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Research Article | Araştırma Makalesi

Audiovisual Narratives, Video Activism and Social Representations: Analyzing Rights-Based Digital Filmmaking in Türkiye

Görsel İşitsel Anlatılar, Video Aktivizm ve Toplumsal Temsiller: Türkiye'de Hak Temelli Film Yapımı

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Abstract

The construction of social reality is closely related to ideological structures and cultural representations, which determine how individuals see the world. Ideology works through discourse, media, and symbolic systems, serving to legitimize established narratives or provide opportunities for counter-discourses. Audiovisual narratives are a crucial part of media culture and representation, as they both embed and circulate representations that enter public consciousness. Regardless of the particular form this representation takes –whether it be cinema production, documentary filmmaking, or digitally based storytelling, such narratives are central in mediating social experience. They may help in preserving the existing power distribution but may also be used to limit and challenge power, as well as to focus on producing and reproducing the knowledge of marginalized voices. Therefore, video activism is a powerful method of social issue advocacy that employs audio visual means of storytelling for documenting injustices, raising awareness, and producing change. Since video activism is less susceptible to commercial and political manipulation than traditional mass media, it gives an opportunity to offer more independent and collective narratives, democratizing the production and circulation of social issues. The potential of such initiatives is recognized by the European Union's Sivil Düşün program, which has for many years supported rights-based action in Türkiye, providing resources and expertise to people and collectives striving for justice and equality. Since March 2020, Sivil Düşün-funded CAM broadcasting platform archived 143 films, which implemented 22 human rights subject areas, and provided the communities with more engaging means for interacting with social issues. This study seeks to explore these phenomena by means of thematic content analysis of a CAM film sample to assess the film production around the rights in Türkiye. By mapping these trends, the study provides a framework for social-purpose filmmaking, assessing its potential to contribute to media activism, historical documentation, and public discourse on human rights.

Öz

Toplumsal gerçekliğin inşası, bireylerin dünyayı algılama biçimlerini şekillendiren ideolojik yapılar ve kültürel temsiller ile yakından ilişkilidir. İdeoloji, söylem, medya ve sembolik sistemler aracılığıyla işleyerek egemen anlatıları pekiştirmekte veya alternatif bakış açılarına alan açmaktadır. Medya kültürünün temel unsurlarından biri olan görsel-işitsel anlatılar, toplumsal bilinç üzerinde belirleyici bir rol oynar; bu anlatılar, sinema, belgesel film yapımı ve dijital hikâye anlatıcılığı yoluyla bireylerin deneyimlerini şekillendirir. Bu süreç, mevcut güç yapılarını sürdürebileceği gibi, marjinalleştirilen sesleri görünür kılarak mevcut ideolojik çerçevelere meydan okuyabilir. Bu bağlamda, video aktivizm, adaletsizlikleri belgelemek, toplumsal farkındalığı artırmak ve olumlu değişimi teşvik etmek amacıyla görsel-işitsel hikâye anlatıcılığını kullanan stratejik bir savunuculuk aracı olarak öne çıkmaktadır. Siyasi ve ticari çıkarlarla şekillenen geleneksel kitle iletişim araçlarının aksine, video aktivizm daha bağımsız ve taban örgütlenmesine dayalı anlatılar üreterek toplumsal meselelerin üretim ve yayılma süreçlerini demokratikleştirmektedir. Bu tür girişimlerin gücünü kabul eden Sivil Düşün, Avrupa Birliği tarafından desteklenen bir program olarak uzun yıllardır Türkiye'de adalet ve eşitlik savunusunu amaçlayan birey ve kuruluşlara kaynak ve uzmanlık desteği sunmaktadır. Mart 2020'den itibaren Sivil Düşün'ün dijital yayın platformu CAM, bu destekle üretilen 143 hak temelli filme ev sahipliği yaparak 22 farklı insan hakları alanını görünür kılmakta ve toplumsal meseleler üzerine kamusal katılımı derinleştirmektedir. Bu çalışma, Türkiye'de video aktivizmin rolünü CAM platformundaki film örnekleri

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üzerinden tematik içerik analizi yöntemleriyle incelemektedir. Araştırma, karakter temsilleri, tematik dağılım ve coğrafi kapsam gibi unsurlara odaklanarak hangi hak alanlarının ön plana çıktığını ve hangi alanlarda temsil boşluklarının bulunduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Bu eğilimleri haritalandırarak çalışma, toplumsal amaçlı film yapımı için bir çerçeve sunmakta ve video aktivizmin medya savunuculuğu, tarihsel belgeleme ve insan hakları odaklı kamusal söyleme katkı potansiyelini değerlendirmektedir.

