quo[xxxi]. Activists criticized authoritarianism via the humour and creativity in their slogans, songs, visuals circulated on social media following the Gezi protests[xxxii] and as part of the emerging festive park culture[xxxiii]. Activists also 'silently' protested authoritarianism through creative 'inactivity' such as "the standing man's simple everyday gesture: standing still on Taksim Square -a performative intervention involving hundreds of people"[xxxiv], which has been an ongoing strategy among activists that resorted to silent but powerful and visible techniques on public spaces.

Following the attempted coup of 2016, the AKP declared a state of emergency, granting the state's executive branch full powers to implement policies and rule the country by governmental decrees without parliamentary approval or judicial scrutiny. Although the suspected coup plotters were Gülenists, the government suspended fundamental rights and freedoms and targeted various dissidents, including parliamentarians, academics, human rights defenders, and journalists[xxxv]. Since then, the AKP withheld fundamental rights and freedoms by strengthening its security forces such as 'the police army' and by turning courts into political weapons that target, purge and imprison dissidents and oppositional social forces. The coup attempt marks "a new phase in the imposition of a new Turkishness, an Islamised version of national identity"[xxxvi], bolstering the already prevalent idea of 'one nation, one flag' in society, while consolidating the notion of 'one religion'.

4.DIY documenting in courtrooms

The multi-faceted characteristic of image activism in Turkey can be understood in reference to not only the state's consistent attacks on social movement networks and street movements, but also media ownership in 2010s and the specific empowering and restrictive aspects of new technologies in Turkey. Mattoni[xxxvii] defines media ecology approach as consisting of complex multi-faceted array of media technologies, professions and contents with which social movement actors also interact. This approach highlights the agency of social movement actors in relation to media technologies, whilst avoiding a media-centric approach. Merrin[xxxviii] situates media ecology with regards to the concepts of media ecosystems of communities and media lifeforms, whereby users create media contents, which organize the world and our reality. In this view, the broader ecosystem also includes organisational forms and structures that produce the technologies, arrange their technical distribution and operation. Due to heavily pressured media ecosystem and the purge of street movements in Turkey, the frontline of

human rights activism has become courts and other similar inner spaces, where activists encountered each other and where do-it-yourself media production flourished.

Akser and Hawks[xxxix] describe the post-2007 media ecology in Turkey as a conservative, redistributive, panoptic and discriminatory media autocracy, exemplified by the wide-ranging pressure on media conglomerates, YouTube/Twitter bans, the arrests of journalists and phone-tapping of political figures. Yeşil[xl] defines this as 'coercive media capture', which includes the prosecution of media professionals, closing of media outlets, expropriation of assets, and levying of fines. Producing your own media content has existed in the pre-digital era, where an individual and/or community produces arts, crafts or zines and engages in their distribution in alternative ways, rather than professional streams of distribution[xli]. The Internet provides the infrastructure for the distribution of self-produced media to a potentially far-flung audience[xlii]. DIY and user-generated media also have the potential to thwart censorship and "circumvent mainstream news media, which either ignore or disseminate a distorted coverage of protest movements"[xliii]. The advent of video-hosting platforms like YouTube, and the spread of networked digital cameras have provided unprecedented opportunities for activists' self-representation, and new performative rituals of "citizen camera witnessing", which is the "ritualized employment of the mobile camera as a personal witnessing device facilitating claims to truth by citizens recording their own oppression"[xliv]. Today, citizen witnessing shapes the way activists and protest movements design their political mobilizations and keep evidence of subsequent state violence.

However, today old media also revives and various post-digital cultures form in the face of digital grievances. Cramer[xlv] points to how the post-digital production and consumption no longer requires constant digital innovation or improvement such as the recent recurrence of the vinyl culture or new analogue trends in the indie game scene[xlvi]. Although citizens enacted new rituals of "citizen camera witnessing" with their mobile phones during the peak of social movements such as the Arab Uprisings or the Gezi protests, cameras and mobile phones have been considered as harmful by state actors and institutions in the aftermath of these widespread movements. Activists found novel post-digital ways for their political witnessing such as analogue drawings in the post-Occupy period. Although the drawings from courtrooms representing the political prisoners/detainees' trials did not find any coverage on the mainstream press, which is largely owned or run by the governing party AKP, these images were used widely in alternative newspapers, whilst being circulated on social media platforms.

