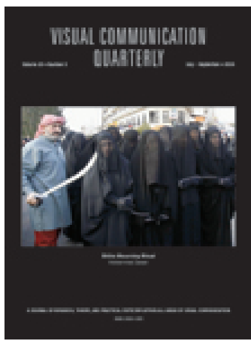

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Visual Communication Quarterly

ISSN: 1555-1393 (Print) 1555-1407 (Online) Journal homepage: http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/hvcq20

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To cite this article: Tae-Sik Kim (2015) Defining the Occupy Movement: Visual Analysis of Facebook Profile Images Posted by Local Occupy Movement Groups, Visual Communication Quarterly, 22:3, 174-186, DOI: 10.1080/15551393.2015.1069192

To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15551393.2015.1069192

Published online: 16 Dec 2015.

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Defining the Occupy Movement: Visual Analysis of Facebook Profile Images Posted by Local Occupy Movement Groups

This visual study analyzes a total of 188 profile images posted on local Occupy group Facebook pages in order to identify how images adopted by local movement groups reflect the characteristics of the movements. By analyzing text, image, and color components of profile images, this study finds that certain design concepts and components are widely shared by local Occupy groups, which reflects the representational characteristic of the Occupy movement as a networked movement. Also, the Occupy Movement can be seen as an extension of traditional social movements because of a wide adoption of design components that are historically symbolic images and colors of social movements.

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Throughout 2011, people observed angry protestors around the world demonstrating for "better" living conditions. The Tunisian revolution at the dawn of the year was the first mass civil resistance event, and it was followed by unrest in North Africa and the Middle East. The movement begun by Tunisia is now known as *the Arab Spring*. On the other side of the earth where the political economic context was remarkably different from the aforementioned region, a historic mass movement erupted with the famous catchphrases "Occupy Wall Street" and "We Are the 99%." The slogans and forms of mass protest originated in New York City and soon spread to urban centers throughout the world. Even though the Arab Spring and the Occupy Movement do not share political goals or socioeconomic contexts, the two movements have commonly adopted social network sites such as Twitter and Facebook in spreading issues and recruiting participants (Skinner, 2011). As already explored in many academic articles, new communication technology has played an important role in creating networks among citizens and gaining international attention and support (e.g., Cottle, 2011). In particular, the Occupy Movement, which first broke out in one of the most technologically advanced countries in the world, effectively utilized Facebook. Over 400 Facebook group pages were set up by various levels of Occupy groups in the United States in the early stages of the movement (Caren & Gaby, 2011).

Facebook is currently a leading social network site, with more than 1 billion users around the world (Tate, 2012). Like other social network sites, there are a variety of features that strengthen networks of users on Facebook, allowing its users to reveal their identities and to share everyday stories, information, and multimedia content. Among the many features on Facebook, the profile image, which is always visible on a certain user's or group's page, timeline, search results, and friend suggestions, is effective in presenting the identity of a certain user or group. While there have been multiple studies on identity display and profiles on Facebook (e.g., Grasmuck, Martin, & Zhao, 2009), little is known specifically about the semiotic roles of profile images. Moreover, no research has paid exclusive attention to group profile images on Facebook. For recent social movements, Facebook is more than a mere network of people; it is not only the recruiting center of a movement but is also the main media outlet for communicating with people. A profile image of a movement group on Facebook is likely to be the face of its communication center (Juris, 2012). Therefore, this study presumes that profile images provide useful data for understanding the orientations, purposes, and visions of a social movement. The visual analysis begins with such questions as, What kinds of images were displayed on the Facebook group pages of the Occupy Movement?, and How do those images represent the movement? In order to

provide a full range of visual understandings, this study (a) categorizes text, image, and color components of profile images; (b) interprets symbolic meanings of design concepts and components; and (c) discusses the way these images represent and define the movement.

Facebook and Local Occupations

TIME named "the Protester" its Person of the Year in 2011, highlighting the ubiquitous social movements against political economic regimes across the world (Anderson, 2011). As soon as the first Occupy encampment in New York City began, the forms and issues of Occupy Wall Street were taken up by local groups of people in 82 countries; the occupation in Boston was called for on September 27, 2011 (Juris, 2012), and the movement emerged in Sydney, Australia, in early October 2011 (Jackson & Chen, 2012). "Occupy" quickly became a common name of worldwide encampment sites that shared the famous slogan "We Are the 99%." On the other hand, the movement was also strongly grounded locally, raising a variety of local political economic issues, as was shown in the Oakland general strike (Wells, 2011).