Audiovisual Narratives, Video Activism and Social Representations: Analyzing Rights-Based Digital Filmmaking in Türkiye

The increasing accessibility of digital media has significantly altered the landscape of audiovisual narratives, particularly in the context of rights-based filmmaking and video activism. Since media representations play a critical role in constructing the public discourse in Türkiye, digital platforms offer an additional communicative space for voices that are underrepresented in the mainstream media. This study is focused on the convergence between audiovisual narratives, video activism, and social representations while exploring why and how digital filmmaking functions as an advocacy tool for human rights and social justice.

The structural basis of the social reality is inevitably supported by the power relations communicated through ideological apparatuses such as the media. In their turn, mainstream media, driven by politics and capital, are inclined to reproduce the dominant ideologies by silencing alternative perspectives. Video activism, on the contrary, introduces the counter-narrative framework that places demand for media production in the hands of grassroots movements to document devastating cases of injustice, raise awareness, and advocate for change. This study thus aims to research how video activism functions in Türkiye by analyzing the films available on the CAM digital platform, which supports rights-based filmmaking as one of the European Union-funded initiatives. The thematic content analysis of these films will help to evaluate how different social groups defined in terms of gender, class, ethnicity, migration, sexual orientation, the environment, violence, health, and education are represented. The thematic distribution and location-wise spread of video activism will help to identify the existing patterns of representation and the existing gaps that need to be filled in the future.

The theoretical framework discusses media and representation as a part of academic studies of media. This approach highlights the role of audiovisual narratives in the construction and

reinforcement of ideological aspects. Van Dijk (2003) and Sartori (2004) argue that the media serves as a gatekeeper that decides which social realities to keep on the cutting edge or obscure. Also, Castells (1997) explains the "network society," which has been creating by digital technologies of information flow and civic engagement. The concept of video activism, as defined by Harding (2001), underscores the use of audiovisual media as a political tool, challenging power structures and promoting social change. While numerous studies explore video activism in global contexts, limited research focuses on its application in Türkiye. Existing scholarship on digital platforms as alternative archives (Uricchio, 1995; Fossati, 2012) suggests that online video-sharing spaces allow for a broader spectrum of representation, yet challenges such as sustainability, digital security, and censorship persist. Christie (2023) emphasizes the evolving role of film archives in preserving and democratizing access to audiovisual materials, highlighting the necessity for adaptive archival practices that accommodate diverse narratives, including those emerging from grassroots video activism. Building on these studies, this research aims to provide an empirical analysis of Türkiye's digital video activism landscape.

The study employs a qualitative thematic content analysis methodology to examine a sample of films from the CAM platform. The analysis has three main dimensions. First, the study investigates the character representation in video activism through the identification of the social groups most often depicted and an assessment of the implications of their presence or absence in the films. Second, it explores the distribution of the themes covered in the selected works of video activism and tries to systemize them within defined rights themes, including gender equality, environmental justice, refugee rights, and freedom of expression. The third dimension is the mapping of the regional distribution of video activism in Türkiye to conclude whether some areas are overrepresented while others remain absent. Taken together, these three dimensions would allow for coding the films according to these parameters in order to identify the patterns of rights-based storytelling and evaluate the contribution of digital filmmaking to shaping public discourse about human rights. In summary, the study decodes the films based on those criteria to uncover patterns in rights-based storytelling and evaluate the impact of digital filmmaking on the shaping of public discourses surrounding human rights. The study has the goals to explore the role of video activism in generating alternative media representation in Türkiye; discuss the extent to which digital filmmaking serves as a human rights advocacy tool; determine the gaps in the representation of rights-based audio-visual narratives and propose a future research agenda regarding the influence of digital media on activism and social justice. By mapping trends in rights-based filmmaking, the study offers valuable insights for scholars, filmmakers, and activists seeking to understand and expand the role of digital platforms in advocacy and representation. Ultimately,

it contributes to the broader discourse on media democratization and highlights the potential of digital storytelling as a tool for social transformation.

Ideology and Representation

In the communication environment of the digital age, societies that become acquainted with each other through mass media can only obtain information within boundaries determined by ideological discourses. Due to the ideological nature of discourse, the topics it selects or avoids, which information is obscured or explicitly stated, which meanings are foregrounded, or backgrounded, and which details are defined or left undefined, become decisive. Having control over the production of cultural representations is critically important for the preservation and continuation of social power. Individuals are continuously shaped by ideology throughout their lives, as their perception of the world is influenced from an early age through their native language and modes of interaction. This ideological influence extends across their social relationships, the objects that surround them, societal institutions, different types of media and communication channels and educational narratives (Van Dijk, 2003, p. 22).