4.a.Images as silent acts of resistance

The drawings of courtroom painters became a silent act of resistance against the state's imposition of an official memory about dissident voices in the post-2016 period in Turkey. In the restrictive physical spaces of courtrooms, these sketches and illustrations are produced instantly with physical materials such as crayons, pens and papers. 'Today, there is an expanding movement within the fields of human rights and international law to explore how the documentation, investigation, and prosecution of serious international crimes can be strengthened through open-sourced derived imagery as potential evidence'[xlvii]. On social media platforms, visual activists and their followers actively share, retweet and comment on the open source courtroom images, which are potential evidences of state violence. Although the production of the visuals from courthouses are within the vicinity of the Turkish state, the production of these images from restrictive spaces and their circulation on social media platforms exemplify ongoing autonomous capacity to transcend the reach of neoliberal, Islamist and nationalist political control. In her research on visual images depicting Muslim women in German media, Özcan[xlviii] illustrates the power of visuals as generators of long-lasting impressions and strong emotions independently from the accompanying texts and identifies visuals as an imaginary point of contact for those members of German society who will not have the chance to have a direct encounter with migrant Muslim women. The images from courtrooms present viewers a glimpse of the tense courtroom spatial organisation as it is an exclusive space for many. These images also provide a "humane" visual account of activists on trial, which generates an imaginary point of contact for wider populations and arouses specific emotions for the political prisoners.

The courtroom drawings portray the presence, physical appearance and emotions of political prisoners and/or detainees in courtrooms, but these drawings are also products of the active presence of the artists/image activists in the same physical space with the political prisoners/detainees and civil servants. Courtroom painters engage in DIY media production from the streets and courtrooms as activists themselves. The proximity of image activists to state and 'law-making' sites makes these drawings extraordinary "resources for understanding the subjective experience of ordinary people who find themselves on the front line of social movements"[xlix]. Image activists' bodies and their pens/colors transform into 'narrative tools' along with the produced drawings that serve as potential evidence of human rights breaches. Through these drawings, the bodies of political prisoners are represented on the streets and in

courtrooms in different ways when authoritarianism encroaches on everyday life in different levels, which transforms voices, objects, colours and costumes within the space of the image.

One of the court painters Murat Başol (interview by the author, April 2019) talked about not only how his own activist identity is formed through spaces and waves of social movements but also recounted the enduring impact of the Gezi protests on the ways image activists cope with everyday authoritarianism:

> I was born and politically educated in a highly politicized neighborhood Gazi, but the Gezi protests marks the transformation of all of us. It politicized lots of people and urged them to think about what happens around them. Many people realized that the reality is not as portrayed on TV. If I worked for a magazine when I drew 'the woman in red' illustration, it would have reached much less people. Rather, I posted it online and it became anonymous like other works produced in the same period. I became hopeful during the protests, because there was a burst in the outlets that I could produce illustrations and the networks to connect with. Its effects continue today, creating hope for my work and understanding of future.

The Occupy had an empowering effect and embraced the role of an 'early riser' as it trained and mobilized both newcomers and experienced activists, who in the post-Occupy context became the recruits and organizers of subsequent campaigns[1]. The Gezi protests connected experienced activists with inexperienced activists that had not taken to the streets before. The emergent sense of creativity and humor spread in the occupied parks and after the parks were occupied by the police forces, the same sense of solidarity and creativity found their home in the viral networks. Murat Başol lived in the Gazi neighbourhood in Istanbul, which was a long-politicised area and home to the 'Alevi Uprising' in 1995. He thus comes from an activist background, but the Gezi protests changed the ways he organized within and beyond his creative networks. The protests also transformed the ways Başol produced and distributed his images, which points to the effectivity of online platforms during the peak of social movements. Başol also recounted the restrictive aspect of working for a media organisation as an image activist, as the copyright of your creative work may belong to the organisation. Başol was able to anonymize his DIY media production on social media, which enabled the image to have a bigger spread and impact across a variety of online social networks. In drawing from streets, Başol used computational aesthetics that relied on specific software and digital techniques.

