Pathways of entrepreneurial urban governance

Spatial dynamics and community politics in Istanbul's regeneration

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CHAPTER 4

In-Depth Case Study I

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4. From entrepreneurial to responsive spatial governance: Unveiling innovative strategies of self-organization in Istanbul

In the realm of urban regeneration, this article analyses the key role of institutionalized self-organization within entrepreneurial governance frameworks, arguing how organized community groups can influence urban policy through engagement in policy networks. Focusing on the transformation initiative in Istanbul's Derbent informal neighborhood (*gecekondu*), where community-driven innovation emerged in the face of state-led urban development, this research elucidates the ways local collectives navigate and transform governance structures. The study presents three main lessons with broader implications for understanding urban governance dynamics globally: (1) the capacity of self-organized entities to re-politicize local networks and impact urban governance, even in authoritarian contexts; (2) the transformative power of these initiatives in facilitating a transition from entrepreneurial strategies to responsive governance tactics, adapting to the needs and inputs of local stake- holders; (3) the enrolment of self-organized groups in policy networks, highlighting the importance of collective platforms that bridge the gap between citizens and policymakers. This investigation into local self-governance strategies demonstrates the tangible impact of localized efforts in catalyzing change in spatial governance, challenging traditional models. While rooted in a unique socio-political landscape, the findings transcend the specific context of Derbent, encouraging further investigation into similar urban dynamics worldwide. The research calls for a re-evaluation of entrepreneurial governance models to better accommodate and leverage grassroots participation and invites further comparative research on the applicability of these insights beyond the studied context.

4.1. Introduction

This research examines the role of self-organized communities in the regeneration of squatter (*gecekondu*) areas in Istanbul, Turkey, where residents have been negotiating their property rights for decades. Central to our exploration is the local resistance to urban transformation projects that have been reshaping neighborhoods in recent years, particularly within

the entrepreneurial governance framework. By sharing Derbent's story, we argue that institutionalized self- organization plays a key role in an entrepreneurial governance context, enabling organized individuals to impact the policymaking process. Institutionalized self-organization in cities is a combination of formal institutions, such as government bodies and regulations, and informal, self-organized activities within a city. This phenomenon is reflected in the diverse ways in which communities and individuals organize themselves without strict top-down control, through the interactive presence of institutions, markets, and governance structures. It leads to transformative learning practices among different communities or individuals. While the entrepreneurial model is market-driven, relies on innovation, and pursues ambiguous initiatives, it has reinforced this reliance on market mechanisms through a deepening of entrepreneurial governance arrangements by the state (Wu, 2020). These arrangements adopt flexible regulations to accommodate the property industry in some places, while at the same time instigating various opportunistic practices in these territories (van den Hurk & Tas ¸an-Kok, 2020). Wu (2018) defines 'state entrepreneurialism' as a governance model that combines planning centrality with market instruments. It provides the state with the ability to act out its will through market mechanism tools for economic development and urban transformation.

In this context, the Derbent neighborhood in the Sarıyer district is highly representative for studying the transformation of informal settlements under the influence of entrepreneurial governance. This area has been attracting rural migrants in search of opportunity and has evolved from a peripheral settlement into a major urban area due to its proximity to one of Istanbul's main business districts, the Maslak CBD, highlighting the potential for rent-seeking opportunities and real estate development, benefiting both the state and private property actors. Derbent captures the complex realities of informal urban development, with its self-constructed housing as well as its infrastructure built in solidarity/collaboration with the residents' own efforts, and its residents' 'right to the city' pursuits to actively engage in urban policymaking that have been shaping their living environment (Aksümer & Yücel, 2018). The area's trajectory, influenced by the market-driven urban policies, demonstrates the unique gathering of self-organization, policy networks, and spatial governance in the face of state-market dynamics. Below is a map (Fig. 12) that illustrates Derbent's location within the wider landscape of Istanbul, providing a geographic reference that places the subsequent analysis in a concrete urban context.

Figure 12. Geographical location of Istanbul's Derbent informal neighborhood[5]

Reflecting on these broader trends, our focus narrows to the specific dynamics of urban regeneration in Istanbul's squatter areas, driven by organic and opportunity-seeking processes. Similar to other places, local stakeholders, including radical social movements, exploit emerging opportunities to shape urban development in Istanbul (Van Meerkerk et al., 2013). Despite the inclusive rhetoric of these approaches, they may potentially exacerbate existing inequalities (Ferilli et al., 2016). Over the last two decades, these processes have evolved to include more institutionalized forms of self-organization in response to increasing authoritarian tendencies. These institutionalized self-organization practices may potentially challenge traditional urban intervention paradigms while adapting to state rescaling and redistributing responsibilities to citizens and their collective associations (Eraydın & Taşan-Kok, 2014; Savini, 2016).