Communication among social network sites played a crucial role in making this globally networked local movement possible. In fact, recent studies have shown that the movement could not have become a worldwide event without social network sites such as Facebook and Twitter (e.g., DeLuca, Lawson, & Sun, 2012). Along with hashtags (#) on Twitter, user-generated groups and events pages on Facebook were widely adopted by organizers and activists in the movement (Gaby & Caren, 2012). A user-generated group is one of popular features on Facebook by which people can form a group with either open membership or closed membership. Studies on Facebook groups formed by politically active people, such as members of the Coffee Party and the Tea Party (Mascaro, Novak, & Goggins, 2012) and supporters of presidential candidates (Woolley, Limperos, & Oliver, 2010), commonly reveal that a Facebook group is an effective feature for mobilizing people and organizing political events. In the United States alone, over 400 Occupy-related Facebook group pages were established in the early stages of the movement, and most of them were set up by specific local occupations (Caren & Gaby, 2011). According to Caren and Gaby (2011), 66% of Facebook activity, such as posting and commenting, was happening on local group pages in October 2011. Therefore, it is important to understand Occupy Movement group activities on Facebook in order to comprehend characteristics of the movement. Nevertheless, few studies have been conducted to analyze Facebook Occupy groups, with the exception of an analysis of postings on Facebook Occupy group pages (Gaby & Caren, 2012).

Like an individual Facebook user, a group can build its own profile information, including a profile image. While all members can individually post their own messages and multimedia content on the wall of a group page, administrators have the exclusive right to build the front page, which is always exposed to other Facebook users. Administrators who initially found or joined a certain local Occupy group strategically built the group's profile information, including profile images, in order to impress users who might be interested in the group. In the case of a closed group on Facebook, the profile image plays a more important role in informing nongroup members about the characteristics of the group because the image, along with the name of the group, is the only information nongroup members have in order to form an impression on their first approach. In their analysis of posts on Occupy group pages on Facebook, Gaby and Caren (2012) pointed out that visual media, such as pictures and videos, were powerful in gaining movement support. This finding supports the assertion that profile images, as the first visual representations of local Occupy groups, are important objects to analyze. Facebook users rely most heavily on profile images to create impressions about their own personalities (Ivcevic & Ambady, 2012), a finding supported by previous research arguing that profile images give accurate cues for predicting people's personal traits (Rule & Ambady, 2008). Although no study has been conducted to specifically analyze profile images on Facebook group pages, this study assumes that each local Occupy group posted its own profile image to attract Facebook users, to express issues and orientations of its movement, and to stress its identity in relation to its location.

Visual Images in Social Movements

Pictorial images have long been used by protesters to deliver their messages to the public. One of the important functions of street art, including posters and graffiti, is the mobilization of social movements by tapping into human emotions and gauging political sentiment. Artwork also makes it possible for participants to be active in a political event (Chaffee, 1993). With the emergence of various electronic media technologies, political communication in civil society has relied more on images, such as iconography, to draw public attention to issues

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Figure 1 A ballerina dancing on the Wall Street bull.

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and events (Szasz, 1994). In fact, DeLuca (2005) called contemporary social movements image events, stressing that performative protests produce images to be disseminated by mass media. These images generate a form of counterargument and compel the public to empathize with protesters (Deluca & Peeple, 2002).

The Occupy Movement was first publicized not only by the 99% rhetoric but also by the famous image of a ballerina dancing on the Wall Street bull (Figure 1). Along with signs and banners conveying various messages of the movement, posters were produced intensively by participatory artists. These images were rapidly shared by users of Facebook, Twitter, and blogs; Daily Kos, a famous progressive blog, introduced poster images produced in the early phase of the movement. Occupy Posters, a Facebook group launched in the very beginning of the movement, posted and shared numerous poster images, along with various informational graphics. In the world of Facebook, the front page of an individual page or a group page is called the wall. Just as protesters post political posters and draw graffiti on public walls in the street to deliver their messages to the public, online administrators of activists groups post digitized images of posters and informational graphics on their virtual walls. Previous studies on image use in social movements have explored the reciprocal relationships between political visual images and communication technologies (e.g., DeLuca, 2005; Szasz, 1994). According to Szasz (1994),