Representation helps individuals define the boundaries between themselves and the social structure in which they exist. Representations inherited from the culture of the society individuals belong to are internalized and become integral components of the self. In this way, individuals are shaped through representations related to the world they belong to, and their lives become definable through the figures or forms that dominate that culture and surround social life. It is precisely at this point that the critical ideological significance of the dominant representations of a culture emerges. They play a crucial role in determining how social reality will be constructed —specifically, which figures, and boundaries will dominate in shaping social life and institutions. As Sartori (2004, p. 10) famously states, "The one who sees is at the mercy of the one who shows." This highlights the inherently manipulative nature of visual media, where the power to shape perception lies not only in the hands of the creator but also within the broader social and cultural frameworks that influence how an audience interprets an image. The way visuals are framed, edited, and presented can significantly alter meaning, reinforcing certain narratives while suppressing others. Additionally, the viewer's understanding is shaped by pre-existing social codes, ideological structures, and cultural conditioning, which mediate their interpretation of what they see. These dynamic underscores the influential role of visual media in shaping public discourse, reinforcing dominant ideologies, and even constructing historical and political realities.

Cultural products, including cinematic narratives and video, function like language and other symbolic systems by guiding thought and imprinting themselves on the representations of reality constructed by individuals. Audiovisual narratives incorporate the discourses present in social life, shaping them through cinematographic elements. In doing so, they manifest as one of the cultural representations that, within certain ideological frameworks, actively contribute to the construction of social reality, societal norms, and over time, social memory. The modern world has increasingly become a phenomenon that is primarily "seen" (Jenks, 1995, p. 2).

Video can be utilized for a wide range of audiovisual narratives with varying forms, lengths, and purposes, from feature-length documentaries, short films, and music videos to public service announcements, raw footage, and vlogs.

Video activism, in its broadest definition, involves utilizing the camera with a focus on social benefit, aiming to raise public awareness through the visuals it creates and to contribute to positive social change. Thomas Harding defines a video activist as someone who uses video as a tactical tool to achieve social justice and protect the environment. Harding (2001, p. 1) emphasizes that in the hands of a video activist, a camera can become a powerful political tool to deter police violence, an editing suite can be a mechanism for setting a political agenda, and a video projector can turn into a device for generating mass awareness.

Alongside traditional mass media, the alternative platforms emerging in the digital age have facilitated a transition towards digitally active citizenship, offering new formats for the exchange of information and ideas through video activism. Regardless of their purpose, every internet user contributes to the continuous accumulation of information. For this reason, the internet has rapidly transformed into a social technology that enhances access to information (Hartley, 2008, pp. 6–7).

The transformation of technical equipment in video production, coupled with increased access to widespread and efficient usage, has enabled digital storytelling. As a result, audiovisual narratives uploaded to video platforms have started to become part of representational strategies, not only contributing to grand and official narratives but also diversifying the field of representation. Manuel Castells (1997, p. 15) defines a society shaped by the cultural impact of information technologies as a network society. According to Castells, the network society prioritizes the flow of information and constitutes a global social structure built upon information networks and driven by digital technologies. This structure not only facilitates cultural interactions among individuals but also reshapes the dynamics of consumption and power. When we interpret internet users' participation—driven by their own initiative—as an expression of their desire to represent them-

selves, make their voices heard, and actively contribute to the transformation of traditional media representations, the internet can be seen not merely as a technological advancement but as a social revolution (Bloom, 2013, p. 117).

In the production of meaning in audiovisual narratives, as well as in the reception of messages through codes, ideology plays a crucial role. In this context, the archives formed on video platforms where visual narratives are housed become significant arenas for the conduct of ideological struggles and video activism.

Archives that represent subcultures are shaped by widely used archiving methods, including video, rather than being dictated by political choices, as is the case with official archives. This distinction highlights the advantage of video platforms as archival spaces. Berkhofer (1995, pp. 263–283) argues that diverse perspectives, contradictions, disagreements, and fragmentations allow historical analysis to be approached through multiple explanatory frameworks. Similarly, LeCompte (1981, p. 53) asserts that history belongs to those who write it, emphasizing that modern techniques, including audiovisual records, offer more inclusive and dynamic methods for documenting history.

Historical Roots and Conceptual Approaches to Video Activism

The origins of video activism can be traced back to early forms of political cinema, particularly the practices of Soviet filmmaker Dziga Vertov and the Kinok collective. Vertov's revolutionary vision positioned the camera as an active political agent rather than a passive recording device (Depeli, 2017, pp. 111–114). He disrupted the industrial logic of filmmaking by placing cameras in the hands of workers and peasants emphasizing collective image production without professional mediation (Berensel, 2017, p. 122; Şener, 2018, p. 87). This democratizing gesture anticipated the ethos of contemporary video activism, wherein the production of visual content becomes a form of direct political engagement.

