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Chapter Author(s): Duygu Erbil

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3   Deniz Gezmiş Takes to the Streets: From Photograph to Silhouette

Duygu Erbil

Abstract

This chapter analyses the role of media materialities and the means of cultural production in the circulation of the visual representations of Deniz Gezmiş. In analysing the afterlife of the most iconic photograph of Gezmiş, it pays specific attention to alternative media and activist cultures of production that are circumscribed by limited material resources and technical skills. It seeks to understand why the composition was so attractive to activists and the methods by which amateurs remediate and reproduce protest ephemera. It argues that the memorability of Deniz Gezmiş' iconic portrait is facilitated by its availability for legible and recognizable low fidelity reproduction.

Keywords: Deniz Gezmiş, memorability, materialism, culture of production, alternative media, protest ephemera

A young man gazes directly at the camera. He inches towards the right of frame, but that does not affect his centrality, it is clearly a portrait. Behind his left shoulder, an older man stands in profile, but we cannot see his face, nor the person he appears to be talking to, who is evidently not essential for the photographer. The subject of the portrait is wearing a parka, and this is a curious element given the photograph is taken indoors. It is a half-length portrait, from head to waist, so the parka occupies almost half of the frame. Our eyes are drawn to the young man's face, but it is not clear whether he wears a blank expression or is slightly sad, and one may see a hint of a smile if that is what you are looking for. Although its expression is elusive, the face itself is very recognizable for a Turkish audience, and so is the photograph. Known as "the Turkish Che Guevara," Marxist-Leninist "martyr"

Deniz Gezmiş' arrest photograph, taken by journalist Ergin Konuksever, is considered one of the most iconic photographs of the 1968–1971 protest cycle in Turkey thanks to its prolific afterlife of reproduction and remediation. Giving a face not only to the so-called 1968 movement in Turkey, but also to subsequent Marxist and youth movements and, indeed to a general political culture of contention, it allows us to consider the role of visual representation in the *memory–activism nexus* (Rigney, 2018).

Deniz Gezmiş has become a symbol of contentious politics in Turkey and this frontal portrait is considered the most iconic representation. When it is carried on banners in commemorative marches every 6 May, the anniversary of his execution by hanging, it functions in *memory activism*. When it is printed on the covers of books or next to newspaper articles about Deniz Gezmiş, it becomes visual evidence for the existence of the life it documents, and hence aids the *memory of activism*. Moreover, when it is taken into the street, remediated as graffiti or as a stencil on protest props representing political groups that draw on Gezmiş' memory as a cultural resource to legitimize their own collective, it serves the use of memory *in* activism. This paper aims to untangle the latter by analysing the aesthetic and material affordances of this photograph that are activated in different mobilizations. What makes this photograph apparently so attractive to activists for remediation and reproduction? My intention here is to show that the visual representation of the past for the purposes of demonstration gains meaning not only through the past it represents but also through its production process, which includes techniques of mediation.

I look at visual memory through the lens of cultural memory studies, which defines memory as always, inherently mediated (Erll, 2011), and thus consider *mediation* integral to meaning-making about the past and its documentations. Crucially, I understand mediation as referring to the production of media in general, including non-professional, do-it-yourself, and protest-specific means of cultural production. I thus focus on the means of cultural production accessible to demonstrators, when they choose to mobilize visual representations of the past. A materialist look at visual memory *in* activism denaturalizes our assumption that images and photographs are disembodied "visions" that can circulate anywhere; an assumption naturalized by the copy-paste practices of our digital era. Photographs and videos of protest signs that are dragged on the street or sprayed with water cannons confront us with the materiality of the mediation practices employed by protestors with limited access to technology and/or limited technical skills. This brings us to the question of the agent in cultural remembrance practices: who mediates the memory to be used

in activism? The demonstrator is not only the carrier of protest signs, but is also an active producer in the memory–activism nexus. The main question for this essay then is why demonstrators—as amateur agents of cultural production—choose this specific photograph of Deniz Gezmiş to reproduce in ephemeral forms? How, in the context of contentious politics, is the afterlife of a photograph produced long after its photographer ceases to be the primary actor in mediation? While acknowledging that there is more to cultural memory formation than material conditions and resources, this chapter focuses primarily on the materiality of cultural production to analyse its specific role in cultural memory, within an activist "culture of production" (Du Gay, 1997, p. 4).