> Political communication increasingly relies on the production and display of political icons rather than symbols, iconography rather than rhetoric, . . . because it is assumed that displays of spectacular images are the only way to break through the indifference of the intended audience. (pp. 62–63)

Framing is an important process of producing meaning for both participants and observers (Snow & Benford, 1988, in Adams, 2002), and various studies suggest that framing plays a crucial role in attracting participants (e.g., Benford, 1993). Most of these studies rather exclusively focus on formal ideological pronouncements such as speeches; however, the study of images is more effective in making meaning about social movements (Adams, 2002; Szasz, 1994), which are sites for creating new identities, ideologies, and social orientations (Friedman & McAdam, 1992). Visual images as cultural signs can define the common shared identities of activists and the long-term orientations of movements.

Visual Analysis

As a social movement, the Occupy Movement produced various kinds of communicative signs, such as slogans and symbols, to fully communicate with the public. As reviewed earlier, communication in a social movement is important for recruiting new participants and persuading the mass public. Various communicative signs, including visual images used in social movements, need to promote culturally agreed-upon meanings in order to optimize persuasive effect, so effective visual images and texts must be based on prior experiences and cultural codes (Kristeva, 1980). Therefore, cultural understandings of images become important theoretical ground for analyzing the sociohistorical meanings, purposes, and orientations of social movements.

In semiotics, a symbolic image is neither an object nor an independent entity. Instead, it is subject to interpretation grounded in history and past experiences. Barthes (1977) introduced the notion of "social usage," claiming that every concept of a word is subject to how a sender uses it. Based on the understanding of the central role of history in shaping social usage, this study regards history and culture as the structure operating the sign system in a given society.

According to Barthes (1977), pictorial images impose meanings directly and "become a kind of writing as soon as they are meaningful" (p. 110).

Peirce's model of signs (1991) can be useful in interpreting these images by systemically looking at their iconic, indexical, and symbolic significances: An iconic image conveys a message with its resemblance to the signified object; an indexical image indicates the causal relationship between the image and the reality; and a symbolic image represents meanings of the reality based on social norms, customs, and contexts. Therefore, the semiotic interpretation of images may reveal both what the image producers aim to communicate and how the audiences perceive the images. Because symbols carry "a history of representation, association, and relation" (Barry, 1997, p. 119), the interpretation of Facebook group profile images may give us insights into how the activists of the Occupy Movement historically and culturally located their social movement in contemporary society.

Although the Occupy Movement was initiated on Wall Street, New York, the issues and practices of the movement were quickly adopted by local activist groups. While a local group may locate its position as an extension of a global movement, it may also develop its own local agenda based on local sociohistorical contexts. Visual images utilized by local groups as their profile images on a communicative platform, therefore, were expected to signify multiple meanings, such as local activism, localized global activism that shared issues with the Occupy Wall Street Movement, and conventional social dissident movements. Grounded in these historical and cultural understandings of visual images in social movements, this study aims mainly to find answers to these research questions:

> RQ1: What kinds of text and image components were utilized as Facebook group profile images by local Occupy groups?
>
> RQ 2: How do the images represent characteristics and orientations of the Occupy Movement?

In order to provide meaningful answers to these questions, this study categorized individual components in the profile images and analyzed connotative meanings of the categorized components. Once analyzed as meaningful units, semiotic codes of the image components were expected to explain how the Occupy Movement was possibly defined by images posted by local groups.

Data Collection

The investigator first conducted data collection by using the Facebook search bar and typing the word occupy. The data collection was continued by clicking "see more results" more than 20 times until no new group page was listed. Selective sampling (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973) was used to collect data matching the framework of this study. Since this study aimed at analyzing images used by local Occupy groups, topical Occupy group pages like Occupy Food were excluded. Statewide and nationwide group pages were also excluded from the study in order to balance the level of groups. A total of 191 local Occupy group pages were collected on January 25, 2013. The investigator again visited each of the 191 Occupy group pages 15 days after the first data collection in order to identify profile images that had been used only temporarily by groups. Three profile images were excluded from the study, and thus a total of 188 profile images posted by local Occupy groups on Facebook were finally selected as the study sample.

