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# Production of space from the digital front: From everyday life to the everyday politics of networked practices

Bilge Serin [a,*], Daghan Irak [b]

[a] *Urban Studies, School of Social and Political Sciences, University of Glasgow, Glasgow G12 8RS, UK*
[b] *Department of Media and Performance, School of Music, Humanities and Media, University of Huddersfield, Huddersfield HD1 3DH, UK*

## ARTICLE INFO

## ABSTRACT

Everyday life expands the debates about the role of capitalist production relations in the production of space and urbanisation to everyday life practices. The digital space has become part of everyday life with extensive use of social media by individuals and institutions as a key communication sphere. Dwelling on these, this paper explores the role of the digital space in the processes of the production of space and the role of the networked practices of local governments within those processes. Investigating the practices of local governments and their engagement with individuals opens up areas of exploration for everyday life, local governance and institutional politics. The paper explores these via two case studies about acts of everyday life: holiday-making during the re-running of an election campaign and New Year's Eve celebrations in Turkey. It discusses the dialectical relationship between the lived space and the conceived space (Lefebvre, 1991) and how everyday politics submerges with everyday life via the practices of local governments by focusing on the networked (Castells, 2004) engagements among local governments and with ordinary citizens through the use of social media. It concludes that the digital space acts as a conduit where the conceived and the lived are submerged.

## 1. Introduction

Everyday life has been part of the debates around urban politics, urban life, and the production of space. The emphasis on everyday life expands the debates about the role of capitalist production relations in the production of space and urbanisation to everyday life practices, rather than replacing them. While Lefebvre's work on the production of space (Lefebvre, 1991) and critique of everyday life (Lefebvre, 2009, 2014) are seminal works on this expansion, many contemporary studies and scholars explore the role of everyday life in capitalist production relations, the production of space and urban politics (e.g. studies of Keil (2002), Shove et al. (2012), Bennett (2005), Beveridge and Koch (2019)) as well as earlier thinkers such as Debord (1994), Benjamin (2002) and de Certeau (2011) (see also Goonewardena (2008) for a broader debate on Marxism and everyday life). Those studies show, in different ways and variegated approaches, that everyday life acts, practices and events may be seen as trivial, simple or routine; however, the ways in which these acts, practices and events are conducted are critical in how the urban space is produced. Everyday politics, by definition, take place in everyday practices while also transforming institutional politics. Investigating the practices of local governments and their engagement with

individuals opens up areas of exploration regarding this dialectic relationship between everyday life and institutional politics. Because local governments are bodies which engage directly with everyday life through their provision of local services while also being part of institutional politics. We aim to contribute to this area of literature with this paper by offering an exploration of the relationship between everyday life and politics through local governments' and individuals' engagements in the digital space. We explore the role of the digital space in the processes of the production of space and the role of networked practices of local governments within these processes. Through this exploration, we argue that the digital space acts as a conduit within the processes of the production of urban space (Lefebvre, 1991).

We have conducted this exploration through two case studies about everyday life acts: holiday-making during the re-running of an election campaign and New Year's Eve celebrations in Turkey. We discuss this dialectical relationship between the lived space (Lefebvre, 1991) and the conceived space (Lefebvre, 1991) using the two case studies and how everyday politics submerges with everyday life via the practices of local governments. We focus in particular on the networked (Castells, 2004) engagements among local governments and local governments' engagements with ordinary citizens where the digital space acts as a

conduit.

We conducted a mixed-method strategy to triangulate quantitative and qualitative methods (Social Network Analysis, word frequency analysis, and qualitative content analysis on textual and visual content) on the social media engagements of local authorities on Twitter. We analysed a corpus of tweets that belong to two specific periods of time, one for each case study. The first period covers the timeframe when the local elections in Istanbul in 2019 were annulled and re-run. The second period is the month of December 2019 when the New Year's Eve preparations usually take place. Looking at local governments' official social media accounts shows how the conceived is not an isolated top-down practice, but produced via these networked relations while it interacts with the lived via engaging with everyday life practices (such as humour, celebrations and joy).

## 2. From everyday life to everyday politics

"'Transform the world,' Marx said; 'change life,' Rimbaud said. These two watchwords are one for us" says Breton (1969, p. 241) while declaring the position of the Surrealists. From Surrealists to Neo-Marxist thinkers, despite their positional differences, everyday life has been a core matter in the debates around urban politics, urban life, and the production of space. Many critical scholars, including Lefebvre and Castells whose theories informed this study, consider everyday life as a transformative core of urban life and politics. Rather than replacing the role of production relations in creating capitalist totality, this emphasis expands the debates to everyday life practices which were extensively side-lined in the discussions. To illustrate, de Certeau (2011) argues individuals operate in various ways as 'tactics' in a set of rules imposed as 'strategy'; thus, 'everyday life invents itself by poaching in countless ways on the property of others' (de Certeau, 2011, p. xii). Lefebvre (2014) criticises everyday life in the modern world in terms of the alienation created within, and Harvey (1992, p. 226) discusses the 'intersecting command of money, time, and space forms of a substantial nexus of social power' that includes everyday practices. In particular, Lefebvre's (1991, 2009, 2014) seminal works on everyday life have impacted the many studies exploring contemporary life-worlds (Habermas, 1984), the transformative potential for creating alternatives, and shaping today's and tomorrow's cities, urban space and urban life.

The main idea behind Lefebvre's (1991) conceptual framework is that '(Social) space is a (social) product' (p. 26) and 'every society - and hence every mode of production with its subvariants … produces a space, its own space' (p. 31). The triad of the production of space (Lefebvre, 1991) – the perceived, the conceived and the lived – has been influential in exploring how urban space and everyday life are being produced, lived and experienced. The perceived (or spatial practice) is the 'space as physical form, real space, space that is generated and used' (Elden, 2004, p. 190). The conceived (or representations of space), on the other hand, is the space that the experts interpret with their understandings, values and knowledge, and re-produce it, while the lived (or representational space) is the space that is 'produced and modified over time and through its use, spaces invested with symbolism and meaning', therefore, it is the 'space as real-and-imagined' (Elden, 2004, p. 190). It is the lived where the meaning is produced and experienced. These three dynamics are in a dialectical relationship, or as Soja (1996) coined, trialectic, rather than being separate categories. In other words, the 'triad allows us to consider the (not dialectical but) trialectical tension between physical space, its mental representations and the social life that occur in it' (Batuman, 2015, p. 10).