Through an in-depth examination of Derbent's transformation, this study links residents' 'right to the city' assertions to the broader dynamics of entrepreneurial state, reproducing the complex state-market-citizen relations in Istanbul. This concept, as discussed by Harvey (2008), underscores the collective agency of urban dwellers, especially those marginalized or excluded, in shaping the urban landscape. As residents

5 https://sehirharitasi.ibb.gov.tr

claim their rights, they begin to employ entrepreneurial strategies to engage in policy networks by institutionalizing their collectivity. Rhodes (2008) defines policy networks as formal and informal institutional ties among public sector actors and other stakeholders, structured around shared and negotiated beliefs and interests.

Our research in Derbent shows that organized residents impact the policymaking process not only by re-politicizing local networks but also by transforming entrepreneurial strategies into responsive tactics. Uniquely, the case shows that innovations in spatial governance also emerge through community dynamics even within authoritarian contexts. The case exemplifies how theories and ideas "*travel – from person to person, from situation to situation, from one period to another, though the 'circulation of ideas' in different forms*" (Said, 1983, p. 226), highlighting the intertwining relations of theoretical concepts and real-world applications in urban regeneration.

In Turkey, squatter settlements emerged as inhabitants from poorer regions migrated to large booming cities like Istanbul in pursuit of employment opportunities. These migrants constructed squats on available land to find shelter. During the 1980s, populist local politics transformed the act of squatting from a mere survival tactic into a mechanism for the redistribution of urban land rents. The legitimization of squatter neighborhoods became a key issue in political agendas, particularly around election periods, signifying a shift in the government's approach to informal settlements. However, informal settlements presented complex challenges. Squatters, by occupying land owned by the state treasury, triggered legal and social dilemmas (Taşan-Kok, 2004). While these squatter inhabitants sought to gain 'rights to the city' and access to basic shelter, existing urban residents from lower-middle income backgrounds faced great struggles in finding affordable housing.

The booming construction sector realized the potential for redeveloping squatter areas into legitimate neighborhoods. This led to the emergence of an individualized negotiation culture between squatter owners and constructors, resulting in agreements to share units in newly constructed multi-storey apartment buildings. Even within officially planned squatter regeneration projects, local governments depended on these individualized negotiations between contractors and squatter owners.

In the 2000s, former squatter residents realized the benefits of coordinated self-organization in securing collective rights, indicating a significant shift in urban regeneration dynamics. This period underscored the emergence of a centralized entrepreneurial public policy culture, emphasizing growing dependence on market-driven strategies and public-private partnerships for urban development. This approach, aligning with earlier discussed concepts of 'state entrepreneurialism', promoted economic growth and urban renewal but often bypassed the needs and voices of locally-elected democratic authorities, focusing on top-down mega-projects and flexible legislation in favour of economic gains. For Istanbul's residents, particularly those in the Derbent neighborhood, the solidification of this public policy culture signified a transformative period where the distinctive characteristics and self- governing capacity of the community were increasingly challenged by the policies and economic priorities driven by state-market collaborations. This development necessitated a reassessment of strategies to navigate and negotiate their space within this ever-changing urban landscape, utilizing digital platforms as a critical component of their approach.

This article contributes to our understanding of how entrepreneurial governance frameworks inspire innovative community responses and negotiations, demonstrating that institutionalized self-organization serves as a key mechanism for adapting to the challenges posed by authoritarian interventions. By examining the Derbent case, we highlight the practical implications of theoretical concepts such as 'the right to the city' and policy networks in the context of urban regeneration, bringing fresh insights into the evolving dynamics between the state, market, and residents. Subsequently, the article outlines the backdrop of urban transformation within entrepreneurial state framework in Turkey, leading to an in-depth analysis of the Derbent area. A data-driven map illustrates residents' complex and systematic efforts in utilizing digital platforms to foster institutionalized self-organization and entrepreneurial engagement with the state, supporting our conclusions.

4.2. Innovation through institutionalized self-organization in responsive spatial governance

Institutionalization of self-organization is key in the entrepreneurial governance landscape, enabling those who can self-organize to influence policymaking processes through their engagement in policy networks.