This study employed semiotic visual analysis that was expected to give answers to the two most important questions of semiotics: What is represented?, and What is hidden in images? (Van Leeuwen, 2001). However, this study also provided frequency data for each component in order to help readers categorically understand the design components of profile images. While this basic content analysis procedure was mainly aimed at identifying denotative elements of collected images, the categorization also allowed the investigator to interpret meanings of the common uses of certain design components. Two research assistants cross-checked the categorized design components in order to avoid missing any important information.

Findings

Text Components

There were only 19 profile images that did not contain any text component (Table 1). Most texts on profile images denoted messages indicating the characteristics and orientations of the movement. However, some text components were combined with other text and image components to create symbolic meanings. Over 70% of the collected images contained the word occupy (138 items). A total of 116 items included the name of a city, which was actually part of the name of a group, such as Occupy Cleveland (Figure 2-1).

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Table 1 Text Components

Features	Number of Items
Images with "Occupy"	138
("Occupy" only)	5
("Occupy" & city name)	116
(with "Occupy Together")	14
(Others)	3
Images without "Occupy"	31
Images with only city name without "Occupy"	1
Images without text	19
Total number of images	188
*(Images with the 99% slogan)	36
*(Images with the name of city)	123

*Separately counted numbers regardless of other components.

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The word occupy and the name of a city delivered the indexical meaning of the image as a profile image of a local Occupy group. The word occupy was also symbolically used to express activism. The word was centrally located on a symbolic image of one city, the coat of arms of Perth, while the Occupy Binghamton group used the text Occupied instead of Occupy, overlapped on the official seal of the city (Figure 2-2). The word occupy in these cases not only defined their identities as local Occupy groups but also sent a strong message of their activism by using the literal meaning of occupy.

Although the Occupy Movement, called Occupy Wall Street, was initiated in New York City, the slogan Occupy Together was quickly adopted by participants in the movement, signifying that the meaning of the movement was not confined to New York or the United States (Waldram, 2011). It was first used as a Twitter tag and as the domain name of a sort of headquarters website, occupytogether.org, listing ongoing actions and issues in the world (Czaja, 2011). The phrase Occupy Together used in a profile image simply denoted the identity of the group. At the same time, however, this shared use of the phrase symbolically stressed that the group was in an extension of the networked movement. For example, the Occupy Bratislava group used its profile image with the slogan Occupy Together and a map of the Slovak Republic indicating the location of Bratislava (Figure 2-3). Although this image clearly indicated the geographical location of Bratislava, it referenced the design concept of the Occupy Together poster (Figure 2-4). Therefore, the profile image of the Bratislava Occupy Movement group not only signified its locality but also identified itself as part of the networked movement.

"We Are the 99%," one of the most popular political slogans of the Occupy Movement (Weinstein, 2011), was also used in many profile images (36 items). The number 99% (or the slogan "We Are the 99%") delivered both symbolic and indexical meanings of the movement. By contrasting the number 99 to the number 1, the slogan symbolically emphasized economic inequality, and most people who were interested in the movement could identify themselves with this number (Smucker, 2011). The rhetoric of 99% was more symbolic than factual, highlighting economic conditions and making people feel related to one other. On the other hand, because of its prominence, the slogan referred to the Occupy Movement itself. For example, the Occupy Brisbane group used a picture of protesters gathered in front of a banner with the slogan "We Are the 99%" for its profile image (Figure 2-5). Although there was no other image component indicating its relation to the Occupy Movement, the banner in the image conveyed the identity of the group to Facebook users.

Although a total 123 profile images indicated the names of cities, the profile image of Occupy Kingston was the only one that did not include the word occupy. One interesting profile image signified multiple meanings by using textual components; the profile image of Occupy Orange County (Figure 2-6) used the symbolic image of an orange, which is associated with the name of the county, and on the orange was the slogan Stop the Squeeze. This phrase was analogically used with the innuendo of juicing the orange to demand the end of economic inequality.

Figure 2 (2-1) Cleveland, OH, USA; (2-2) Binghamton, NY, USA; (2-3) Bratislava, Slovak Republic; (2-4) Occupy Together; (2-5) Brisbane, Australia; (2-6) Orange County, CA, USA.