Lefebvre's framework for understanding how (urban) space is produced has received increasing attention since the translation of his works into English in the 1990s (Elden, 2001). Over the last decades, literature adopting this approach to explore the production of urban space and everyday life has been developed, to which we aim to contribute by bringing the digital space into this debate. Kipfer et al.'s (2013) excavation of the impact of Lefebrian thoughts on social sciences

shows its variegated traces in different areas and disciplines in the debates about 'social movements, colonialism, postcolonial conditions, the state, scale, regulation, urban political ecology, gender, sexuality, and the right to the city' (p. 121). Many studies focus on particular aspects within the praxis of the production of space, such as the role of the state and regulation in the commodification of urban space (Serin et al., 2020), integrating the notion of the production of space into urban planning and design (Zieleniec, 2018), or the socio-spatial production of counter-hegemony (Yoltay, 2019). The 'right to the city' notion, in particular, has been adopted by many thinkers and activists as a call for radical and practical urban transformations (Purcell, 2014). Shaw and Graham (2017) draw our attention to the requirement of adopting this notion in the information age and digital sphere: 'as the urban environment becomes increasingly layered by abstract digital representation, Lefebvre's broader theory warrants application to the digital age' (p. 907).

Everyday politics, by definition, take place in everyday practices cross-cutting the three aspects of the perceived, the conceived and the lived. Here the key is the fact that even everyday life acts, practices and events are seen as trivial and mundane, simple and routine; how to conduct these acts, practices and events is the moment that produces the praxis. Therefore, changing this conduct is a key to transforming and producing urban space. Thus, people are 'not passive users or subjects of institutions and discourses, we constantly amend and subvert them' (Courpasson, 2017, p. 847).

Some studies explore the role of everyday politics in authoritarianism and authoritarian space building in different contexts (Davey & Koch, 2021; Ibrahim, 2018; Koch, 2022). Others look at everyday politics regarding 'politicised everyday practices' (Beveridge & Koch, 2019) that are explicitly politically engaged everyday practices. These studies mostly engage with practices that carve niches of alternative socio-spatial relationships to hegemonic capitalist production and consumption relationships, such as commoning (Bresnihan & Byrne, 2015; Labaeye, 2019; Stavrides, 2016), squatting (Grazioli & Caciagli, 2018; López, 2013; Neuwirth, 2007; Pruijt, 2013; Van Schipstal & Nicholls, 2014), housing cooperatives (Noterman, 2016), community gardening (Pikner et al., 2020), co-living (Felstead et al., 2019), and food networks (Zhang & Barr, 2019). For these practices, Beveridge and Koch (2019, p. 143) rightly discuss the 'politicisations of the urban everyday' as 'a more visible form of political action'. These practices, as defined by Beveridge and Koch (2019, p. 143), of urban everyday politics are 'collective, organised and strategic practices that articulate a political antagonism embedded in, but breaking with, urban everyday life through altering – however temporarily – time- and place-specific social relations'. However, in our case, we are concerned with *how everyday life practices are inherently political* per se, although they seem to be ordinary and mundane, and how 'institutional politics' actually interact through everyday life practices. Batuman (2015, p. 22) similarly argues that the 'immanent politics of the social' is the political character of everyday life while discussing the public space's irreducibility, which is the fact that the public space cannot be diminished solely to its social centrality in urban life or its political function.

As per being a transformative milieu, everyday life is the place where everyday politics is being realised while also transforming institutional politics. The relationship between institutional politics and everyday politics, on the other hand, is not a one-way route. This is part of the dialectical relationship, as discussed, between the lived and the conceived. Investigating this relationship through the practices of local governments and their engagement with the public opens up even more areas of exploration regarding local governments are both 'local' and part of 'institutional' politics. Some recent illustrative cases demonstrate the intricate relationship between local governments and everyday politics, such as Zografos et al.'s (2020) study on the transformation of a superblock project for climate adaptation in Spain, Moragues-Faus's (2020) study on new food governance systems regarding civil society, private actors, and local governments in the UK, and Flinders and

Wood's (2018) conceptualisation of nexus politics for emerging ways of participation. With this paper, we aim to contribute to these emerging debates about the relationship between local governments and everyday politics.

In our contribution, we discuss the dialectical relationship between the lived and the conceived through the two case studies in this paper. The discourse formation around two 'mundane' and 'trivial' aspects of everyday life – celebrating New Year's Eve and holiday-making (although the latter is also attached to an institutional political act, as we discuss further in the following sections) – exemplifies the engagement of local governments with everyday practices. In addition, we investigate the networked characteristics of these engagements and argue the digital space is a space crosscutting the conceived and the lived. Looking at the local governments' official social media accounts shows how the conceived is not an isolated top-down practice, but produced via these networked relations while it interacts with the lived via engaging with everyday life practices (such as humour, celebrations and joy).

## 3. Network society and the role of social media in everyday politics

The late 1990s and early 2000s marked an important turning point in the history of social movements, since a wave of new social movements appeared with a different way of organising and action. Starting with the protests against the World Trade Organization Ministerial Conference in Seattle in 1999, individuals and groups gathered to protest against the economic globalisation the world had been going through after the fall of the Eastern Bloc. Following the protests in Seattle, these new social movements, advocating different forms of globalisation (alter-globalisation), made a mass appearance in Genoa, Italy to protest against the 27th G8 summit. The same year also saw the start of the World Social Forum events in Porto Alegre, Brazil, to discuss and present alter-globalist solutions to the world's global justice problem, under the slogan 'another world is possible'. As Juris (2004, p. 341) puts it, these movements were comprised of 'a broad network of networks', having global, informational and decentralised characteristics (Juris, 2004, pp. 345–347). All of these characteristics were best reflected by the way these movements mediated their communication, through the world-wide branches of online Independent Media Centres (Indymedia). As Bennett (2003, p. 31) argues, Indymedia tied the activists together in virtual political spaces, ensuring the re-imagination of local actions on a global scale. This new form of digital activism also indicated the production of new spatial forms (Juris, 2005, p. 204), with reference to Lefebvre (1991), creating alternative digital spaces. Castells (2004, p. 36) conceptualises these newly-produced spaces as the space of flows which is made of nodes and networks, 'of places connected by electronically powered communication networks through which flows of information circulate and interact, which ensure the time-sharing of practices processed in such a space'.