Historically, video activism emerged as a distinct communicative strategy in the 1960s and 1970s, when lightweight video technologies such as the Sony Portapak enabled grassroots movements to document protests and disseminate counter-narratives (Şener & Emre, 2019, p. 205). Movements involving environmentalists, feminists, labor activists, and anti-war protesters integrated video as part of their advocacy and identity-building strategies. The second wave in the 1980s–1990s was marked by the popularization of handheld video cameras and the appearance of landmark events such as the Rodney King incident in 1991, which signaled a turning point in public witnessing and the visual documentation of human rights violations (Widgington, 2015, p. 113;

Şener, 2018, p. 100). The circulation of the 81-second amateur footage catalyzed mass mobilizations and judicial proceedings, indicating the growing political power of citizen-filmed content.

The next wave of video activism coincided with the rise of the internet and social media, transforming practices of production, distribution, and reception. Sousa (2019, p. 190) identifies the 1999 Seattle protests as a pivotal moment when video and online platforms converged, launching "video activism 2.0." In this phase, the ubiquity of mobile technologies, digital editing tools, and streaming platforms enabled broader participation in audiovisual storytelling, leading to new formats such as livestreamed protests, political mash-ups, and collaborative montage videos (Şener, 2018, pp. 88–97).

While there is no universal definition of video activism, several conceptual frameworks offer insight into its communicative and political dimensions. Harding (2001, pp. 1–2) defines it as the tactical use of video for the purposes of social justice and environmental protection. Askanius (2012) emphasizes its counter-hegemonic potential, describing it as a communicative practice that can empower marginalized groups, expose human rights violations, and offer alternative representations. Similarly, Mateos and Gaona (2015, p. 2) conceptualize video activism as a form of audiovisual discourse conducted outside dominant power structures, aimed at resisting discursive oppression. Typologies of video activism further illustrate its diversity. Askanius (2012, 2013) identifies categories such as mobilization videos, testimony videos, documentation videos, archival radical video, and political remix video. Martin and Pisonero (2015, p. 6) offer an alternative schema that includes witness, action, interpretation, identity, and empowerment videos —each reflecting distinct strategies of engagement. These typologies help differentiate between spontaneous documentation and more curated, interpretive content, which may include collaged footage from multiple sources (Michael, 2011).

In the Turkish context, video activism has gained traction particularly after the 2013 Gezi Park protests, which catalyzed a surge in academic interest (Doğanay & Kara, 2014; Özdüzen, 2020; Kotaman & Şener, 2023). Early examples from the 1990s focused on guerrilla television and human rights documentation (Berensel, 2012), while recent scholarship highlights feminist video activism, digital counter-surveillance, and intersectional struggles (Akmeşe & Deniz, 2016; Şener & Işıkman, 2018).[1]

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[1]The mapping of representation patterns in rights-based video activism in Türkiye is the main goal of this study: For this reason, the theoretical literature review has been kept constrained. Yet, for those social scientists desiring a deeper theoretical, ethical, legal, technical and practical examination of video activism, the edited volume by Şener and Işıkman (2018), *Video Aktivizmde Kavramlar, Sorunlar ve Uygulamalar* (*Concepts, Challenges, and Practices in Video Activism*) will likely be a useful resource. The book is among the limited few providing a wide range of topics of crucial significance to the Turkish context with comparable practices from Türkiye and the rest of the world, including but not limited to alternative media, ethical responsibilities, legal frameworks, verification practices and civil society-oriented interventions.

Video activism thus emerges as a hybrid practice rooted in political cinema, experimental art, and social movement media. Its power lies not only in representation but in enabling collective agency, constructing alternative archives, and reshaping the public sphere. By foregrounding lived experience and subaltern narratives, it offers a critical intervention into dominant media discourses and contributes to a democratization of audiovisual culture. All through these, in this study, video activism is approached not only as a mode of visual resistance but also as a tool for documenting grassroots human rights struggles and mapping underrepresented social realities in Türkiye. By focusing on rights-based digital filmmaking through the CAM platform, the research emphasizes video activism's dual role as both a narrative and archival mechanism that amplifies marginalized voices within local socio-political contexts. Drawing from critical media theory and cultural studies, the study conceptualizes video activism as a counter-hegemonic communicative practice that enables subaltern expression, challenges dominant ideologies, and democratizes the means of audiovisual production. Methodologically, this research situates video activism at the intersection of discourse, representation, and advocacy, using thematic content analysis to reveal how digital storytelling facilitates both civic engagement and the formation of alternative public memory. The study highlights video activism not only as a media practice but also as a socially transformative process with the potential to influence public discourse, foster collective agency, and contribute to long-term cultural and political change.