Within this framework, we investigate the complex dynamics among entrepreneurialism, institutionalized self-organizing communities, and urban governance to advance an understanding of their interactions within the ever-changing landscape of authoritarian governance structures. In connection to this, the literature on self-organized communities now encompasses changes in spatial governance systems, considerations of flexibility and adaptive governance, and processes such as negotiation and depoliticization. Scholars have studied how spatial governance systems that include self-organization will change (Rauws et al., 2016). Flexibility and adaptability have emerged as necessities for legal systems to accommodate the coexistence of multiple regulatory approaches in the same context (Jacobs et al., 2024; Tarakçı & Türk, 2020). Attention has been focused on negotiation and depoliticization processes within a post-political paradigm (Bayırbağ et al., 2023; Etherington & Jones, 2018). Together, these discussions highlight the emergence of innovative strategies in spatial governance, where citizens become increasingly autonomous in reacting to interventions that change their built environment. This results in intertwined transformations in the institutionalization of self-organization, innovation through responsive spatial governance, and policy networks, which are co-determine and reinforce one another, building a flexible spatial governance environment, even in authoritarian political contexts.

The literature on the institutionalization of self-organization encompasses studies on self-organized communities and their institutionalization processes (Çılgın, 2019; Cozzolino et al., 2017; Horelli et al., 2015), soft power networks (Büdenbender & Golubchikov, 2017; Zandbelt, 2020), and social innovation (Bartels, 2020; Swyngedouw & Moulaert, 2010). Normative studies establish recommendations for self-organization, addressing what should be done or improved. The link between the entrepreneurial state and self-organization in urban development is explored in scholarly literature (Boonstra & Boelens, 2011; Eizenberg, 2019), with critical perspectives on the institutionalization of self-organized initiatives (Mullins & Moore, 2018). Self-organization is considered a preliminary stage of institutional design (Zhang et al., 2015), with its institutionalization influencing both the organic and flexible development of self-organization attempts and the creation of rigid, hierarchical engagement approaches. However, institutionalization also plays a role in legitimizing self-organization initiatives and enabling an innovative spatial governance landscape in property market-driven planning systems.

The second transformation highlighted in the literature is innovation through responsive spatial governance, where self-organization is steered by planning as a dynamic and transformative process requiring flexible governance forms. Citizen-responsive spatial governance initiatives enable innovations through responsive and inclusive participation, contributing to new ways of engaging citizens in urban policymaking. This necessitates data-smart governance systems and infrastructure that support diverse approaches to problem-solving (Goldsmith & Crawford, 2014; Silva, 2020). Moreover, these initiatives enable the articulation and reactivation of issues, which open up space for alternative political actions and the creation of new social imaginaries (Roussos, 2019). This process is known as re-politicization, as we will explain further in the article.

The third aspect of transformation involves policy networks, where awareness of rights, legal and institutional knowledge, social organizing skills, and civic networks indicate well-developed and active citizenship. Active citizenship leads to sophisticated social movements, and actors within the state play a critical role in creating opportunities for engagement. Policy networks, as webs of formal and informal institutions, establish community-government relations and play a crucial role in recognizing the transformation towards a responsive governance system. These networks are influenced by the interest and goals of the existing governance regime, as well as by political elites instrumentalizing them, shaping the innovative strategies created through institutionalized self-organization. Similar to Tonucci's (2024) findings on the paradoxical role of overregulation and tolerance in shaping informal urbanization in Brazil, policy networks in Turkish urban governance demonstrate how state actions can simultaneously constrain and enable local self-organized efforts.

4.3. Research material and methods

Our research is grounded in a rigorous methodological framework that integrates five structured steps by utilizing three main approaches: Policy Network Analysis, Phenomenological Interviewing, and Discourse Analysis. This methodological design is tailored to examine the complex transformation landscape in Derbent, Istanbul, focusing on both the broad policy dynamics at the macro level and the individual experiences at the micro level.

1) Policy Network Analysis in Urban Governance Context: The first part of the study (Section 4.1) applies policy network analysis to examine how Turkey governs urban renewal within an entrepreneurial state noted for its authoritarian interventions. This approach's framework establishes a grounded methodological base for studying the intertwinement between the actors and their relationships with the structural dynamics within the policy networks themselves (Kenis & Schneider, 2019; Le Galès, 2001; McGuirk, 2000). Based on McGuirk (2000)'s research on property-led regeneration efforts in Dublin, this methodology provides an understanding of the reconfiguration of local governance amid networked practices and regulatory frames. We have, therefore, been able to explore policy networks in Turkish urban policymaking in an in-depth manner: mapping the actors, their interrelations, and the general architecture of the network (or their positioning in the sphere of spatial governance) to clarify the wider context of this research.