Meanwhile, this new form of communication also enabled communication between the new social movements and broader 'lifestyle publics' (Bennett, 2003, p. 31). Even though the openness, the blend of internationalism and localism, the use of hyperlinks and self-management resembled the socialist anarchist tradition (Downing, 2003, p. 254), it also opened the gates to a wave of digital activism that was slanted towards well-educated, middle-class, urban youth (Fenton, 2016, pp. 154–155), as information-communication technologies were more accessible to this particular social layer and which was more likely to have the digital cultural capital to use these technologies more effectively. This factor would eventually reinforce the everyday politics aspect of the new social movements. Couldry (2015, pp. 610–622) criticises Castells (as well as Hardt and Negri) of 'missing social' and ignoring 'how and where social resources and power relations are being reproduced'. While this criticism requires a broader debate, it is fair to say that one part of this argument is related to the missing role of

lifestyle-based middle-class everyday politics in Castells's 'network society' concept. In a way, this missing aspect of Castells's concept is akin to the criticisms directed to Habermas's public sphere theory with its bourgeois-centred focus, especially by Negt and Kluge (1993). Therefore, it is important to investigate the role of middle-class everyday politics in the Castellian interpretation of digital spaces.

Internet usage becoming a part of everyday life has changed the modalities of how it is used for political action. Mediated political communication in the digital realm has often been discussed under 'contentious politics' (Beraldo & Milan, 2019; Hemsley & Eckert, 2014; Liu, 2017), 'lifestyle movements' (Haenfler et al., 2012) or 'connective action' (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). While often relying on different theories, these conceptualisations share common points. In one of the earliest works on the relationship between information and everyday politics, even preceding the widespread use of the internet, Melucci (1996, pp. 180–184) argues that in a world where 'communication becomes the means and content of domination', the link between everyday life and collective action could be established by considering it 'no longer as a sum total of individuals but as a different relationship among individuals', a suggestion which strongly indicates a network-driven approach. According to Bennett and Segerberg (2012, pp. 743–752), 'individualized orientations result in engagement with politics as an expression of personal hopes, lifestyles, and grievances', and 'connective action' stems from a different logic of organisation that connects individualized social orientations. 'Lifestyle movements' is another conceptualisation with similar tendencies, according to which the actions are individual, private and ongoing, where 'adherents interweave action into daily life' (Haenfler et al., 2012, p. 5). According to Beraldo and Milan (2019, p. 3), individual acts of rebellion and practices made possible by the 'infrastructure of datafication' also fall into the category of contentious politics, and 'the everyday practices of resistance, subversion and creative appropriation embodied by individuals' are embraced by the contentious politics of data. These studies all suggest, albeit in different ways and with different conceptualisations, the individualisation of everyday practices in modern life and the reconnection to social collectivity, along with everyday politics and political actions, through social networks, which have become gradually become more online. Therefore, it may be argued that, in a setting where individual social and political aspirations reform collective claims and action, it involves everyday politics in a more accentuated fashion. This also overlaps a reconstructed structure of spaces, where the digital space exists as an overlay to the physical one; rather than being a separate and disparate entity, it lies as a permeable layer where everyday life in the physical space can easily penetrate (and vice versa), along with everyday politics. Therefore, even though the digital space transcends geographical boundaries, locality still plays a role in the digital reflection of everyday life, and the political negotiations within the local physical space are reproduced in the digital space.

Thus, in a networked way of living, local politics is not depreciated. On the contrary, within a network-based societal order where power is decentralised on a global scale, local governments appear at a very crucial spot. According to Castells (2002, p. 552), the role of local authorities is enhanced by globalisation and they become 'a node in the chain of institutional representation and management'. In this regard, urban social movements 'have merely mutated' to 'the defence of the local community' and 'the environmental movement', becoming 'a cultural movement as [much as] it is a traditional urban economy-oriented movement' (Castells, 2002, p. 552). Appadurai (2001, p. 26) argues that transnational advocacy networks "provide new horizontal modes for articulating the deep democratic politics of the locality, creating hitherto unpredicted groupings: examples may be 'issue-based' – focused on the environment, child labour or AIDS – or 'identity-based' – feminist, indigenous, gay, diasporic". Therefore, within the network society, local governments happen to become the direct interlocutors of new social movements, the roots of which also come from the identities and issues that are present in everyday life.

It may be argued that the civil society tradition in any given case may dramatically affect the dialogue between popular demands and institutional politics; however, it would be unlikely to presume that the importance of everyday politics would diminish, it may very well become more crucial. In his study about popular participation at the local level in Latin America, Schönwalder (1997, pp. 753–754) states that, in a setting with a strong centralist state and a relatively weak civil society (thus, very comparable to the case study on Turkey), democratic popular participation is hindered by a few factors; the issue of governance and the unwillingness of central government, as well as the fragility of democratic institutions as an underlying factor. The first issue the author mentions requires further investigation into each case about how popular movements deal with institutional politics, not only in the aforementioned setting of developing countries, but also in Western democracies. Social movements often have a few choices in their relationship with institutional politics; such as supporting a political party or alliance, becoming a party or alliance itself, or being repurposed by an institutional actor that has a grassroots problem. Greece, Spain and the United States, respectively, can be given as examples of these choices. In our case study, the third scenario seems to take place. Institutional actors, namely opposition political parties, are reshaping their grassroots strategies in parallel with the heritage of the Gezi Movement and the political action it directly created from everyday politics and the production of urban space. Therefore, the issues raised by Schönwalder are addressed by yielding them to institutional politics. While it would no longer count as popular participation, the social strata that created Gezi lends its discourse (and support) to political parties, as a form of popular delegation, which is a loose contract where the continuation of support depends on how much the discourse remains dominant in institutional politics. This strategy seems to conform with the relationship between politics and the middle classes, or the public in general, in Turkey. In the political tradition of Turkey, the people remain distant from institutional politics. Therefore, democratisation does not take place through participating in institutional politics, but rather at the discursive level, which renders networked expressions within everyday life even more valuable for investigating.