Digital Video Platforms as Archives

The digital age has transformed the ways in which information is stored, managed, and accessed. Digital video platforms enable convenient long-term storage of films and other audiovisual materials in formats that can be accessed, retrieved, and searched effortlessly with computers and other digital devices. By using metadata to systematically organize and search these materials, these platforms improve the discoverability of millions of hours of visual content. Their introduction and development have been pivotal steps towards the preservation and accessibility of millions of hours of audiovisual material, ensuring that the records of culture and history can be accessed and viewed in the future. Serving as digital archives, these platforms eliminate the risk of deterioration and loss of material that traditional film storage often entails. They also eliminate the geographical barrier, allowing people from all over the world to engage with the centuries-old heritage and stories from history that would otherwise be inaccessible. Moreover, with the development of artificial intelligence and machine learning technology, these platforms have become increasingly sophisticated in terms of indexing, tagging and recommending content for individual users. Given their ability to safeguard, organize, and democratize access to audio-

visual content, digital video platforms are poised to play an increasingly crucial role in cultural preservation, education, and historical documentation in the digital age. Their growing influence underscores the need for sustainable digital archiving strategies and continued investment in technological infrastructure to ensure long-term accessibility and integrity of stored materials. Beyond traditional categories such as fictional feature films and documentaries, digital video platforms collect a diverse range of materials, including amateur formats, local television content, amateur videos, and even historical visual archives. As Christie (2023, p. 29) remarks despite often being underfunded and operating under more precarious conditions than national archives, their broader scope allows them to serve as a crucial resource for new forms of visual narratives.

As Uricchio (1995, pp. 256, 260) explains, the recordings of marginalized groups are often excluded from the archival processes of official film and television institutions, while materials reinforcing the dominant narrative are systematically preserved. He draws a parallel between the selective choices made in official history writing and those in archiving. In this context, he underscores the advantages of video-sharing platforms such as YouTube as alternative archives. Unlike official archives shaped by political decisions, these platforms facilitate the representation of subcultures through popular forms of archiving, such as video.

Digital video platforms offer significant advantages over traditional film mediums, particularly in preservation, accessibility, cost efficiency, interactivity, and participatory culture. First and foremost, the above issue applies to secure storage. Physical film is prone to deterioration and loss, while even if not burglary-proof, digital files can be safely stored online or backed up in different ways. This ensures that the materials are preserved and stable for a long time. Digital platforms are also accessible. While physical archives require direct access to them, online files can be accessed from any place globally. This removes territorial restrictions for researchers, filmmakers, and audiences. There is also an option to quickly find video clips using the "search" option, where it is also possible to search by metadata, through keywords, or using the filter tool to narrow a whole range of materials to find a specific one. Looking at the economic aspect, digital is also much cheaper. Physical archives take up space, need to be air-conditioned, and need special treatment. There is less need for this online, and in digital archives, several people can use the same content at the same time. There is no need to distribute anything or duplicate, which is also impractical both physically and financially. Finally, digitized collections, in addition to being more entertaining, engage the user. It is possible to index metadata, make their annotations, features, or incorporated subtitles, and also comfortable recommendation algorithms that anticipate the viewer's use. Users can also upload their content, chat, or create forums. The user is not just

fed with content, but his activity is encouraged. All in all, this democratization of film access and production diversifies access to media archives and allows people to participate in producing cultural heritage and history. With the development of artificial intelligence, machine learning, and cloud computing, digital video will be preserved, sorted, and shared even more effectively. Combining secure storage, continuous access, and user resource, digital video platforms are not only archival or film culture equivalents but also dynamic places such as they alter the way people think about films and record cultural history (Fossati, 2012, pp. 177–184).

Unfortunately, in addition to its advantages, the use of digital video platforms as archives presents a number of challenges. One of the biggest concerns is that the archives will need to be maintained constantly. This will also help avoid the risk of losing archive data in case of technical disruptions or hacker attacks. Sustainable long-term access will require regular updates and secure storage, including regular backup copies to preserve the integrity and originality of digital material. In addition, the digitization process is resource-consumption. These include the high costs for specialized equipment and qualified personnel, which are necessary to process and convert audio-visual materials for preservation and cataloging in the highest quality possible. Thus, these issues require environmentally friendly digital archiving and financial resource strategies to address them (Wengström, 2013, pp. 125-137).

CAM by Sivil Düşün

Sivil Düşün is a program of the European Union available, which supports civil society organizations and activists, by offering in-kind contributions and expert support to rights-based initiatives, and empowering its beneficiaries to implement them efficiently. The program aims to ensure the availability of resources, strengthen the advocacy capacities of individuals and organizations, support the beneficiaries' capacity to act when rights violations are detected, and promote a vibrant and inclusive civil society that can engage with all aspects of political and social life.

Sivil Düşün has been providing this necessary support for years to individual and collective efforts to awareness-raising about rights, documentation of violations, accountability, and community mobilization. Including in-kind support and expert guidance, civil society actors can effectively advocate for various rights-related claims. Since March 2020, CAM, has put these films, produced with the support of Sivil Düşün, into play (CAM, n.d.). In total, films have been produced based on 22 areas of rights. These films lead to more in-depth reflection and demonstrate how these rights are reflected in daily life. At the moment, there are 143 films stored on CAM. This

platform contributes valuable work to the film archive by offering the chance to discover various human rights narratives and amplifying the voice of those who would otherwise be silenced.