4b.Images from streets

[Figure I near here]

Başol's illustration (see Figure I) was anonymized and became one of the most widely shared reproductions of the first visual symbol of the Gezi protests, namely the woman in red. One of the first widespread photos from the first day of the park occupation taken by the photojournalist Osman Örsal, was the photo of the woman in red, who was an ordinary activist amongst the crowds. Başol's image was a reproduction of the viral photo, becoming one of the many landmark visuals of the protests. During this time, many social media users used Başol's image as their profile photos. After the initial occupation of the Gezi Park by activists to prevent the police from cleaning up the area, the police raided the park heavily with tear gas and water cannons. The image depicts the woman in red two times bigger than the gas spreading police, which became a motivational and hopeful source of engagement for activists vis-à-vis police violence.

In the aftermath of the Gezi protests, image activists continued to produce from home settings and used computational aesthetics with the help of technological tools and apps, in order to depict street movements. One of the court painters Aslı Alpar drew from the resistance of some of the civil servants who were dismissed from their jobs with emergency decrees (KHK) in the aftermath of the failed coup (see Figure II). During the resistance of hunger striker teachers Semih Özakça and Nuriye Gülmen, Alpar passed through Yüksel Street in Ankara, where Gülmen was demonstrating solo with her own placard. Every day, Gülmen held her placard and read her press statement. A while later, Gülmen was taken into custody by the police forces on a day-to-day basis. Alpar not only drew Gülmen's solo resistance on the street, but she also drew from the court, following Gülmen's imprisonment.

[Figure II near here]

Different from other courtroom image activists, Alpar uses visual elements in combination with textual features. She drew Figure II during the hunger strikers' resistance, which inserts diegetic text such as Gülmen's placard that says 'I am dismissed from my job, I want my job back' and non-diegetic text recounting how Gülmen continues her resistance, despite being taken into custody every day because she does not 'clear the area' and surrender. The political function of the text on the image is to familiarise the audiences with what was happening on the ground and to satirize state violence and hegemony in using terms such as 'clearing the area under the state of emergency'. Alpar bolsters texts with the use of bright colors on the placard,

supported by a less bright yellow of the Human Rights Monument on Yüksel Street. In 1990, the sculptor Metin Yurdanur made the bronze monument seen behind Gülmen on Figure II, depicting a woman reading the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. As a symbolic space of contentious politics and resistance in Ankara, the monument, ironically, was under police blockage/custody for 26 months during the state of emergency between 2016 and 2018. Alpar primarily depicts humans or animals in the centre of her drawings, but she equally draws the geographical space that is constitutive of political action in this image, including the symbolic monument and the tree.

4c.Images from courtrooms

While the Gezi protests were a mobilizing reference point and web aesthetics provided the backbone of visual communication from street movements, newer solidarity networks created better organized and sustainable creative resistance, questioning the strategies and perspective of the Gezi protests. Illustrator Alpar (interview by author, June 2019) provided a detailed picture of how court painters organized and drew as a mutual aid network:

> I went to many court cases for LGBTI+ communities or animal rapes but the most difficult was the hunger strikes' case. I went there not only for showing solidarity with hunger strikers but also for not leaving Zeynep (Özatalay) alone. I am normally not a painter that can draw a moving body. The hunger strikers' case was very emotional as you draw a body that is about to fade away, when there are thousands of people out there who claim that they actually eat. You don't want to draw them as weak, but you also don't want to lionize them. You want to show how hunger strikers are precarious, and their bodies are damaged, but you also want to capture their power and resilience.

Alpar was not keen on her drawings from the courts and preferred to widely distribute her illustrations depicting the hunger strikers on the street during the trial periods in 2017. She saw her presence in the courtroom as a way of keeping solidarity with political prisoners and with other voluntary courtroom image activists. Within activist and creative circles, Alpar is known for her visual activism as a vegan and trans-inclusive feminist who drew for a multiplicity of print media platforms such as *Cumhuriyet*, which she describes as a more masculine space, and the journal of Ankara-based KAOS GL (1994), which is the first legal LGBTI+ organization registered as an association in Turkey. Image activists represent the wider ecosystems of communities that fight against the neo-liberal and Islamist ideologies on the ground, while at the same time resisting the hegemonic tendencies of conventional leftist parties[li]. In addition

to her struggle against the government's policies, Alpar fought with the left-wing *Cumhuriyet* newspaper for them to create a more inclusive space for LGBTI+ communities. From the trials of hunger strikers to today, Alpar's Twitter account has been suspended occasionally, often preventing her to express her art and political identity. In her posts on her personal Twitter account and her engagement with street politics, she raises her voice especially against violations of women's and animal rights.