The Story of the Photograph

"I took this photograph of Deniz at the gate of Ankara Ministry of the Internal Affairs. That day Deniz spit on the face of the Minister," recalls Ergin Konuksever (cited in Acar, 2012), in an interview about his own life, which he spent as a war photographer and documenting the Turkish student movement. He is describing the day after Gezmiş' arrest, along with his comrade Yusuf Aslan, on 16 March 1971, after an armed conflict. There were other friends in the same area, all of whom were killed by the gendarmerie. Gezmiş, Aslan, and others, generally known as "Deniz Gezmiş and his friends," constituted a Marxist–Leninist armed guerrilla organization called THKO, the People's Liberation Army of Turkey [Türkiye Halk Kurtuluş Ordusu]. The group was one of several enactments of the "guerrilla model" in the Turkish student movement during the 1968–1971 protest cycle, which became popular among students in 1969 due to the influential translation and publication of books by Che Guevara, Carlos Marighella and Regis Debray (Alper, 2009, p. 433). Before embracing guerrilla warfare, the members of the group, like most of the militant revolutionaries of this era, were student activists and leaders. Gezmiş was a well-known student leader from the Istanbul University Department of Law, where he instigated protests against American imperialism, most famously against the United States Sixth Fleet visiting Turkish ports, which has itself become a historical symbol for the so-called '68 movement in Turkey, along with its most mediatic leader. Gezmiş also led university occupations for education reforms, and protests against farmers' exploitation. But in 1969, when student protests were increasingly the targets of violence on the part of the police and right-wing militants, he received guerilla training upon invitation by

Figure 3.1: Republican People's Party Youth members at the commemoration of the 36th anniversary of the execution of Deniz Gezmiş, Yusuf Aslan, and Hüseyin İnan. Istanbul, Turkey, 4 May 2008. Photo: Ünsal Karabulut/Anadolu Images.

the Palestine Liberation Organization and took up arms (Uslu, 2015, p. 524). Upon his return to Turkey, he co-founded the THKO, but never escalated armed resistance to the level of political murders.

Members of THKO topped Turkey's "most wanted" list in 1971 due to a bank robbery and the kidnapping of US servicemen, and other guerrilla activities. Then came the 1971 Turkish military memorandum of 12 March, Turkey's second military intervention following the 1960 coup d'état, to end the political chaos and "carry out reforms 'in a Kemalist spirit'" (Zürcher, 1993, p. 258). It was in the context of this "coup by memorandum" that Deniz Gezmiş and his comrades were arrested or killed. The military trial of Gezmiş and his friends would begin on 16 July 1971, to be concluded with the death sentence handed to 18 young revolutionaries for trying to "overthrow the constitutional order" (Çelenk, 1974). Only three of the sentences ended up being carried out after a judicial deadlock: Deniz Gezmiş, Yusuf Aslan, and Hüseyin İnan were executed on 6 May 1972, in an unlawful manner according to legal experts (see Çelenk, 1974; Behram, 2006). The portrait of Gezmiş in his parka at the gate of Ankara Ministry of the Internal Affairs came to represent the historic moment of the 1971 coup: Turkey's traumatized democracy, law's crisis of legitimacy under military rule, the murder of three young men, and the defeated revolutionary movement.

The Afterlife of the Photograph

As the visual representation of Gezmiş' life, the portrait has given face to everything Gezmiş himself symbolized; never a single meaning, such as being a Marxist–Leninist revolutionary or a victim of state violence. Like the meaning of the life it represents, the meaning of this portrait of Gezmiş has always been dependent on the context in which it has been reproduced. When circulated in protests, it represented defiance and its long history.

This was not the first arrest photograph of Gezmiş, since he was in and out of prison between 1968 and 1970 as a student leader and spent 32 months of his six years of active political life between 1967 and 6 May 1972 in prison (Uslu, 2015). He became notorious because of search warrants and news of his arrest but it was the arrest photograph taken for the *Günaydın* newspaper that became the iconic face of contentious politics in Turkey. There are tens of different photographs of Gezmiş, including different angles of his arrest, which could be circulated widely thanks to the legal archive of evidential photographs that was compiled for and taken at the THKO trial. Furthermore, his family photographs have been widely circulated due to extensive biographical research taken up by different cultural actors, and journalists still dig up new photographs or recirculate forgotten ones to report on the "unknown" or the "unpublished" photographs of Gezmiş.[1] Journalist Can Dündar's popular 2014 book *My Brother Deniz: Memoirs of Hamdi Gezmiş with Unpublished Letters and Photographs*, for example, exhibits this discourse and practice in its subtitle. The very discourse of "unknown" photographs points at the fact that there are well-known photographs, such as the frontal portrait by Konuksever. Among these "known" and "unknown" photographs, there are rhetorically powerful photographs of Gezmiş pointing his finger at the military prosecutor or the judge; clearly defiant photographs of Gezmiş protesting with his fist in the air. Considering the abundance of such photographs with a clear visual rhetoric of protest, why is the most iconic Deniz Gezmiş photograph this specific portrait taken upon his last arrest?