The primary research method used in the study is thematic content analysis, which enables the exploration of the audiovisual narratives offered on the CAM platform. To accomplish this, a systematic review is conducted to determine the filmmaking and coding data, which is based on identification of a number of key themes, characters, rights categories, and filming locations. Thematic content analysis is the most suitable instrument to collect the latent and manifest content of the films to detect the common social problems and interpret the subtextual simulation of the ideological framework assumed by the narratives.

This methodological decision is underlain by the research question of the necessity to chart the general representation tendencies that manifest in the broad spectrum of audiovisual material. While on the one hand, the discourse analysis allows for delving deeper into the nuances of each text, a more fitting framework for searching for connections between them might be thematic content analysis. Through the number and variety of films that this research covers, thematic analysis allows a more structured approach to coding, cross-comparing, and generalization of the main patterns. Furthermore, although the conducted analysis is not formal discourse analysis, the coding always remains sufficiently sensitive to the markers of ideology such as representation, subjectivity, or exclusion, which means that it can uncover the hidden discursive links between the narratives.

In conclusion, the methodological approach functions as a tool for a systematic analysis of how video activism from Türkiye deals with a wide range of social issues, as well as dominant and sparse narratives. Based on coding, the content analysis systematically examines the manner in which digital video platforms support rights-focused narratives and offers empirical observations about the interaction between media, activism, and representation. The findings do not only disclose the principal subject of activism and the groups of society portrayed in the films but also serve a valuable insight into the different spatial aspects of video activism. Specifically, the geographic dispersion of this type of video makers underscores the significance of documenting several rights fighting stemming from diverse locations across the country.

Coding was done manually using the qualitative content analysis framework. All the films available in the CAM platform were reviewed, and data were extracted in categories that had been developed a priori, such as character representation, human rights categories, and the geographic distribution of cases. Also, a coding sheet was developed to keep track of recurrent patterns, and multiple codes were assigned to each film when necessary. An inductive approach was used to

identify new themes during the analysis. This manual procedure was highly tailored to the content of audiovisual narratives and allowed for a deeper context-rich understanding of their content; it was also indispensable to catch the nuances of representation in various social and geographic contexts.

Table 1

Number of Films by Character

	Character	Number of Films
1	Women	21
2	Civil Society Activists	20
3	Environmental Activists	15
4	Workers	13
5	Agricultural Workers	9
6	Ethnic Minorities	12
7	Earthquake Victims	8
8	Refugees	7
9	Children	6
10	LGBTQ+ Individuals	5

These areas emphatically help identify certain communities and show which human rights activist receives the most and which the least attention through the characters' frequency representation. The portrayal of different characters does not only put different struggles into the picture for different people but also positions them differently on the activist field.

The most frequently represented character groups in the sample are women and civil society activists. Films that show women are more in number –21- but not far are those that portray civil society activists. This high level of representation suggests an extreme focus on gender in video activism.

The fact that environmental activists (15/20) hold a large place among civil society activists in Türkiye's video activism is an essential fact-based component reflecting the environmental and ecological problems of the country. There are many environmental and ecological issues Türkiye struggles with, such as deforestation, pollution, impact of industrialization, and transformative climatic change. Massive infrastructure projects like dams, mining explorations or developments, and large-scale urbanization have been popular among the public resistances that are usually led by rural communities and supported by environmental activists. Moreover, it is also pertinent to note that the general and global rise of environmental activist movements based on climate change and general sustainability and brought Türkiye activists within the global context. In other

words, environmental concerns in Türkiye are similar for the global planet developments and how activist groups have been emerging for environmental protection causes.

Workers, especially agricultural workers (9/13), also receive considerable representation, which indicates attention to ecological and labor-related concerns. Agricultural workers are often directly affected by environmental changes and policies, such as droughts, deforestation, and industrial farming practices. As environmental activism grows, there is increasing awareness of how ecological issues intersect with the livelihoods of agricultural workers. This overlap between environmental and labor concerns makes agricultural workers key figures in activism focused on sustainability, environmental justice, and rural development. Also, we have to mention that agricultural workers, especially seasonal laborers, often belong to vulnerable groups such as ethnic minorities or migrant workers who face significant socio-economic discrimination. Their marginalization makes them a focus of advocacy and activism aimed at improving labor conditions and addressing structural inequalities.

There is relatively less representation of vulnerable groups such as refugees, children, and LGBTQ+ individuals, with only 5 to 7 films featuring these groups. This could point to the need for more advocacy and visibility for these communities in video activism.