Zeynep Özatalay was also at the forefront of image activism during this period. Although she was well-known within creative communities because of her activist and professional work in newspapers and children's books, she reached a wider network of human rights activists with her drawings of, first, the cartoonist Musa Kart (see Figure III), second, her drawings of hunger strikers (see Figure IV), both of which became emblematic of image activism in this period. The image of Musa Kart depicts the cartoonist sitting among many other journalists of *Cumhuriyet*. The journalists were accused by the Turkish state of supporting groups that the state has labelled terror organisations, such as the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). On the Figure III, along with the shadows of their surroundings, five of these journalists are discernible amongst 19 journalists on trial. As one of the first activist images from the courtrooms, the visual provides a realistic account of the serious and dormant environment of the courtroom. It neither lionizes the journalists on trial nor makes big claims about them, it simply portrays the here-and-now of the courtroom interaction for political prisoners/detainees.

[Figure III near here]

Özatalay (interview by author, May 2019) remarked how media and creative communities formed solidarity networks in the post-Gezi era, especially starting from the *Cumhuriyet* trials:

> Following Musa Kart's imprisonment, we formed the 'courthouse painters' network by taking our immediate circle of friends/colleagues into consideration. Whilst waiting for a national reaction to Musa's imprisonment, Brazilian cartoonists published political drawings/cartoons to support Musa. At the same time with our local and global networks of visual artists, journalists in Turkey also formed networks of solidarity with Musa. As these cases last long -at least for seven/eight months- and the individual trial was going to last five days, we let all illustrators/cartoonists know about our political action in the courtroom. Everybody took turns in the courtroom. For instance, I was a friend of Yıldıray (Çınar) from university. Yıldıray has a younger generation fan group, who were not necessarily political. Everyone has done their bit in their own capacity

and within their own diverse networks, which was a tendency amongst activists and creative people during and after the Gezi protests.

In their initial organization, the courtroom painters started their activity to support the cartoonist of *Cumhuriyet* newspaper; Musa Kart. Özatalay unintentionally became one of the most important faces of image activists, but she was not a leader or a representative of this small network of activists. Mitchell[lii] argues that "although Tahrir Square had a Facebook account, it did not have a representative face as the avatar of the revolution, which was partly tactical. If the police had possessed that face, they would have arrested and tortured the body connected to it. This was also a key ideological feature of the Occupy movements, which insisted on non-sovereignty and anonymity, renouncing the face of the charismatic leader". Similarly, Eslen-Ziya and Erhart[liii] describe the leadership during the Gezi protests as a post-heroic and collaborative leadership. The community of image activists refused to have a representative face and used a collaborative strategy for their image activism in the courtrooms and beyond.

In the process of increasing authoritarianism, their activist network transformed into an intersectional movement and from one issue to multi-issue actions. It went beyond the solidarity for Musa Kart or other journalists and extended to a solidarity with other human rights activists such as hunger strikers, lawyers or academics. As Özatalay recounted, intersectional activism was a strategy that gained momentum in the post-Occupy context of Turkey[liv], as a continuity of the "Gezi spirit". Mutual aid groups like image activists created solidarity in physical spaces and visibility in digital spaces for other activists in dire conditions and extended their wider social networks, such as journalists and cartoonists in Brazil.

[Figure IV near here]

Figure IV has a special meaning; it was the first instance where the representation of a hunger striker was available to the public after months of isolation in prison. The image, the most widely shared courtroom drawing, became a symbol of hunger strikers on social media and alternative newspapers. It represents a slimmed Semih Özakça but his facial expression seems to be almost content. The visual contributed to the 'reality' into which contemporary activists and creative networks politicized in an authoritarian setting where the right to work (due to emergency decrees), the right to use freedom of expression (e.g. Internet surveillance) and exercise political agency (especially as part of street movements) have been severely limited after the attempted coup. The political function of this image was influencing public opinion

on hunger strikers who were dismissed from their teaching jobs through governmental decrees and experienced dire conditions in courthouses and prisons. While the represented Özakça looks away from the state and towards his loved ones in the courtroom, the drawing does not isolate him from the reality of the courtroom by including the figure of the police in the background.