The photograph was first disseminated as journalistic evidence of the defeat of the radical Marxist–Leninist guerrilla group THKO, as it documented the capture of their mediatic leader in *Günaydın* newspaper. However, the image has become a touchstone for subsequent leftist movements in Turkey

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1   Newspapers and media outlets that report on Gezmiş' unpublished photographs include *OdaTV, Evrensel*, and *Hurriyet* in 2011, *Sabah* in 2014, *Hurriyet* again in 2016, *Sondakika* in 2017, *Cumhuriyet* in 2018, and *Sozcu* in 2019.

as it was reproduced time and again as the representation of the iconic "martyr" of the revolutionary movement, as well as the so-called 1968 in more liberal framings. The photograph has become familiar to many from a remarkable number of book covers that commemorated his life: Erdal Öz's prison memoir, based on his interview with Gezmiş, *Deniz Gezmiş Anlatıyor* (1976) was originally published with this photograph on its cover, before it was later extended and published as *Gülünün Solduğu Akşam* in 1986, which has been reprinted 65 times by 2021. Since then, whether in works memorializing Deniz Gezmiş, like *Bitmeyen Deniz* (2019), or in works on the student movements and the Left in general, like *Türkiye Solundan Portreler* (2015), the photograph has become the defining photographic image of his afterlife and the 1968 generation in Turkey. Due to the symbolic power it accrued via this reproduction, it has also become a marketable object of commemoration. It has been widely reproduced on market goods from handwoven wall tapestry to manufactured panels available from e-commerce retailers, as iconicity and commercialization went hand in hand. Some of these photographic reproductions and remediations used Konuksever's iconic photograph, others used another full-length portrait by an unknown photographer, with the same front angle (though with a slightly more defiant look on Gezmiş' face) while still referring to it as his "iconic photograph," as it has usually been cropped to mimic Konuksever's head-and-shoulders composition.

This second photograph, after being cropped to re-enact Konuksever's photograph and remediated as a silhouette, adorned the façade of the Atatürk Cultural Centre during the Gezi Park protests in 2013. As a mnemonic anchor, the use of Gezmiş' photograph was imbued with the political symbolism of Marxism in Turkey. It figured alongside several other symbolically charged portraits, like that of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, Marx, Engels, and Lenin, on curiously smaller banners. Gezmiş' remediated portrait on one of the largest banners framed the Gezi Park Protests with a revolutionary tone, even though the protests were marked by ideological heterogeneity. The banner, made by Mücadele Birliği [Struggle Alliance], declared: "Bütün İktidar Emeğin Olacak" [all power to labour]. Although it represented a Marxist organization, a year after the Gezi Park protests, journalist Can Dündar (2014) referred to this banner on the back cover of his book *My Brother Deniz: Memoirs of Hamdi Gezmiş with Unpublished Letters and Photographs* and suggested that the book would help understand why Gezmiş' image adorned the "most visible" part of the Atatürk Cultural Centre during Gezi. The intriguing aspect of this reference is that the book is a collaborative life narrative of Gezmiş that emerges from Dündar's interviews with Gezmiş'

brother Hamdi and the family archive, and insistently frames Gezmiş as a Kemalist youth rather than a socialist (Uslu, 2015). This is a testament to how the photograph is layered with different forms of political symbolism, as Dündar could reframe the Mücadele Birliği banner as the monumentalization of a Kemalist youth, thereby obscuring the politics and symbolism of this Marxist organization. It does not matter if Mücadele Birliği's avatar on social media is the same stencil printed on their Gezi Park banner (although it is printed on red this time), and it makes no difference that this specific image is the logo of a specific political group. In its indexicality, the stencil is recognizable as Deniz Gezmiş in his iconic pose, whose life is rendered meaningful in other people's narrativizations.

The same stencilled avatar, black on red, is also used by a Mücadele Birliği related youth organization, Devrimci Öğrenci Birliği (DÖB) [Alliance of Revolutionary Students] who use the remediation as their representative avatar everywhere from social media to street demonstrations. In their October 2021 zine, *Sabırsızlık Zamanı* [Time of Impatience], we observe, on a textual level, how they relate to and use the memory of Gezmiş to legitimize their own contentious politics and identity by using his name as a mnemonic anchor: he is defined as the leader of anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist youth with roots in the global 1968 movement (p. 28), as someone who fought for the emancipation of the working class (p. 34), as the co-founder of DÖB (p. 34), and also as the founding figure who insisted that the struggle must be in unity with Kurds and against chauvinism (p. 35). One can add that the zine also circulates an old CCCP poster, and while its front cover has the photograph of the façade of the Atatürk Cultural Centre, its back cover circulates the stencil of Che Guevara's iconic photograph with the beret superimposed on the Cuban national flag. As these visual and verbal signifiers are articulated into a political identity for this revolutionary youth in 2021, Gezmiş' stencilled portrait comes to represent a revolutionary youth organization in solidarity with minorities, workers, women, and LGBT+ communities (p. 4).