Table 2

Number of Films by Rights Categories

	Rights Category	Number of Films
1	Environmental and Ecological Rights	34
2	Women's Rights and Gender Equality	19
3	Refugee and Asylum Seeker Rights	14
4	Right to Housing	8
5	Cultural Rights	7
6	Right to the City	7
7	Anti-Discrimination and Equality	6
8	Right to Health	5
9	Business and Human Rights	5
10	LGBTQI+ Rights	5
11	Animal Rights	5
12	Children's Rights	4
13	Right to Work, Fair Income, and Union Formation	4
14	Sustainable Rural and Human Development	4
15	Youth Rights	3
16	Disability Rights	2
17	Elderly Rights	2
18	Freedom of Thought, Conscience, and Religion	2

	Rights Category	Number of Films
19	Right to Education and Learning	1
20	Right to Development	1
21	Right to Communication, Freedom of Expression, Media, and Press	1
22	Transparency and Right to Access Information	1

The subjects addressed in video activism reflect the socio-political priorities and human rights struggles within Türkiye. Certain rights categories receive extensive attention, while others remain underrepresented, indicating disparities in advocacy focus and public awareness. The distribution of films across different rights categories provides insight into which issues are most frequently documented and which areas may require greater visibility and activism.

Films focusing on environmental and ecological rights (34 films) and women's rights and gender equality (19 films) dominate the landscape of video activism in Türkiye. This indicates that issues of environmental justice and gender equality are central concerns within the activist community.

Refugee and asylum seeker rights (14 films) also garner significant attention, likely due to Türkiye's geopolitical position and the ongoing refugee crisis.

Other categories, such as health rights, LGBTQ+ rights, animal rights, and anti-discrimination, have relatively lower representation, with 5 or fewer films each. This might suggest that these areas, while recognized, have yet to become major focal points in the broader spectrum of video activism.

Table 3

Number of Films by Region and City

	Region	City	Number of Films	Regional Total
1	Southeastern Anatolia	Diyarbakır	7	32
		Kahramanmaraş	7	
		Adıyaman	6	
		Mardin	4	
		Gaziantep	3	
		Malatya	3	
		Siirt	1	
		Batman	1	
2	Eastern Anatolia	Tunceli	7	24
		Van	6	
		Bingöl	3	
		Iğdır	2	
		Ağrı	2	

	Region	City	Number of Films	Regional Total
		Kars	2	
		Bitlis	1	
		Erzurum	1	
3	Mediterranean	Hatay	7	17
		Adana	4	
		Antalya	3	
		Muğla	2	
		Osmaniye	1	
4	Aegean	İzmir	4	16
		Muğla	4	
		Aydın	3	
		Manisa	3	
		Afyon	2	
5	Marmara	İstanbul	9	11
		Kırklareli	1	
		Çanakkale	1	
6	Black Sea	Samsun	3	11
		Ordu	2	
		Rize	2	
		Artvin	2	
		Karabük	1	
		Düzce	1	
7	Central Anatolia	Ankara	3	6
		Eskişehir	2	
		Konya	1	

The distribution of video activism across Türkiye reflects the socio-political and environmental challenges faced by different regions. The production of rights-based films is not evenly spread across the country, as certain areas with ongoing struggles, historical tensions, or major crises tend to receive greater attention. This uneven distribution highlights both the potential and the limitations of video activism in capturing diverse social realities.

Southeastern Anatolia and Eastern Anatolia lead in terms of film production, with 32 and 24 films respectively. Cities like Diyarbakır (7 films), Tunceli (7 films), and Van (6 films) are prominent, reflecting a focus on regions that experience significant social, political, and environmental challenges.

The February 6th Earthquake significantly shaped the distribution of films in Türkiye's video activism scene, with provinces such as Kahramanmaraş, Hatay, Adıyaman, Gaziantep, and Malatya being central to the narratives of earthquake victims. These regions, already facing socio-economic

challenges, became the focal point for documenting the human impact of the disaster, illustrating the importance of video activism in capturing the stories of survival, resilience, and the long-term process of recovery.

Alongside the Earthquake, the intersection of ethnic identity with broader issues of human rights, cultural preservation, and political advocacy makes Diyarbakır a focal point for films that aim to not only reflect the local experience but also contribute to the global discourse on minority rights and social justice.

Marmara, especially Istanbul (9 films), also plays a key role, which is unsurprising given its status as Türkiye's cultural and media hub. Other regions like Central Anatolia and the Black Sea have lower overall film production, suggesting either fewer activist initiatives in these areas or less representation in video activism narratives.