Figure 3 (3-1) El Paso, TX, USA; (3-2) Tulsa, OK, USA; (3-3) London, UK; (3-4) Norman, OK, USA; (3-5) Memphis, TN, USA; (3-6) Los Angeles, CA, USA; (3-7) San Francisco, CA, USA; (3-8) Santa Barbara, CA, USA; (3-9) Fresno, CA, USA; (3-10) Plymouth, UK.

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Image Components

Local images. A total of 53 items included image components symbolically or directly referring to the cities in which their groups were grounded (Table 2). Local symbolic images were the most popular components, followed by iconic images of cityscapes and local maps. There were different kinds of symbols, such as an emblem of the city (Figure 3-1), a representative monument (Figure 3-2), and a famous local logo (Figure 3-3), which all indicated the locations of the groups by providing symbolic cues. In case of Occupy Norman, the Route 66 road sign was used to symbolize the location of the group (Figure 3-4). However, the image was upside down, transforming the number 66 to 99, representing the slogan “We Are the 99%.” In this case, the symbol had a double connotation, indicating the orientation as well as the location of the group.

Iconized local cityscapes, such as silhouettes of cities, were also often used as important components of profile images to stress groups’ localities. The iconized cityscape could easily be recognized by local people, but the iconic image was not used only to represent the locality. For example, Occupy Memphis used a profile image composed of an illustration of pyramid, a famous structure in the city (Figure 3-5). Although the pyramid on the image was an iconic sign representing the city, the image component also delivered an Occupy Movement message by contrasting the small, black top of the pyramid and its large, white base. Also, the text 99% explained the double meaning of the pyramid. In addition, sharing a design concept with other groups was another way to signify the meaning of the networked movement. Occupy groups located in three California cities, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Santa Barbara (Figure 3-6–3-8), shared the same design concept involving one iconic local structure, the word occupy, and the acronym of the city. Other than these three cities, most profile images designed with silhouette images of cityscapes conveyed similar impressions to viewers with black iconized images, the conspicuous text of Occupy, and the name of the city.

Another way to emphasize local group status was by using the image of a local or national map on a profile image. While Occupy groups in the United States mainly used state maps along with the locations of cities on maps (Figure 3-9), groups in other countries like New Zealand and the United Kingdom used national maps indicating certain locations (Figure 3-10). These maps on profile images indexically informed Facebook users about the locations of the groups. As explained earlier, the iconic image of a map was initially used by Occupy Together. Therefore, it can be said that these groups shared the design concept, which was widely known to the public, while reflecting their localities.

Table 2 Image Components

Features	Number of Items	Features	Number of Items
Local	53	Protester	34
(Local symbol)	25	Clenched fist	24
(Iconic cityscape)	12	Anticapitalism	6
(Local map)	9	Guy Fawkes	6
(Local scenery)	6	Environmental	4
(Others)	1	Hands	4
Nation	18	Red patch	4
		No image	20

Note. Those that were composed with multiple image components were counted multiple times.

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Images of dissidence. There were mainly three kinds of image components stressing the social activism of the Occupy groups on Facebook. First, protesters were commonly used as a central image component, reflecting activism. While 23 profile images were composed of photographic images of protesters and occupations, another 12 images contained iconic images depicting protesters. Photographic images captured at the actual scenes of mass protests and occupations were also strategically used to signify multiple purposes of the movement groups. For example, although the profile image of Occupy Vienna was composed of a single photographic image without any text or other image components, the famous statue Reiterstandbild Erzherzog Karls was located in the center of the image along with protesters, denoting the location of the group (Figure 4-1). On the other hand, the Occupy Dayton group used a photographic image of protesters that included a man wearing a Guy Fawkes mask (Figure 4-2), a symbolic image of dissidence that reinforced the meaning related to the orientation of the group. As Barthes said (1977), these objects in photographs constituted elements of signification.

A clenched fist was another popular image component reflecting the traditional meaning of social activism; it was centrally placed in 24 profile images (Figure 4-3). It is generally known that the clenched fist originated in the Weimar Republic and was quickly adopted by communists in Germany, and the image was widely used by the Popular Front in France and during the Spanish Civil War (Korff, 1993). According to Korff (1993), the image of a clenched fist was symbolically adopted by the Red Front in Germany to distinguish their radical movement from the social democratic labor movement (p. 117). Therefore, a clenched fist came to symbolize radical political movements, especially leftist groups, in the early 20th century in the Western world. In the late 20th century, civil rights activists in the United Sates actively adopted the image, symbolizing resistance to the status quo (Goodman, 2012) Also, in 1969 Socialist International adopted the combination of a clenched fist and a red rose as its official logo (Sawer, 2007). Although the image has been occasionally used by white supremacists in the Western world, it was adopted by left-leaning activists and groups throughout the last century.