The same stencilled silhouette, however, is also used by other political actors, among which we can paradoxically find the ultranationalist organization Türkiye Liseliler Birliği (TLB) [High-schoolers Union of Turkey]. An interesting use of the stencilled portrait by TLB occurred in May 2014, one year after the Gezi Park protests. Some Istanbul residents received letters, stamped with the same silhouette used on the Gezi banner on the left top corner of the envelope. The bottom right was stamped with a reworked portrait of Atatürk, which also serves as TLB's avatar. A red stamp on the envelope announced: "Deniz Gezmiş'ten mektup var" [You've got mail from Deniz Gezmiş] and the letter invited the people of Istanbul to the

commemorative march for the 42nd anniversary of the execution of Deniz
Gezmiş, Hüseyin İnan and Yusuf Aslan on 6 May. The commemoration
march was organized in collaboration with *68'liler Birliği Vakfı* [Foundation
of the Union of the '68ers], a key player in the proliferation of the afterlife of
Deniz Gezmiş. TLB too chose to use Gezmiş as a mnemonic anchor for their
youth organization and his stencilled portrait as an icon, but reproduced
the image in the context of ultranationalism and Kemalism. Curiously, TLB
identifies with Gezmiş, using the same visual representation as DÖB, while
occupying the opposite end of the Turkish political spectrum. TLB's 2021
campaign for shutting down the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) for its
"schismatic" (read pro-minority) politics, for instance, makes us look back
to their 2014 use of Gezmiş' portrait with confusion. Why did they use that
particular portrait and its specific stencil on the envelope despite the fact
it represented antagonistic politics?

Indeed, representations of the past are indexical, and Gezmiş' life gains
new meanings according to the context in which it is remembered. Thus,
TLB's use of the same stencilled silhouette as DÖB does not concern them.
It looks exactly like Gezmiş' "iconic photograph" by Konuksever, only in
silhouette form. However, the stamp on the envelope is not a simple case of
reappropriation of leftist iconography by a conservative group. It also raises
a question regarding the material means of cultural production. TLB refers
to Gezmiş as a mnemonic anchor, and uses the memory of Deniz Gezmiş in
their ultranationalist politics, especially in their commemoration marches
of 6 May. Nevertheless, the more common high-quality visual representation
they use online is the famous portrait by Konuksever, photoshopped to look
like an illustrated cartoon, accompanied by remediated side portraits of
Yusuf Aslan and Hüseyin İnan next to Gezmiş, layered on a blue sky. Why
then did they choose the more "radical" silhouette for their envelope in
2014? On a discursive level, TLB's appropriation of the memory of Gezmiş
can be explained by its *resonance* with a nationalistic formulation of
youth as a political category, as I discuss elsewhere (see Erbil, 2022). In
terms of the material use of a specific stencilled silhouette on a specific
medium, however, I argue that the answer is to be found, at least in part,
by their do-it-yourself production process, their reproduction technique.
The technical ease of reproducing this stencil as a stamp on an envelope
makes it materially more accessible, to an extent that the demonstrators
can take the risk of being misrecognized as the opposite party. The stencil
is an available and recognizable way of representing Deniz Gezmiş. In the
end, it is the silhouette of *their* Kemalist, nationalist Gezmiş, even though
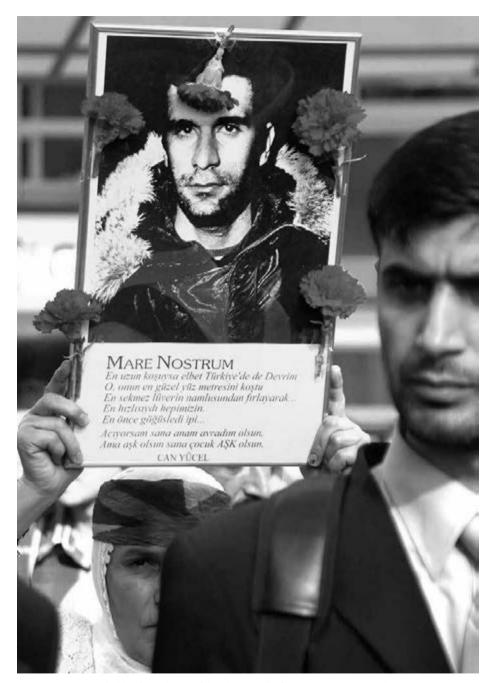the stencil happens to be the logo of DÖB.