Concluding Remarks

In the realm of audiovisual narratives, video activism, social representations, cultural ideology, and digital video platforms, media emerges as a powerful force in shaping and transforming social discourse. The correlation between image and reality retained in the narratives studied above allows for the production of deeper meaning, question the status quo of dominant cultural ideologies, and articulates a voice for the marginalized. The very nature of the digital facilitates enables the documentation of movies, fostering more diverse narratives and countering mainstream media representations that are often selective and influenced by political ideologies. Consistent with previous findings, the highlighted cases demonstrate the importance of feminist movements and environmental struggles that have profoundly influenced video activism in Türkiye, especially in the context of post-Gezi Park protests (Kotaman & Şener, 2023; Şener & Emre, 2019). Furthermore, Fossati (2012) and Uricchio (1995) reading of digital platforms as participatory archives where overlooked archives are brought back to life to shape alternative historical memories is supported by the analysis of such sites as CAM. First, the video activism of LGBTQ+ persons and refugees revealed the importance of such an alternative platform, proving that Askanius (2012), Doğanay & Kara (2014) conclusions as even the media explicitly oriented on alternative topics such as CAM may and do marginalize certain themes. Moreover, the regional concentration of the number of works focused on Southeastern and Eastern Anatolia corresponds with the past of Türkiye, in which the combination of ethnic awareness, activism, and visual medium was frequently observed (Berensel, 2012; Akmeşe & Deniz, 2016).

The ability to document human rights struggles, environmental movements, and social justice issues is one of the most important contributions of video activism. This is because these dimensions of social life are not often captured by traditional media or are simply ignored, negating their existence. Video platforms create an epistemic alternative – a counter-memory, which provides an opportunity to resist socially dominant discourses, drawing strength in the non-represented. Based on the findings of this study and the CAM platform analysis, the study found that women, environmental activists, and civil society movements remain central to the legalization landscape in Türkiye. Thus, the subject of the emerging consciousness from the presented data is that gender equality and ecological struggle remain crucial.

The study also underlines the potential role of digital platforms as extensive archives that contribute to the long-term preservation of archival material. It is noteworthy that platforms such as CAM, as a repository of rights-based filmmaking, contribute not only to media activism but also historical documentation. In this way, current and future generations will have access to human rights narratives. However, the use of digital archives also implies certain risks, including questions of sustainability, digital data security, and the risk of censorship. The underrepresentation of specific groups, solemnizing refugees, LGBTQ+ people, or children and young people, proves certain opportunities for expanding the scope of video activism.

The general practice of the regional distribution of video activism content was another key finding of the study. The regional consolidation of films in the Southeastern and Eastern Anatolia regions, which, among other things, have historically been associated with social and political resistance, is a vivid example of how ethnic identity and economic vulnerability are closely linked with rights issues. The case of the February 6th Earthquake demonstrates how video activism can document the crisis and demonstrate human rights abuse and struggle. At the same time, the limited production of films in such regions as the Black Sea and Central Anatolia suggests potential inequalities in the access to video activism content and representation.

As it may be seen from the examples of Türkiye, there is considerable room for further diversification, both thematically and geographically, of rights-based video activism. It should be improved, for more content should be covering topics such as disability rights, freedom of expression, and labor rights. Production in underrepresented regions should increase to boost the impact of video activism further. As digital technologies develop, video activism should evolve as well, incorporating new media tools such as artificial intelligence, interactive storytelling, and immersive experiences to increase its efficacy and reach.

To develop further in the context of Türkiye, rights-based video activism needs a prioritized focus on multidisciplinary strategies that bridge academic research, civil society promotion, and policy advocacy. From an academic perspective, more interdisciplinary research integrating human rights law and communication studies, sociology, digital archiving studies, affecting theory, discourse analysis, and digital ethnography will be needed. Additionally, film, media, and communication departments at universities should be encouraged to promote rights-based filmmaking in their curriculum to foster media literacy and knowledge of production among their students.

The continued success of video activism from the civil society and policy perspectives demands specialized and lifelong support including enriched training programs, technical support systems, and funding channels for ant experts of various grassroots activists. Responsible organizations need to develop teaching materials on efficient and ethically sound video narratives, digital freedoms and abuse, and stakeholder representation for this area, particularly for activists who work with predisposed groups. Besides, open access to inexpensive software and secure digital spaces would make it simpler to enter the public sphere. Policy should also tackle concerns like editing and monitoring so that digital sites remain secure forums for advocacy. Through cross-functional integration between academia, civil society, and public institutions, Türkiye would create a more efficient and representative ecosystem.

In conclusion, this study centers on the digital video platforms' transformative possibility to document, preserve, and enlarge human rights activities. As digital activism grows, distant and independent open media places would play an essential role in allowing diverse voices – most crucially, the minorities' voices – to structure public influences. Further inquiries could look at the many films' impact on audiences and comparative previews with video activism in other systems, providing an increase insensitive and understanding of the global consequences of digital rights-specific filmmaking.

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