[Figure V near here]

In this period, Başol's most circulated courtroom works were the images for 'the revolutionary lawyers' in 2019 (see Figure V). Selçuk Kozağaçlı represented in Figure V, is a lawyer and the president of the People's Law Office (ÇHD), who worked on human rights cases. ÇHD advocates for the prevention of attacks on fundamental rights but was closed by a government decree issued under the State of Emergency (November 2016). In March 2019, the ÇHD lawyers received over 159 years of prison sentence. Among the different functions communicated through the visual on 'the revolutionary lawyers', one is primary: the resilient and hopeful sentiments of activists despite increasingly harsh political and everyday reality under the regime. Başol's image showcases not only the lawyers' sentiments and actions but also the faces and movements of the police, representing 'the face of the state'. International solidarity networks can equally relate to these visuals as the activists depicted use the universal symbols of revolutionary action: the V sign.

Alongside the facial and bodily movement of activists and their opponents, the image provides a detailed account of the courthouse as a geographical space. The drawing depicts the courtroom as "an enclave, which serves and sustains the hegemonic social order through the segregation of strong groups and the exclusion of weak ones"[lv]. It puts into practice "the preoccupations of sovereign, disciplinary, and security-minded modes of power"[lvi]. The image documents not only the Turkish flag and the courtroom podium as artefacts of state hegemony, hierarchy and state sanctioned nation state iconography but also positions other restrictive random everyday objects such as the decaying path, walls or stairs in the courtroom, which are unwelcoming and grey. In the enclave of the courtroom, the painters were only allowed to use designated pens and paint but, as Başol recounts, the ÇHD trial was even a more difficult case. The production context in the courtroom was precarious; the image activists were denied resources to draw or asked to leave several times, which was becoming a consistent state reaction to courtroom image activists in this period. Despite these conditions, courtroom painters effectively used post-digital techniques to persistently produce their images. The next

day/week of the trials included at times anonymised digitalised images of courtrooms that are shared widely on different social networking sites, in addition to alternative newspapers.

5.Conclusion

Despite having different visual symbols, aesthetics as well as production and circulation contexts of images from streets and courts, the courtroom artists' solidarity with various resistances including the then imprisoned cartoonist Kart, their creative ways of combatting the regime's oppression following the attempted coup clustered these drawings and their producers together. Courtrooms as restrictive spaces connected image activists with not only activists and civil servants co-present in the courtrooms, but also with local communities, activists, cartoonists, alternative newspapers and other transnational human rights activists. This helped image activists to create networks of global support and spread a form of transnational awareness on their own and political prisoners' struggles. These ongoing strategies at times fall short as they cannot prevent activists to be imprisoned or media from being coerced, but the testimonies here account for how creative communities such as image activists continue to fight back in authoritarian contexts.

Rather than examining dissent in the public sphere of Turkey as merely an online phenomenon, this paper examined images produced from the semi-public spaces of courtrooms as a symbol of silent and hopeful resistance in contemporary Turkey. To articulate image activism during an authoritarian period, the paper captured political and social conditions of images and their modes of distribution, while elucidating the ways particular social power relations structure the meanings of an image[lvii]. As the interview material with the image activists and an engagement with their drawings bring to light, the AKP governments' increasing pressure on media and arts did not put an end to the individual and/or collective stance against the government's authoritarianism, even in the most restrictive institutional spaces such as courtrooms.

In this light, the paper, first showed the ways contemporary visual activists consistently used the Gezi protests as a reference point for their intersectional activism in the post-Occupy period. This ranges from not having a representative face or a leader to producing anonymized works[lviii]. Second, the paper showed that despite the repression in the public and semi-public spaces of streets, towns, courtrooms as well as online geographies, visual activists used post-digital ways of producing content from courtrooms, while effectively employing digital platforms like Twitter, Instagram or Facebook for the purposes of image circulation. These artists have also used alternative, diasporic and Kurdish online media to engage in DIY media

circulation to expedite political mobilization, create visibility, and challenge the institutional exclusion of dissident voices by the regime. In conclusion, the political visuals from courtrooms became an instance of powerful silent acts of resistance, whilst situating their painters at the forefront of cultural activism.