Figure 3.2: A woman holds a framed print of the photograph of Deniz Gezmiş. Izmir, Turkey, 6 May 2004. Photo: Mehmet Özdoğru/Anadolu Images.

The Silhouette of Deniz Gezmiş

Whether it takes the form of digitally mimicking the stencilled look as an homage to old techniques of commemorating "martyrs," or an actual DIY stencil used on placards or walls as graffiti, using the silhouette of a person is one of the most accessible means of visual cultural production. It is a single-coloured pattern on another colour, and even when digitally printed, a single colour print on the colour of your choice is less expensive than a colour print. This accessibility in the *production of culture* is constitutive of demonstrators' *culture of production*, that is, "the ways in which practices of production are inscribed with particular cultural meanings" (Du Gay, 1997, p. 4). The stencilled look communicates dissent, because stencilling is an accessible and democratic form of cultural production available to and used by demonstrators, and thus inscribed with contentious cultural meanings. It communicates protest because it is historically used in protest media produced by amateurs.

Protest media are produced either by ordinary people without sufficient means of cultural production, or by professionals with tight budgets, and by virtue of taking to the streets, they are marked by ephemerality. Protest ephemera can be dragged on the street and confiscated by the police; graffiti can be painted over, and posters can be ripped from the wall. Even if one has drawing skills, simply spraying paint through a stencil on a wall is quicker, and thus safer, than drawing an image. Consequently, a portrait photograph can be remediated as stencil to circulate more widely on the streets, to be used as memory *in* activism. In other words, remediation of the photograph as a silhouette has the *affordances* of circulating more widely due to quicker, cheaper, safer, more accessible reproduction and dissemination options. This access to wider circulation, in turn, shapes cultural memorability in activism, supplementing the lack of material durability: the ephemera that disappear on the streets might not seem as memorable as a statue, but if the same stencil takes to the street every year on different surfaces, it can constitute visual memory with a different type of durability.

Different mediation practices produce memory differently and this is evidenced especially in discussions of *alternative media*. Alternative media scholars have long been interested in the relationship between mediation and activism, or protest media. Whether they call it alternative, radical, or social movement media, these media are defined in opposition to mainstream media, although there are also some critics of this binary. Chris Atton (2010) argues that alternative media are defined by low levels of economic and cultural capital, supplemented by high interest in symbolic value which "challenges the mainstream media monopoly on producing

symbolic forms" (pp. 17–18). They are counter-hegemonic, participatory, democratic, accessible, and amateur, and form alternative or counter-publics (Mowbray, 2015; Drüeke & Zobl, 2018). Among different theorists of social movement media, J. D. Downing (2000) has a special interest in the role of "radical media" in the formation of cultural memory as he calls for the recognition "of how they may light a mnemonic flame that sometimes burns over decades and generations" (p. 34). He goes as far as claiming that "ephemeral media address social memory differently" (p. 102), but this focus on "social memory" comes short of recognizing that memory is always mediated. In other words, radical mediation as a cultural remembrance practice in social movements has not yet received the attention it deserves, leaving cultural memory scholars an exciting disciplinary lacuna to further explore. Let us ask then: How do counter-hegemonic, participatory, democratic, accessible, and amateur practices mediate cultural memory?

What makes a portrait remediable to the extent that it can be reproduced as a blot but is still recognizable? Is there a palpable reason why Gezmiş' iconic portrait has become iconic? First, we cannot ignore the fact that Gezmiş' photograph itself has become recognizable thanks to the book covers it was printed on. For a photograph to be printed on book covers, one needs permission from the photographer. Konuksever, a self-declared sympathizer with the '68 movement and militant students, might have made it easier to circumvent copyright issues for publishers who chose to publish commemorative life narratives of his young friend Deniz Gezmiş. This social aspect of the reproducibility of the iconic photograph, certainly facilitated its subsequent popularity though this was not the only photograph of Gezmiş taken by Konuksever. However, this portrait of Gezmiş, which arguably has a more youthful look than the others, shows how the symbolism in the afterlife of Gezmiş draws on the "Turkish youth myth" and formulates Gezmiş as the representative of "youth" as a contentious political category (Erbil, 2022). His wearing a parka might also have added to its memorability because parkas have become markers for the revolutionaries of the period. However, it is not clear whether the parka (now known as the Deniz Gezmiş Parka) rendered the photograph iconic or the photograph the parka. For these observations to be more than speculation, more testimonial and textual evidence would be needed regarding the visual register of youthfulness in Turkey, or for the parka's place in the symbolic universe of this movement. One thing is clearly and materially observable in Konuksever's photograph, and is shared by the second, anonymous photograph that is usually cropped to re-enact Konuksever's composition: the parka's hood is lined with fur, which creates a contrasting frame for the body. This helps make Gezmiş'

figure recognizable when the portrait is remediated as a stencil. What otherwise would be the silhouette of a face, which might look like any random youth, becomes the silhouette of this this specific man. The parka's fur lining creates a referential link to the original photograph even when reduced to rough outlines, just like Che Guevara's iconic beret.