A total of six Occupy Movement groups on Facebook used a Guy Fawkes mask as the main image component of their group profile images. The Guy Fawkes mask, which was illustrated by David Lloyd in Alan Moor's graphic novel V for Vendetta, became widely known because of the film of the same title in 2006. Once demonized in the United Kingdom, Guy Fawkes has come to symbolize dissidence in pop cultural products, and this symbol was actively adopted by the new social movement. The Guardian called it "the face of protest in 2011," and many protesters in Occupy movements around the world wore the same mask (Jones, 2011). Although the mask was hardly grounded in history, the new meaning created together by cultural products and wide use by protesters was quickly shared by people around the world. Adopting this meaning, for example, Occupy Paris (Figure 4-4) used the image of the mask and the image of the Eiffel tower together with no accompanying text component to identify itself as a local dissident movement group.

Other image components. While those symbolic images of dissidence referenced historical and cultural meanings, some image components like the charging bull on Wall Street and a photographic image of a bank more directly expressed the main issue raised by the Occupy Movement (Figure 4-5). The charging bull as a symbol of Wall Street, the symbolic center of

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Figure 4
(4-1) Vienna, Austria; (4-2) Dayton, OH, USA; (4-3) Akron, OH, USA; (4-4) Paris, France; (4-5) Durham, NC, USA; (4-6) Lubbock, TX, USA; (4-7) Lancaster, PA, USA; (4-8) Miami, FL, USA.

global capitalism, was significant for the movement: The Occupy Movement was initiated with the name of Occupy Wall Street; the first occupation was held in Zuccoti Park, located on Wall Street; and Wall Street is the center of financial capitalism, which is targeted as the main culprit in the 99% problem.

On the other hand, famous symbolic signs like the olive branch, the peace sign, and the V sign created with two fingers were also placed on some profile images (Figure 4-6). These images all have clear historical references and have been widely used in various social events to signify the ends of conflicts. Thus, the use of these signs on profile images was interpreted to express a desire for resolving conflicting socioeconomic situations. In addition, images reflecting environmental messages were used by four groups. Although the environment was not a main issue of the Occupy movement, the message of the green movement, which was recognized as an important contemporary social movement, was adopted to broaden the scope of the Occupy movement (Figure 4-7).

Some profile images were composed of other image components that delivered the multiple meanings of the movement. For example, the Occupy Miami Facebook group used a profile image composed of four image components; seeing the profile image, a user could identify the location with a palm tree, the characteristics with a clenched fist and red patch, and the orientation of the movement with a UN logo-like symbol featuring an azimuthal projection and an olive branch (Figure 4-8).

Color Components

Red and black were the two most dominant colors, strengthening the semiotic meanings of other text and image components. While 44 profile images were either red or black only, 65 were both (Table 3). The two colors were also combined with other colors, such as blue or yellow, and some were full color. More important, red and black were the most common colors for central text and image components. For example, the most common text component, Occupy, was usually red or black (85 items) or was white on a red or black background (18 items). In addition, 20 out of the 24 clenched fists used in profile images were red or black.

In the history of social movements, activists and organizers have often adopted various red and black logos because “red and black are passionate colors, conveying emotions of revolution, death, and violence” (Chaffe, 1993, p. 6). The history of red in social movements is traced back to the Jacobin tradition of the French Revolution. Later, this color more exclusively symbolized proletarian activism during a series of revolutions in 1848, with the red flag symbolizing labor movements (Korff, 1993). Since then, red has

Table 3 Color Components

Features	Number of Items	Features	Number of Items
Mainly Black	62	Multidominant Colors	34
(black only)	31	(black & red)	23
(with red)	24	(red & blue)	9
(with other colors)	7	(others)	2
Mainly Red	32	Full Color	50
(red only)	11	(full-color photo)	29
(with black)	18	(photo with red stress)	8
(with other colors)	3	(others)	13
		Others	10
		Total	**188**