## 4. Production of space from the digital front: from everyday life to the everyday politics of networked practices

### 4.1. Methodology

In this paper, we use a mixed-method strategy in which we triangulate quantitative and qualitative methods. These methods are used to analyse a corpus of tweets that belong to two specific periods of time. The first period is between 6 May and 24 June 2019, when the first Istanbul local elections were annulled and re-run. The first corpus consists of 54,242 tweets posted by Twitter accounts belonging to 456 municipalities. The second period is the month of December 2019 when the New Year's Eve preparations usually take place. The second corpus comprises 42,379 tweets posted by 491 Twitter accounts. All active municipality Twitter accounts, regardless of their political parties, are taken into account.[1] The data was collected using open-source DMI-TCAT software (Borra & Rieder, 2014), using its timeline collection script, which collects the most recent 3200 tweets of given accounts using the Twitter API. The social network analysis was carried out and

visualised using open-source Gephi software (Bastian et al., 2009). All the municipality Twitter accounts included in the research are public office accounts, and therefore quoted without any anonymisation. On the other hand, the users they have interacted with are anonymised, in case their content is used in this research. The content produced by these users is only used if a municipality account was engaged in a conversation with them. For the qualitative part of our analysis, all textual and visual content produced by the municipality accounts, including text-only posts and images (e.g., photos, photoshopped posters, and memes) is included.

Our analysis is based on a combination of three different methods. Firstly, in order to verify the networked nature of municipalities' communication on Twitter, we employed Social Network Analysis (SNA), a mathematical method that calculates and visualizes an actor's (node) position on a network depending on its interactions (edges) with other actors. Hypothetically, in a networked environment, the actors, in our case municipalities, are expected to be in interaction with each other. One big caveat of this method is that it does not consider the meaning of the message; therefore, any interaction (retweet, subtweet or mention) between two actors has the same value, no matter what connotation the message holds. For instance, a critical tweet is treated the same as praise regarding its interactional value. This is the reason why, in social sciences, SNA often needs to be supported by other methods that analyse the meaning of the message. As a result, we used two supplementary methods. Since the use of certain words (like 'New Year's Eve' or 'holiday'), or lack thereof, may have a certain value in everyday politics, as we discussed in the previous sections, the use of these words, the frequency of such use and by whom they are used present findings that are relevant to our study. Therefore, we employed the SNA method to also reveal the relationship between relevant keywords and municipalities. And finally, these two aforementioned methods are complemented with a qualitative content analysis which includes both textual and visual elements. The use of memes, photos and videos has become increasingly popular on Twitter, whereas the platform is still text-oriented. As Pink (2007) stresses, 'just as images inspire conversations, conversation may invoke images; conversation visualizes and draws absent printed or electronic images into its narratives through verbal descriptions and references to them' (p. 21). Therefore, all of these elements need to be analysed to reveal common narratives. As discussed, the use of humour has a particular place in everyday politics, therefore this part of our study also aims to analyse the tweets through this aspect, as well as references to lifestyle and other elements of everyday life.
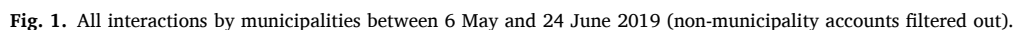
### 4.2. Tracing everyday politics via the re-election campaigns: 'our beaches are closed for Istanbulites until the election is over'

On 6 May 2019, the Higher Elections Board announced that the Istanbul local elections, held on 23 March and won by the opposition candidate Ekrem Imamoglu (Republican People's Party, thereafter CHP) by a small margin over the ruling party's candidate Binali Yildirim (Justice and Development Party, thereafter AKP), were annulled after a series of objections raised by AKP officials. The new election date was set for 24 June 2019. The period between these two dates constitutes the first part of our analysis, in which we observed networked engagements during the re-run election campaign. This campaign demonstrates how aspects of everyday life and politics are submerged, and how local governments build networks in a digital space that is a product of the lived and the conceived.

First, from an SNA standpoint, we visualised the data in two different ways. The first analysis (Fig. 1) takes into account all the tweets posted by municipalities. The non-municipality accounts that the municipality accounts interact with are included in the analysis to help provide a more accurate positioning. However, they are visually filtered out of the final graph. In this visualisation, we found that the opposition (mainly CHP) municipalities constitute a separate and very dominant set of

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[1] It should be noted that only the municipalities where the mayor's seat is held by a democratically-elected candidate are included. Two groups of municipalities were excluded: (1) The accounts belonging to municipalities seized by the Ministry of Interior Affairs are excluded as they are no longer run by elected mayors, but by government appointees. (2) The accounts belonging to municipalities run by the second-placed candidates who were declared as elected by the Supreme Election Board (due to the first-placed candidates being expelled from public offices) are excluded from the research.

**Fig. 1.** All interactions by municipalities between 6 May and 24 June 2019 (non-municipality accounts filtered out).

clusters against a much less visible cluster formed by the AKP municipalities. These two parts of the network that face each other are connected through the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality's official account (@istanbulbld).[2]

In the second graph (Fig. 2), only the tweets that mention the re-run elections are included. However, this time the non-municipality accounts are not filtered out of the graph to show the relationship between

the municipality accounts and the major political figures, including the candidates, during this electoral campaign period. As might be expected, the opposition forms a set of clusters around the CHP candidate Ekrem Imamoglu (@ekrem_imamoglu) and there is an AKP cluster around their candidate Binali Yildirim (@by). Once again, the opposition side is more expansive and dominant over a limited cluster formed by the AKP municipalities. One major difference between the two parties' clusters is that the AKP cluster has several interactions with the party chair Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the Interior Minister Suleyman Soylu (who is a popular figure on Twitter), and the party official account, whereas neither the CHP official account nor the party leader Kemal Kilicdaroglu appear in the opposition clusters.

The SNA for the period reveals a political picture that is confirmed by other research on Turkey. Party politics in Turkey is highly polarised