The symbolism of the parka surely communicates an ethos of militancy and political self-sacrifice, like Guevara's beret, and thus renders the photograph a recognizable symbol of militant resistance. But again, there are other photographs of Gezmiş with his parka. What renders Konuksever's photograph—and the anonymous one when it is cropped—available for a more legible and recognizable remediation as a silhouette is the symmetrical frontal shot: Gezmiş' direct gaze that fixes the viewer's attention is perfectly in line with the parka, creating a semicircle. This creates a halo, and thus aligns with the aesthetics of martyrdom, which also contributes to the legibility of amateur remediation.[2] Because circular compositions lead the viewer to complete the implied shape by filling in the missing parts (Sale & Betti, 2008), they are not only aesthetically pleasing but also available for low fidelity remediation thanks to the closure law of *Gestalt principles*[3]: even if you are running out of paint and thus the stencil does not come out perfect, the viewer will complete "the circle in spite of the abrupt ending to the flow of the shape" (p. 71). Thanks to strong shadows and the intrinsic high contrast of the portrait, it is easily remediated into a silhouette where stains form a recognizable image via the applied closure principle, and even if the low fidelity amateur reproduction is not perfect—e.g. in graffiti that were quickly sprayed—the eye can easily complete the reproduction due to the composition of the portrait. This legibility despite imperfection in reproduction, facilitates this photograph's wide use in protest media, rendering it memorable in activism, that is, easily reproducible within the culture of production that activists operate in.

In addition to the ease with which the photograph is remediated in a legible low fidelity form, we can also observe that its composition effectively

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2   Although halos are more familiar from Christian art, they have a long history and can be found elsewhere, from Buddhist to Islamic art.

3   Meaning "unified whole" in German, *Gestalt* gave its name to a school of applied psychology in Germany, which theorized visual perception on the basis of the understanding that "the mind 'informs' what the eye sees by perceiving a series of individual elements as a whole" ("What are Gestalt Principles?", n.d.). Gestalt principles (proximity, similarity, figure-ground, continuity, closure, and connection) have become an essential part of visual design and especially the closure principle of completing shapes informed iconic logos such the World Wildlife Fund's panda ("What are Gestalt Principles?", n.d.).

Figure 3.3: Demonstrators gather around a banner by Mücadele Birliği [Struggle Alliance] during the 39th anniversary of the execution of Deniz Gezmiş. Istanbul, Turkey, 6 May 2011. Photo: Metin Tokgöz/Anadolu Images.

accommodates written text. The eye is not only looking at a semicircle, but also a triangle that the semicircle is inscribed in. This composition, in addition to the closure principle of the eye completing the pattern, is ideal for poster design—or book covers—if one wants to incorporate written text such as slogans or commemorative poetry. When positioned at the bottom of a poster, which is usually a rectangle, the triangle leads the eye to the top by virtue of pointing upwards and thus draws attention to the possible writing space that completes the rectangle. When the silhouette is positioned on top, this composition allows the written word to be framed by the implied circle that the parka outlines, leading the eye to the centre, to the written word. Given that protest ephemera are likely to incorporate slogans, this availability for multimodal composition makes the portrait and its silhouette a convenient choice for demonstrations that incorporate principles of practicality and accessibility. In this sense, its material, aesthetic composition facilitates the cultural memorability of this photograph.

A photograph can indeed be technically reproduced infinitely if one has access to technologies of photographic reproduction. If not, there are low fidelity, "democratic forms of media"—such as stencils—that do not necessarily comply with the visual conventions of hegemonic cultural practices, but promote self-determination, participation, and accessibility (see Spencer, 2008). In other words, the means of cultural production in activism, which constitutes the communicative repertoire of contention, structures the mnemonic capacity (Armstrong & Crage, 2006) of demonstrators.