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been widely adopted by left-leaning political groups, events, and states, such as the Paris Commune in 1871, the Red Army of the Soviet Union, and the Five-Star Red Flag of the People's Republic of China. In the realm of social movements, the color black was initially associated more with anarchism than with Communism in the 19th century. Black was once adopted as the color of the Fascist Movement in Italy and was subsequently adopted by fascists in other countries like the United Kingdom and Germany (Sawer, 2007). Despite the political discordance signified by black, it has historically connoted radical activism and has been associated with radical groups, such as the Black Panthers in the 1960s United States. The Occupy groups also often used red and black to produce posters widely exposed to the public, so the common color composition of red and black became very visible anywhere there were Occupy sites, including the Internet. Although red and black were widely used by local Occupy groups as the color components of their Facebook profile images, the two colors did not specifically symbolize the Occupy Movement, unlike recent social movements that were symbolized by colors, such as the Orange Revolution in 2004 Ukraine and the Umbrella Revolution (Yellow) in 2014 Hong Kong.

Other than red and black, green, yellow, and blue were used as the main color components of a few profile images. Some of those represented local symbolic colors instead of delivering political messages. For example, the Occupy Lexington group used blue, which is the symbolic color of the University of Kentucky located in Lexington, as the main color of its profile image.

Discussion

Findings of this study are rather obvious because the data were collected from local Occupy groups on Facebook. A majority of local Occupy groups used profile images designed with text and image components that both explicitly and implicitly showed groups' localities. However, most groups not only applied local-related components to their profile images but also jointly used other text, image, and color components to signify multiple meanings reflecting multifaceted orientations of the movement. To sum up the findings, this study mainly discusses two distinct characteristics of the Occupy Movement represented through the uses of visual images in online communications.

A Networked Movement

As reviewed before, the Occupy Movement has been a worldwide event. Mass protests held in cities around the world have shared issues, slogans, and methods of recruitment. While the Occupy Movement has often been called a global movement (Anderson, 2011), it has also been typified as a locally networked movement (Uitermark & Nicholls, 2012) because often local groups of people have held daily events in their own locales concerning specified local issues. These different levels of the movement were harmonized by a network, facilitated mainly by various online communication tools. Facebook profile images of online Occupy groups also effectively reflected the characteristics of the networked movement.

A large number of local Occupy groups shared various design concepts and components with other groups. Although there was no official headquarters of this worldwide movement, several websites built by anonymous groups of people played central roles in distributing these concepts and components. The Occupy Wall Street website (http://occupywallst.org) has been active as a kind of symbolic online center for the Occupy Movement since the beginning of the movement; many text and image components and color

combinations of profile images found in this study were originally posted in this site. Because of its originality, along with its role as a symbolic center, the site might be regarded as the main supplier of various informational and practical sources to local activists. The Occupy Together website (http://www.occupytogether.org) also played a key role in defining the Occupy Movement by providing such information as how to mobilize people and how to make the movement more visible, although the site never claimed to be the headquarters of the Occupy Movement. Occupy Together was a portal site that linked users to a variety of Occupy-related information sources, such as Occupy Design (http://occupydesign.org). Because all these websites were linked to their own Facebook and Twitter accounts, contents posted on the web could be widely disseminated to an unspecified public.

While some local Occupy groups on Facebook designed profile images based on their own designs, many others borrowed and modified design concepts and components from various visual images originally posted on Occupy Together and Occupy Design. It is possible to interpret this borrowing to mean that a limited pool of personnel in a local group made borrowing necessary. However, using shared images might also be effective as a way for local groups to impress viewers because of the images' repeated exposure in media and on the Internet. In addition, local groups symbolically shared issues, orientations, and ideologies of the Occupy Movement by making those widely accepted signs visible on their online centers. Local Occupy groups could legitimize their local activism by stressing their connectedness with the huge wave of the global Occupy Movement.

In recent years, a wide range of social movements have networked through social media like Facebook and Twitter all over the world (Sorour & Dey, 2014). Those movements have also been characterized by colors. The visual representation of a social movement and its spread through social media has also been observed in the Umbrella Revolution in Hong Kong in 2014. Images of protesters who raised umbrellas to protect their eyes from tear gas have been widely circulated on social media and have become the symbol of the movement (Chimbelu, 2014). Contemporary social movements have become networked movements by adopting social media and visual images as means of communication with activists and citizens.