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[2] No political parties other than the AKP and the CHP are visibly present in the network, despite the fact that there is an alliance system in Turkey and these two parties' candidates were supported by other parties (the MHP supported the AKP candidate, while the IYIP and the HDP supported the CHP one in this election).
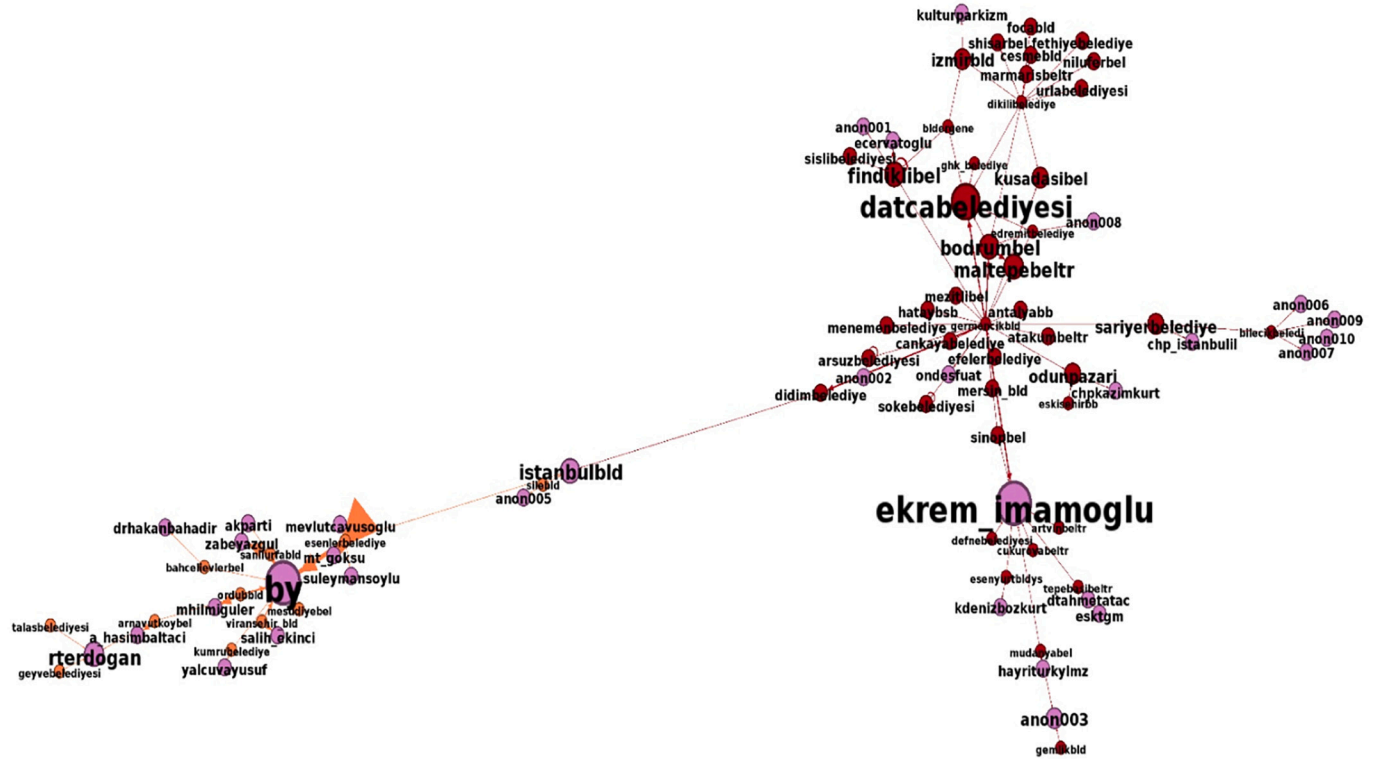
**Fig. 2.** Network of election-related tweets (non-municipality accounts not filtered out).

between the pro-Erdoğan camp and the anti-Erdoğan camp, and this electoral campaign was no different. There are few interactions between the two clusters, if any, and the inner-party clusters are tightly knit. As revealed in other studies (Irak, 2016; Irak & Öztürk, 2017), President Erdogan appears as a strong figure within the AKP part of the network, while the opposition appears to be much less leader-oriented.

The keyword-user graph[3] for the same period (Fig. 3) reveals an equally polarised picture. The election day, 23 June, and the word 'election' are the only keywords that connect the opposition-run municipalities and the ruling party municipalities. The opposition municipalities present a vibrant network comprised of multiple keywords, while the ruling party network has fewer keywords. The opposition network revolves around Imamoglu's campaign slogan 'Everything will be great', while 'democracy' and the day after the election are also used by several municipalities. Two other keywords prominent within the opposition cluster are 'sea', 'don't come' and 'closed'. These keywords all relate to the social media campaign run by the opposition municipalities of holiday spots, humorously asking Istanbulites to stay in Istanbul and vote, instead of visiting these towns for holidays. Other keywords related to the opposition clusters, such as 'caution', 'warning', 'holiday', 'forbidden', 'attention', are used as part of these messages. The opposition candidate Ekrem Imamoglu is less prominent within the opposition cluster than his slogan. Meanwhile, in the ruling party cluster, the most prominent keyword is Binali Yildirim, the AKP candidate. The other important keyword is 'it will be greater', which originates from President Erdogan's spontaneous response to a voter telling him 'everything will be great' during one of his campaign visits and used later on as a campaign slogan.

Second, in the qualitative part of our research, we conducted a textual and visual analysis of the tweets posted by municipalities. Throughout the analysis, we had two major concerns: the relationship between the tweets and everyday politics, and the networked nature of the tweets.

We detected a heavy use of humorous visuals that are a specific reminder of the Gezi-era use of humour on Twitter. Several municipalities in holiday towns posted whimsical fake caution signs that warn Istanbulites about some fake forecasts of natural disasters (such as heavy snow, avalanche or tsunami) that would occur in their towns on election day. Therefore, they should not come but stay in Istanbul to cast their votes. The municipality accounts also posted made-up access bans to beaches. A holiday town municipality, the Municipality of Didim, tweets, "We have the pretexts made up by other municipalities. We laughed. We had fun. We have no pretext though. Access to the beaches is 'forbidden' on June 23, brother [word play on the word 'Yasak' (forbidden) and 'YSK' (abbreviation for the Supreme Election Board)]". All but one municipality which joined this campaign were opposition-run municipalities. The Municipality of Kumru in Ordu (Black Sea region) was the only AKP-run municipality to use a humorous visual to ask Istanbulites to stay at home and vote. This is due to the widely-shared presumption that Istanbulite holidaymakers who visit coastal regions are voters of the main opposition party, connected to another supposition that AKP voters would rather visit their home villages for their holiday. While the validity of these claims should be questioned, both sides seemed to play along and develop their re-run election strategies based on the expectation that it would be the Imamoglu voters who would be likely to go on a holiday in June.

On the networked nature of re-run election-themed tweets, we observed two types of networking: one among the municipalities themselves and the other among municipalities and non-municipality users. In both cases, the conversations were humorous and playful, based on the personification of municipality accounts. In this case, the interactions between different opposition-run municipalities are more dominant than municipality-user interactions. Different opposition-run

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[3] Original keywords in Turkish and their English translations: '23 June' (23 Haziran), 'election' (seçim), 'Everything will be great' (Her şey çok güzel olacak), 'democracy' (demokrasi), 'sea' (deniz), 'don't come' (gelme), 'closed' (kapalı), caution' (dikkat), 'warning' (uyarı), 'holiday' (tatil), 'forbidden' (yasak), 'attention' (dikkat), 'it will be greater' (daha güzel olacak).