2) The Macro-to-Micro Perspective Transition: a Methodological Nuance in the Inquiry of Urban Regeneration: In our methodological approach, understanding the transition from Turkey's centralized legal framework to localized governance practices in urban regeneration projects is crucial, with particular regard to Derbent. This approach enables us to examine how the national policy landscape at the macro level steers local efforts at the micro level in regeneration initiatives, thus revealing a nuanced perspective between the all- encompassing legal structures and grassroots governance mechanisms. The case of Derbent exemplifies the dynamic reinterpretation and adaptation of centralized policies at the micro-level, serving as a lens to explore the broader implications of such transitions on local governance dynamics and community-led initiatives. Through the analysis of policy networks and actor dynamics across different scales and layers (as illustrated in Fig. 13; network, policy, and spatial layers), we aim to identify the mechanisms by which legal frame- works, centralized yet flexible, create room for participatory, localized governance models. This critical read from a macro to a micro perspective is imperative to our methodology, offering profound insights into the complexities of urban regeneration within Turkey's evolving urban policy environment.

3) Case Selection - Derbent: The choice of Derbent as a case study was rigorously guided by a comprehensive review of the 'mega' projects database[6] maintained by the Istanbul Association of Architects in Private Practice (IstanbulSMD). This database documents a diverse array of 128 large-scale projects across Istanbul city region, encompassing a wide range of initiatives from transportation infrastructure to land reclamation efforts. From this extensive compilation, our focus narrowed to projects classified under the 'urban transformation' typology, identifying a subset of 16 regeneration initiatives. Among these, Derbent was selected for its distinctive socio-political context. The selection among these, was motivated by Derbent's unique position, due to its unique socio-political context, the inspiration it provides to other projects in the city through grassroots initiatives, and its capacity to provide rich insights into self-organization dynamics within an entrepreneurial governance framework, in the face of Istanbul's rapid urbanization and the proliferation of informal settlements.

4) Data Collection - Phenomenological Interviewing: Our research used two types of information resources: primary and secondary data. This data was basically collected through semi-structured and focus group interviews, as well as nurtured by prolonged observations and experiments concerning urban transformation processes and ongoing projects. In gathering first-hand data, in addition to the snowball sampling technique, we adopted phenomenological inter- viewing, inspired by Høffding and Martiny (2016)'s framing, to delve deeply into the lived experiences and perceptions surrounding the Derbent project. This method was instrumental for exploring the subjective experiences of residents, focusing on how they make sense of the evolution of their established self-organized entities, the institutionalization process from informal to formal structures, and their maneuvering within an entrepreneurial context. We conducted 17 interviews with a diverse set of key actors, yielding a rich qualitative dataset. Participants included representatives from the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (city-level authority) and Sarıyer Municipality (district-level authority), the Çamlıtepe Neighbourhood mukhtar, members and activists from the Çamlıtepe Derbent Cooperative (local neighborhood association)

6 http://en.megaprojeleristanbul.com

and Sarıyer Neighborhoods Association (district-level neighborhoods association), the Chamber of City Planners, and urban planners involved in a research project in Derbent. These interviews spanned from February 2021 to late-January 2024. The interview questions were carefully formulated to address three main themes: (1) resident's interactions with policy networks, (2) influence of community mobilization on urban policies, and (3) the spatial and social outcomes of the regeneration efforts in Derbent and their subsequent impact on governance structures.

5) Data Analysis - Discourse Analysis and Utilization of Quotes: The qualitative data derived from interviews and focus groups were subjected to discourse analysis, concentrating on the language, transcripts, and communicative practices. This method facilitated a critical inquiry of the narratives, power dynamics, and policy implications embedded within the discourses on urban transformation, exploring how they are constructed, contested, and negotiated among different stakeholders. To enrich the analysis and render the assessments and interpretations more tangible, direct quotes from the interviews were also incorporated as concrete examples.

4.4. Results & discussion

4.4.1. Governing urban transformation under an entrepreneurial state

In this chapter, we observe the top-down spatial governance mechanisms in Turkey, noted for its multi-layered urban policy network shaped within an entrepreneurial framework. This web of governance, distinctive with its over-regulated urban transformation framework, legal flexibilities, and a reflexive dynamic between the state and residents, is operationalized through an entrepreneurial state role in urban regeneration. Central to this examination is the evolution of policy networks, which we will visualize through an institutional perspective. The analysis captures the essence of this evolution, contrasting the policy networks before and after a pathbreaking period—after 2012—when significant changes have begun to take place. This analysis centers the state's approach to urban transformation, where the scales of governance were down-scaled between 2004 and 2012 to involve local actors and have been up-scaled after 2012

to consolidate control, revealing the landscape between various tiers of government and non-state entities in the urban policy narrative.