The Culture of Production in Dissenting Turkey and its Aesthetic Legacies

In their discussion of the conditions that facilitate the commemorability of social movements, Armstrong and Crage (2006) point to an important material condition for commemoration that they call *mnemonic capacity*. This concept refers to "the skills and resources needed to create commemorative vehicles," which may vary according to differential access to "technologies of memory" (p.726), like printing and building memorials, which are all susceptible to restrictions by law, material resources, and crises of public legitimacy. Mnemonic capacity is an instructive term for thinking about the material conditions of memorability given that it acknowledges access to medial production as a facilitative condition. However, it is limiting to think only within the binary of "access" and "restriction," since restriction can direct activists to democratic forms of memorialization and commemoration, in accordance with the "DIY ethos" that privileges participation in cultural production and reproduction (Spencer, 2008). This means that an understanding of mediation beyond institutionalized and professional forms, which is to say *mediation by amateurs*, can enhance our understanding of visual protest aesthetics, as well as of visual memory in/of activism.

Amateurs and activists employ different cultural production and reproduction techniques with media materialities that are specific to their repertoires of contention. For instance, when streets are historically designated as the site of contention the visual culture of contention evolves according to the material conditions of the streets and the mnemonic capacity of the demonstrators to produce ephemera. The recent digitization of activism should not make us forget the site-specific materialities of protest media. The process of mediation begins far earlier than the spectacle of the crowd. Protest signs must be constructed before they can be carried. Anyone who has made a protest sign, read guides for the mediation of protest available on mainstream Internet (such as the "How to Make Protest Signs" co-authored by wikiHow Staff (2022), or "How to Make a Protest Sign That Isn't Garbage" by Justin Caffier (2017) on *Vice*) or attended a banner and slogan workshop by an activist organization, knows the distinct materialities and textualities required for self-determining the aesthetics of protest. Although some banners and signs are mass-produced by activist organizations who have budget for access to production technologies, it is a fact that both budget and access are limited for non-institutionalized groups.

Perhaps the clearest way to understand how visual cultures of activism are shaped and self-determined within these constraints is by paying attention to

the way activists themselves remember the production process. Documenting and memorializing the visual culture of the Left between 1963–1980, Yılmaz Aysan's *Afişe Çıkmak* (2013), for instance, offers us a selection of interviews with five activists who were involved in Devrimci Afiş Atölyesi [Revolutionary Poster Atelier] at Middle East Technical University that was active from 1968 to 1971. Interestingly, these interviews do not recall symbolic tactics in their poster production as much as the technical tactics. For example, in the interview with Hasan Barutçu, Barutçu does not mention anything about colour symbolism at the Atelier. Instead of recalling why certain colours were used in a poster, he describes how the students used five colours in one specific poster produced through serigraphy, not separately but printed on top of each other to achieve accent colours, like in the trichotomy method: "We printed trichotomy through serigraphy, can you believe it!" (cited in Aysan, 2013, p. 105). Of course, this enthusiastic take on craftmanship may be a result of the interviewer Aysan being a graphic designer himself, but the description of the techniques and the material processes of production throughout the interviews is very relevant for analysing the cultural memory of images.

While the question of why a certain colour is used for its symbolic power can be central to the study of the representative aspects of an image, the role of production technique is equally definitive in the formation of visual cultures and memory. For example, to Yılmaz Aysan's question of whether the Turkish posters are different from other posters around the world, Ali Artun gives a technical answer, explaining that the distinguishing feature of Turkish posters is that they are not produced by "fine arts students like in France":

> For example, the "silhouette" technique. It was something imposed by the screen-printing technique. I mean you have to fill in the screen with ink blots. For example, if it concerns a murdered revolutionary, these blots [sic] are subtracted from his photograph. It is contrasted and worked directly on the screen by hand. We see that technique has a very important effect on the formation of images. For example, if a painter had dealt with this job, he could have sat down and tried to paint the man, whereas we wouldn't have been able to do this anyway. (cited in Aysan, 2013, p. 127)

Lacking the drawing skills of the fine art students who produced posters during the French '68, these students at the Revolutionary Poster Atelier may thus seem to lack the mnemonic capacity that the French art students could create. However, by adapting to the more accessible form of the silhouette, they started a visual tradition of martyr commemoration via a stencilled aesthetic. Even today, not only the "martyrs" of that era like Deniz Gezmiş, but

also the Gezi "martyrs," are depicted via the stencil's aesthetics of protest, on posters and banners, as well as the Internet where an actual photograph could as easily be disseminated. This is because the "silhouette" has become *the legible aesthetics of commemoration* in the Turkish protest culture of martyrdom marked by amateur visual production. This is an exemplary case for how a medium of production can become a mnemonic resource. Capturing the aesthetic differences that emerge from professional and amateur production and how the production techniques and conditions shape visual cultures, Artun's explanation also shows us how the much-overlooked question of mediation technique shapes the conditions of cultural memorability.