**Fig. 3.** Graph of the election period keyword-user network.

municipalities plan an imaginary route to Istanbul to 'watch the sun rising on the 23rd of June'. Meanwhile, back-and-forth exchanges between non-municipality users of different political sides under municipality tweets about the elections are numerous. The AKP supporters often criticise the municipalities for being partial and not being attentive enough to real issues, while the opposition supporters respond with claims about the political misuse of public and private media by the government. The municipality accounts rarely engage in this type of conflict, although they do respond to some positive comments from opposition supporters.

### 4.3. Everyday politics in the festive season: small acts of solidarity among the municipalities

As discussed, New Year celebrations[4] have recently become more and more a matter of everyday politics; therefore, our study aims to analyse the tweets posted by municipalities during the preparation period, particularly the ones that contain references to New Year's Eve. The period for our second case covers the month of December 2019, when preparations for New Year's Eve take place in Turkey, as in most other countries. For this reason, as in the first case, we focus first on the quantitative analysis via three SNA graphs: two based on interactions between users and one keyword-user graph. Again, as before, one interaction graph will cover all interactions, while the other one is

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[4] It should also be noted that most opposition-run municipalities celebrate the event as the New Year's Eve but not as Christmas, as the former is secular, while the latter is explicitly a Christian tradition. However, in areas where Christian communities live, such as the Sisli and Besiktas districts (run by the opposition party) in Istanbul, or Artuklu (run by the ruling party) in Mardin, Christmas is also mentioned by the municipalities.

keyword filtered, and includes only tweets related to New Year's Eve.

All the interactions in the selected time period give us a polarised picture of two blocs with different network structures (see Fig. 4). The opposition-run municipalities present a tightly networked cluster, with a few additions from other opposition parties. Meanwhile, the AKP-run municipalities are loosely connected and rather dispersed with little to no connection between each other. However, it should be noted that the non-municipality actors are filtered out from this graph, so it is likely that some non-municipality bridge users connect municipality accounts, such as President Erdogan's account, as was revealed in Fig. 2. In this study, we preferred to use the filtered versions of interaction graphs (with one exception), since the presence of non-municipal actors makes it visually difficult to grasp the clusters formed by municipality accounts.

The keyword-user graph brings an interesting distinction between the keywords related to the New Year.[5] As Fig. 5 shows, 'New Year' is universally utilised by municipalities from different parties, while some CHP-run municipalities (the edges coloured bold red located on the upper side of the graph) mention this keyword more than others. Several AKP-run municipalities also use it as well as municipalities run by smaller parties. Therefore, regarding this keyword, there is no visible polarisation. However, again on the upper side of the graph, we observe a diamond-shaped structure that is defined by other keywords distinctively used by the CHP-run municipalities. These keywords are 'New Year's Eve', 'celebration', 'Happy New Year'. The words 'Christmas' and 'party' are also annexed to this structure and show similar characteristics, albeit they are used less frequently. Another frequently used keyword is 'hat', which we will mention thoroughly in our qualitative analysis.

All in all, it is fair to say that the AKP-run municipalities mostly acknowledge the New Year as a legitimate date. On the other hand, despite the wide recognition of New Year as an event on the calendar, it becomes more reserved to the opposition cluster when it is perceived as an event to celebrate. Very few AKP-run municipalities, such as the Municipality of Kemer (a holiday town in Southern Turkey) which organised a New Year's party, mention the keyword with signifiers of celebration.

Most of the opposition-run municipalities change their Twitter avatars by adding a Santa Claus hat to the municipality logo as part of their New Year festivities. The Municipality of Bodrum even posted a photo of its mascot cat wearing a Santa Claus hat. Once again, this shows that the use of visuals is crucial for the representation of space in the digital space. Some municipalities deliberately attract their followers' attention to the new avatar by using the #NewProfilePicture (#YeniProfilResmi) hashtag, while others ask their followers (and other municipality accounts) to help them photoshop a Santa Claus hat onto their logo. This interaction exemplifies small acts of solidarity among the opposition-run municipalities. The interactions among the municipalities and the interactions between the municipalities and ordinary users are once again very playful and humorous. An example of this is a Twitter interaction initiated by the Sariyer Municipality demanding others help them create their New Year logo, because their graphic designer went to a wedding. Under the tweet, other municipalities and ordinary users respond to the Sariyer Municipality, offering different renditions of the municipality logo with a Santa Claus hat. The analysis shows that while New Year's Eve was celebrated as a secular holiday by the opposition-run municipalities, they did not shy away from the aforementioned symbols related to Christmas, at the expense of drawing the ire of Islamists, who have started to voice their objection to the celebration of New Year's Eve in recent years.

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[5] Original keywords in Turkish and their English translations: 'yeni yıl' (New Year), 'yılbaşı' (New Year's Eve), 'kutlama' (celebration), 'mutlu yıllar' and 'mutlu seneler' (Happy New Year), 'Noel' (Christmas) and 'parti' (party), 'şapka' (hat), Mecca (Mekke).

## 5. Discussion

The interaction-based analysis of municipalities' online social networks presented similar findings to other studies that employed a similar SNA-driven approach (Doğu & Mat, 2019; Furman & Tunç, 2020; Irak, 2016; Irak & Öztürk, 2017). The polarisation between the ruling and opposition blocs in the politics of Turkey is reflected in their online interactions, comfortably visualised by the SNA. In this research, the first case, the re-run elections in Istanbul, was an intense political event, where political polarisation was expected. Since the first case is directly related to elections, it is expected that institutional politics plays a part, although the re-run election voting campaign directly engages with everyday life, especially through holiday-making. The second case, the New Year celebrations, does not necessarily directly engage with institutional politics. Yet, the interactions in this period portrayed even sharper polarisation, emphasising the importance of everyday politics in this country. These findings suggest that everyday politics play a crucial role in opposition politics in Turkey, which is also confirmed by the findings of the keyword-based analysis in this research. The findings also show that the opposition bloc is much less leader-oriented (the opposition leader Kilicdaroglu did not even appear within the network), which is the contrary to the ruling bloc.