A New, yet Traditional, Social Movement

Many scholarly reports covered stories about protesters spreading issues, recruiting supporters, and forming virtual public spheres by using social network sites (e.g., Gaby & Caren, 2012). As Juris (2012) points out, online media in recent social movements have become an important means of diffusing issues effectively. While network-based forms of social movements have existed since the 1970s, digital technologies have dramatically widened the scope of the networks (Juris, 2012). Therefore, the Occupy Movement can be called a new digitally networked movement; digital networking was critical in shaping the nonhierarchical as well as nonstructural nature of the movement.

On the other hand, as indicated in the findings, a number of design concepts and components of profile images used by local Occupy groups on Facebook were still grounded in symbolic meanings that had long been shared in the history of social movements. A majority of the profile images were composed with at least one design component symbolizing social activism, such as a clenched fist, images of protesters, or the use of red and black. Those components were usually centrally located on the images and created the overall tone of the visual images.

There are two possible interpretations of the uses of traditional images. First, these components might have been used strategically by local groups. The traditional concepts and components of profile images as semiotic signs easily make intense impressions by relying on historically structured meanings of social movements. By positioning their movement as an extension of historical social movements and using well-known image components, local Occupy groups more effectively drew people's attention. The majority of local Occupy groups also displayed profile images stressing Occupy with red or black, two conventional colors of social movements. The combination of the title text and the conventional colors signified the symbolic tie between the Occupy Movement and a long history of radical social movements. Second, the repeated uses of symbolic images of social movements supported the argument that the Occupy Movement was grounded in a collection of leftist ideologies resisting the power structures of the world market (Ossewaarde, 2012). The Occupy Movement was an extension of antiglobalization movements (Klein, 2012) and continuously expressed the message of the "non-democratic character of global capitalist forms" (Ossewaarde, 2012, p. 11). An image like a clenched fist in a profile image, therefore, could be an important sign reflecting this orientation. That is to say, traditional signs of social movements used in the Occupy Movement helped protesters place their movement in the

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historical context of left-leaning social movements.

Concluding Remarks

The present study quantitatively found that the texts Occupy and 99%, local images, images of protesters, and red and black colors were popular components in local Occupy groups' Facebook profile images. While each component denoted as well as connoted a certain orientation of the Occupy Movement, the deliberate combination of different components in images represented the multifaceted characteristics of the movement. Contextually analyzing such text, image, and color components and their compositions, the present study suggest that local Occupy groups' Facebook profile images could be important cues that reveal salient characteristics of the Occupy Movement: that it was a local, yet networked, movement and a new, yet traditional, social movement.

Many local Occupy groups identified the movement as a locally based social movement by using various components representing locality. At the same time, many of them placed their movement in the larger network of the Occupy Movement by sharing text, image, and color components with other local Occupy groups as well as Occupy Together, a symbolic center of the Occupy Movement. While local Occupy groups actively adopted Facebook as a platform of their networked movements, many of them still relied on conventional images of social movements in representing their movement.

The Occupy Movement is not a past historical event that is now well defined; many scholars, activists, and journalists are still discussing the causes, outcomes, and consequences of the movement. Visual images used by various levels of the Occupy Movement could be important sources of information that support the discussion of the movement because visual images may both reflect and define realities. Moreover, socioculturally contextualized products are always subject to interpretation. Although it is a tautological statement, the main limitation of this study is that a visual interpretive study cannot be free from the investigator's subjective eyes. However, this kind of visual analysis becomes a good guideline for future studies comprehensively covering perceptions and consequences of visual images. According to Rose (2012), "There are three sites at which the meanings of an image are made: the site(s) of the production of an image, the site of the image itself, and the site(s) where it is seen by various audiences" (p. 19). In order for this study to develop the findings and discussions into more theoretically meaningful arguments, it is necessary to investigate the intentions of image creators, the purposes of those who posted the images, and the perceptions of viewers.

As mentioned several times throughout this article, images and image components collected in this study are widely distributed on the Internet. Many of them were originally created as either digital or wall posters of the Occupy Movement. Also, Facebook was not the sole outlet for Occupy Movement groups to communicate with activists and citizens. Therefore, a comprehensive visual analysis of posters and image products created and shared by Occupy activists may shed a brighter light on visual representations and definitions of the Occupy Movement.

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