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[i] Doerr, Mattoni and Teune, "Toward a Visual Analysis".
[ii] Ozduzen and McGarry, "Digital Traces".
[iii] Ozduzen, "We are not Arabs".
[iv] Bulut and Yörük, "Mediatized populisms".
[v] Aslan, "The mobilization process", 2521.
[vi] Pearson and Trevisan, "Disability activism"; Treré and Mattoni, "Media ecologies"; Mattoni, "A situated understanding".
[vii] Lotan et al., "The Arab Spring".
[viii] Kharroub and Bas, "Social media and protests"; Moore-Gilbert, "A visual uprising"; McGarry et al., "Beyond the iconic"; Jenzen, "The symbol of social media".
[ix] Alkazemi and Wanta, "Kuwaiti political cartoons".
[x] Huntington, "Pepper spray cop", 78.
[xi] Özcan, "Lingerie, bikinis".
[xii] Khatib, "Image politics", 11.
[xiii] Andén-Papadopoulos, "Image Activism", 5017.
[xiv] Andén-Papadopoulos, "Citizen camera-witnessing".

[xvi] Rose, "Visual methodologies", 22.
[xvii] Aiello, "The 'other' Europeans".
[xviii] Rose, "Teaching visualised geographies", 283.
[xix] Brummett, "Rhetorical dimensions", xi.
[xx] Foss, "A rhetorical schema".
[xxi] Ibid., 215-219.
[xxii] Özdüzen, "Bearing Witness".
[xxiii] Bozkurt-Güngen, "Labour and authoritarian", 1.
[xxiv] Öniş, "Turgut Özal", 114.
[xxv] Lüküslü, "Creating a pious generation"; Topak, "The authoritarian surveillant".
[xxvi] Yilmaz and Bashirov, "The AKP after", 2.
[xxvii] Castells, "Networks of outrage", 21.
[xxviii] Saka, "Social Media", 2.
[xxix] Bennett and Segerberg, "The logic", 742.
[xxx] Gençoğlu Onbaşı, "Gezi Park", 279.
[xxxi] Emre, Çoban and Şener, "Humorous form", 438-440.
[xxxii] Ozduzen and Mcgarry, "Digital Traces".
[xxxiii] Ozduzen, "Spaces of hope".
[xxxiv] Derman, "Stand-in", 199.
[xxxv] Topak, "The authoritarian surveillant", 465.
[xxxvi] Lüküslü, "Creating a pious generation", 638-645.
[xxxvii] Mattoni, "A situated understanding", 495.
[xxxviii] Merrin, *Media Studies 2.0*, 48-49.
[xxxix] Akser and Hawks, "Media and democracy".
[xl] Yeşil, "Authoritarian turn", 240.

[xli] Duncombe, “Notes from”; Kafai and Peppler, “Youth, technology”.
[xlii] Croteau, “The growth of self-produced media”, 341.
[xliii] Thorson et al., “YouTube, Twitter”, 425.
[xliv] Andén-Papadopoulos, “Citizen camera-witnessing”, 756
[xlv] Cramer, “What is ‘Post-digital’?”.
[xlvi] Thibault, “Post-digital Games”.
[xlvii] Andén-Papadopoulos, “Image Activism”, 5014.
[xlviii] Özcan, “Lingerie, bikinis”, 428.
[xlix] Snowdon, “The revolution will, 401.
[l] Szolucha “Occupy in Ireland, 257-258.
[li] Ozduzen, “Spaces of hope”.
[lii] Mitchell, “Image, space, revolution”, 9.
[liii] Eslen-Ziya and Erhart, “Toward postheroic leadership”.
[liv] Papazian, “Between Gezi Park”.
[lv] Allweil and Kallus, “Re-forming the political”, 749).
[lvi] Casey et al., “Edge, common space”, 2.
[lvii] Rose “Teaching visualised geographies”; “Visual methodologies”.
[lviii] Alkazemi and Wanta, “Kuwaiti political cartoons; Mitchell, “Image, space, revolution”.

Acknowledgements

This research was partly funded by the British Academy Newton International Postdoctoral Fellowship (NF170302). I am thankful to Alev Karaduman for her help in accessing research participants. I am thankful to Olivia Glombitza, Paul Kubicek and two anonymous reviewers for their feedback on earlier drafts. Finally, I am grateful for the three image activists who have generously shared their time and visuals with me.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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