The keyword-based analysis in the first case shows that the keywords used by the opposition side are diverse. Yet, these collectively refer to the coastal holiday culture that is often associated with the urban, secular middle classes in Turkey. The ruling bloc, on the other hand, seldom uses the keywords related to holidays, while repeatedly using the re-run election slogan. Once again, the opposition clusters were observed as more culture-oriented, while the ruling bloc appeared to be leader-oriented. The findings of the second case revealed some rather unexpected findings. The expression 'New Year' is embraced by municipalities of all parties, while the expression 'New Year's Eve' is almost exclusive to the opposition, along with other keywords like 'Christmas', 'party' and 'celebration'. It appears that the New Year is accepted as a secular calendar event across the political spectrum. However, New Year's Eve is rejected by the conservative ruling bloc. A likely reason for this is that conservative groups associate it with Christianity. On the other hand, the opposition views the New Year as a secular event to be celebrated. The opposition's approach to the New Year is in parallel with secular Turkey embracing New Year's Eve as a secularised holiday which does not necessarily exclude some cultural elements of Christmas, such as the Christmas tree and Santa Claus, while excluding the religious ones. In this research, the difference between the New Year and New Year's Eve seems to draw a political line between the two blocs.

The exploration of the networked practices of local governments and their engagement with the public opens up further areas of exploration for the role of digital space in the production of space and the role of local governments in these processes. Although these are on the discursive level, and cannot be generalised, it is observed in the example of municipalities producing a New Year's Eve logo for a fellow municipality that the digital space works as a conduit for such small acts of solidarity among local governments. Also, in this example, ordinary citizens posted some photoshopped logos for this particular municipality. This engagement shows that the networked practice of municipalities surpasses the solidarity among local governments by including direct engagement with the city-dwellers. This case of the everyday act of celebrating New Year's Eve demonstrates how the lived space entangles with the conceived via networked practices in the digital space. The other case, holiday-making during the re-run election period, also demonstrates similar aspects of how everyday life reproduces itself and intervenes with institutional politics. Again, in this case, local governments engage with ordinary citizens through a networked practice in the digital space by using this everyday act in a humorous way. These engagements surpass networked practices among municipalities, but directly reach out to the city-dwellers and holidaymakers. These cases present clear examples of how space is produced through nested
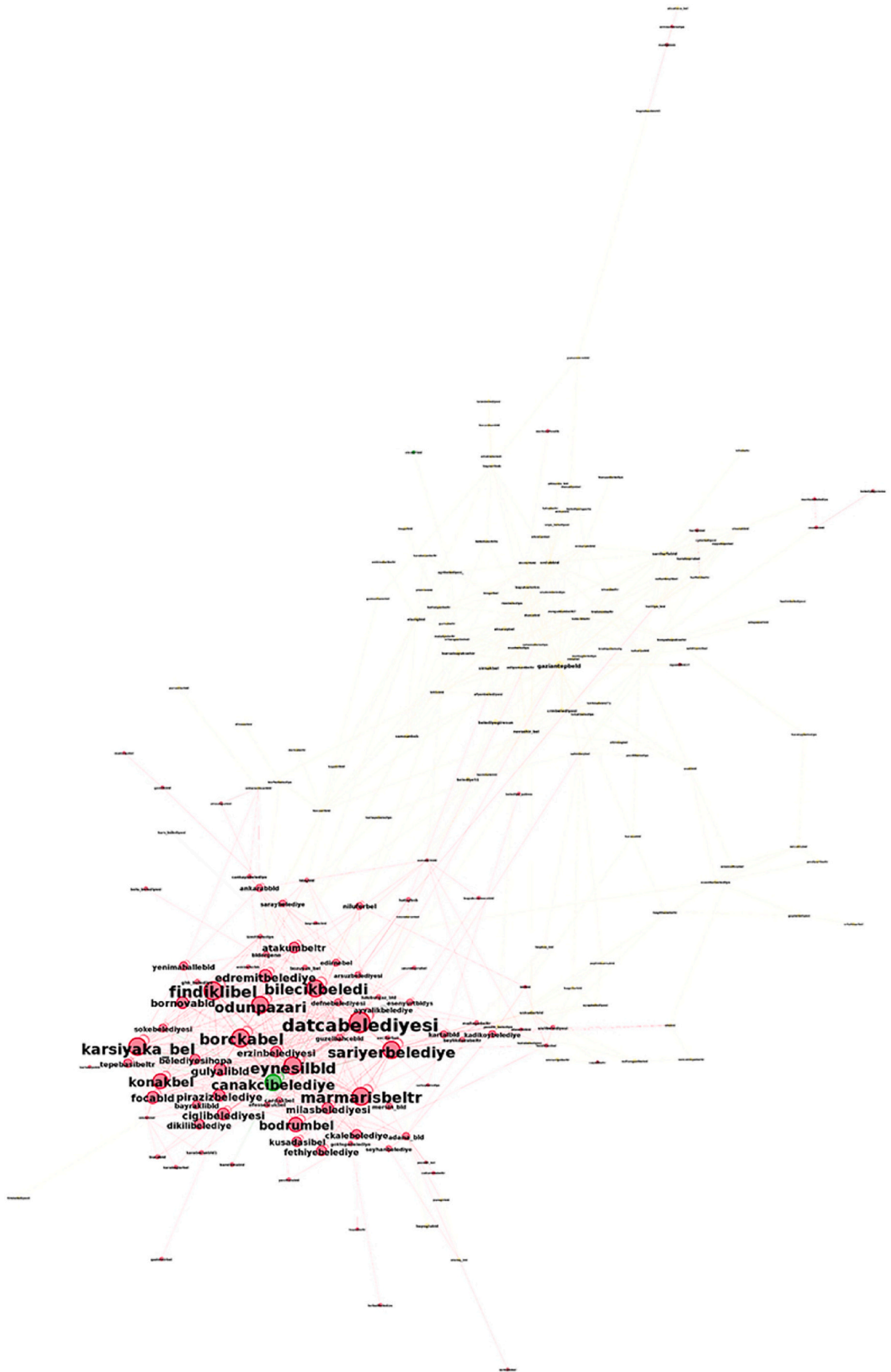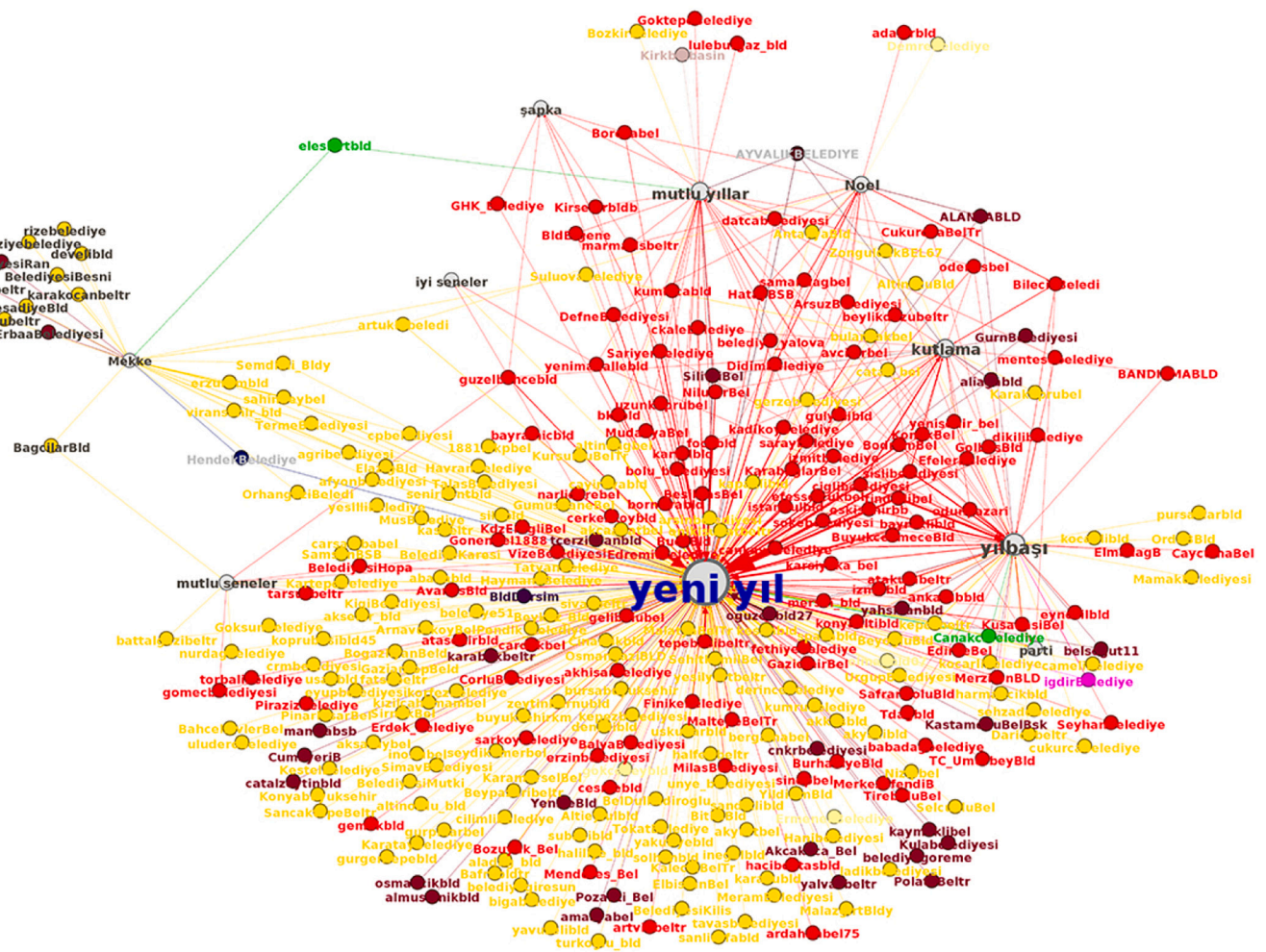
**Fig. 4.** Graph of the New Year period interactions (all) (non-municipality accounts filtered out).