Conclusion

Most of the time, we assume an iconic photograph is reproduced and remediated because it is iconic. This circularity, however, obscures reproduction and remediation processes that are closely attached to the context in which they are occurring. Memory cultures of activism cannot be isolated from the cultures of production and circulation that generate and accommodate cultural remembrance practices that are specific to activists. In this chapter, I argued that media materialities and the means of cultural production are interrelated and relevant categories of analysis in the study of the memory-activism nexus. With the assumption that cultural production in activism employs amateur techniques and is structured by different material conditions than the conventional field of cultural production, I asked: What makes this "iconic" photograph of Gezmiş so attractive for reproduction and remediation on the part of amateurs who primarily act in the political rather than the cultural field? To answer this question, I first explained the historical context of the original photograph by Konuksever, which is considered "iconic" in Turkish public discourse. Then, I sketched the circulation extent of the original photograph and another anonymous version with the same composition to draw attention to the sometimes contradictory contexts it appeared in. This brief look at the afterlife of the photograph aimed to show that the discursive aspects of visual memory are context specific, and the use of the same visual representation by antagonistic groups might have material reasons. Based on the observation of different remediations of Gezmiş' photograph, I then focused specifically on its remediation as a silhouette for stencilling and contextualized this technique within the amateur and activist culture of production. We saw that independent from their political beliefs, all activists with limited access to material resources and technical

skills operate in the same culture of amateur cultural production, which circumscribes their capacity for visual reproduction.

The chapter argued that the memorability of Deniz Gezmiş' iconic portrait is *facilitated* by its availability for legible and recognizable low fidelity reproduction. It is an effective mnemonic object to use in activism because the composition makes a good silhouette, which complies with the culture of production in Turkish activism. The last section hence drew on the culture of production in Turkish contentious politics, as reflected in the older generation's memories of producing visual representations for claim-making and protest commemoration. I have thus shown that the memorability of the portrait is facilitated by its compatibility with the culture of production, which is structured by the low mnemonic capacity of the older generation of Turkish activists. There is a feedback loop here: The stencil of Deniz Gezmiş communicates dissent partly because it is a stencil, a mediation of a dissenting type; it evokes graffiti, pamphlets, posters, banners, the streets, and, most importantly, the older medial practices which turned into an aesthetic tradition. I have argued that the visual rhetoric of dissent cannot be isolated from the culture of production it is embedded in.

Due to the institutional regulations of cultural production, protest repertoires of mediation primarily incorporate do-it-yourself methods and low fidelity aesthetics. What is intriguing is that this aesthetic of accessibility, in turn, becomes a visual tradition, as seen in the stencilled Gezi "martyrs": the very materiality of commemorative silhouettes imbues the new re-enactments with the symbolism of political martyrdom. The DIY stencil style itself constitutes the aesthetics of activist memory, for commemorating activists required this aesthetics of accessibility before widespread online commemorations. This DIY nature of the cultures of production in activism, however, is largely ignored in the study of the visual aesthetics of protest; many simply lose sight of the materialities that condition the much-celebrated dynamics of visuality and visibility in contentious politics.

Of course, it is not only the principles of organization in composition that makes the arrest photograph of Deniz Gezmiş memorable. The profound cultural afterlife of Gezmiş turned him into a revolutionary icon and the photograph, being an important document of his arrest, belongs to the vast media constellation that shapes the memory of Gezmiş as well as Turkey's contentious past. Capturing a symbolic moment in Turkish history and incorporating the symbolism of the parka facilitate the portrait's memorability on a discursive plane. One could also ask if the frontal framing and the halo provided by the parka aligns the portrait in the visual culture of martyrdom, which might be informed by Islamic, especially

Alevi art. There are many other questions to ask about the cultural value and meaning of this photograph. As Stuart Hall (1997) showed, "the question of meaning arises in relation to all the different moments or practices in our 'cultural circuit'—in the construction of identity and the marking of difference, in production and consumption, as well as in the regulation of social conduct" (p. 4). Visual memory is bound to the entire "circuit of culture," the circuit of representation, identity, production, consumption, and regulation (Hall, 1997; Du Gay, 1997). Within the scope of this essay, I have paid exclusive attention to production, not to prioritize and isolate it, but as a reminder of its function in the "circuit of culture." This essay hence aimed at demonstrating the ways in which the memory-activism nexus can benefit from considering questions beyond representation and identity in the process whereby meaning is made of the past.

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About the Author

Duygu Erbil is a PhD candidate in Comparative Literature at Utrecht University. Her research analyses the cultural afterlife of Deniz Gezmiş through a cultural materialist approach and is part of the *Remembering Activism: The Cultural Memory of Protest in Europe* (*ReAct*) project. (d.erbil@uu.nl)