**Fig. 5.** New Year period keyword-user graph.

interactions of the lived and the conceived, but from the digital front. Discursive formation around these two aspects of everyday life shows how the conceived space is not an isolated top-down practice, although the acts in these cases were initiated by local governments. On the contrary, it is produced via these networked relations while interacting with the lived through engaging with everyday life and affects such as humour, celebrations and joy. The networked practices produce the 'digital space' in which the conceived and the lived are submerged. In other words, local governments and urban dwellers produce this space through their networked engagements which go beyond particular 'locales'.

## 6. Conclusion

Starting with the question of how everyday life and politics take place via the networked practices of local governments and dwelling on the fact that '(social) space is a (social) product' (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 26), in this study, we explored the production of space from the digital front. With its novel approach and findings, the study bridges urban studies and communication studies, and offers empirical and conceptual contributions.

The study confirms that the networked practices in the digital space are as polarised as the general tendencies in institutional politics. However, the study focusing on holiday-making during a re-run election campaign and New Year's Eve celebrations in the same year allowed us to explore a nuanced picture of how everyday life practices play a role in everyday politics in addition to more visible institutional ones.

These two cases provide robust evidence about how urban space is produced through the nested interactions of the lived and the conceived from the digital front. The conceived space is not solely produced top-down, although this is the space that the experts interpret with their understandings, values and knowledge, and re-produce. Rather, it is produced by interactions with the lived via networked interactions. The digital space acts as a conduit where these networked practices take place and the conceived and the lived are submerged. In other words, local governments and urban dwellers dialectically produce the (social) space through their networked engagements.

The empirical findings presented in this paper and our approach show that the digital front is an emerging, but extensively neglected, area in the production of space as a multifaceted process and praxis. In an age where these networked engagements are becoming more extensive and the tools enabling these engagements are becoming more accessible, the digital front is gaining even more importance in the understanding of the dynamics behind the production of space. This is equally important for academics, activists and policy-makers regarding the increasing role of the digital front in understanding the urbanisation processes, the transformative potential of the digital front and its potential policy implications in shaping future cities.

## CRediT authorship contribution statement

Bilge Serin: Conceptualization; Analysis; Roles/Writing - original draft, Writing - review & editing.

Daghan Irak: Conceptualization; Data curation; Analysis;

Methodology; Resources; Software; Visualization; Roles/Writing - original draft, Writing - review.

## Author statement

All persons who meet authorship criteria are listed as authors, and all authors certify that they have participated sufficiently in the work to take public responsibility for the content, including participation in the concept, design, analysis, writing, or revision of the manuscript. Furthermore, each author certifies that this material or similar material has not been and will not be submitted to or published in any other publication.

## Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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