The institutionalization of urban regeneration in Turkey, while relatively recent, has rapidly evolved, with a substantial number of regulations that frame the state's approach to urban transformation. The legislation that initiates this development was enacted in 2002 under the governance of the AKP (the Justice and Development Party) (Özden, 2010), signaling a foundational shift in how urban spaces would be conceived and constructed. The main driver of such a thorough regulatory framework can be traced back to the 1999 Izmit earthquake—a disaster that killed thousands of people and caused significant economic losses, provided the justification for reconfiguring urban renewal processes. Turkey lacked overarching institutional directive to urban renewal before that time (Kuyucu, 2018). The era prior was characterized by ad-hoc interventions, such as squatter redevelopment in Ankara during the 1990s and scattered regeneration initiatives in Istanbul.

As we transition to more detailed examination of policy networks, Fig. 13 below presents a reference point. It exposes the two distinct trajectories that urban regeneration policy has followed—pre and post the year 2012—a division that Kuyucu (2018) also emphasizes. The earlier years, particularly between 2002 and 2010, laid the groundwork for urban transformation policy, establishing legal instruments like Renewal Law No. 5366[7] and Municipality Law No. 5393 in 2005, which initially pointed to a decentralizing trend by empowering local governments to designate 'transformation zones.' This decentralization is visually articulated in the left portion of Fig. 13, where a diverse array of governmental and non-state actors converges, connected through a network of both formal and informal linkages, representative of policy networks that are down-scaled and diffused, reflective of Swyngedouw (2005)'s notion of governance at the local level.

By 2005, the Turkish Mass Housing Development Administration, TOKI (founded in 1984 to produce affordable housing), had acquired expanded powers to plan and construct in designated regeneration areas. This empowerment of TOKI positioned the organization to execute state policies

7 Law on Protection and Usage of Historical and Cultural Immovable Assets.

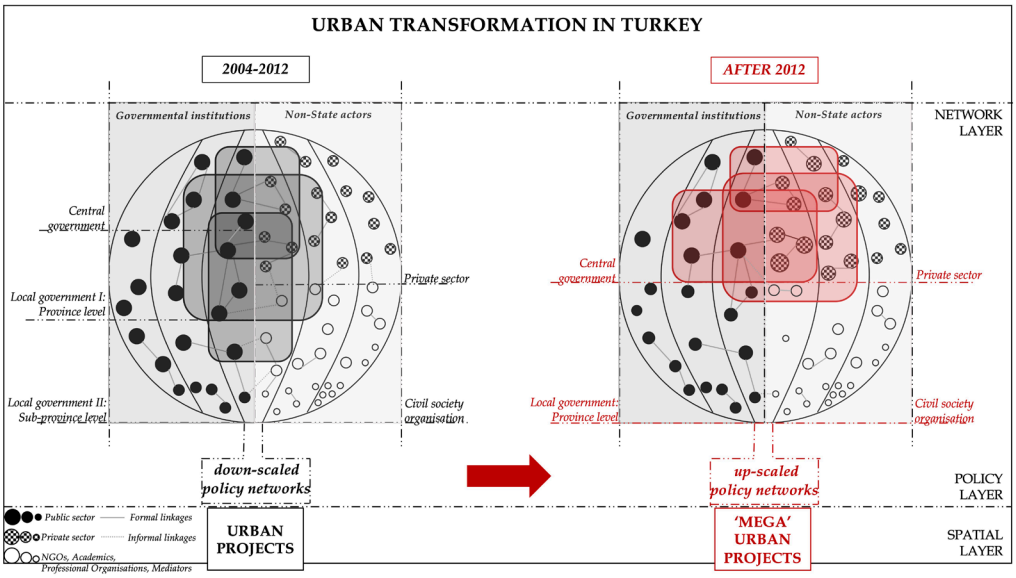

Figure 13. Tracing the shift: The evolution of network and policy dynamics in Turkey's urban transformation (prepared by the authors).

more actively, thereby bypassing local planning authorities. As Fig. 13 illustrates, between 2004 and 2012, there was a noticeable development in the urban policy landscape, with newly announced urban projects gaining momentum through down-scaled policy networks. During this period, the restructured TOKI not only became a central actor in the regeneration narrative with its substantial financial and regulatory authority but also symbolized the state's entrepreneurial drive-in urban policy, foreshadowing the centralization that would characterize the post-2012 era.

Considering the regulations and re-positionings of policy networks, the period after 2010 stands as a "*critical juncture*" in Turkey's urban transformation policy as also highlighted in the work of Kurt-Özman, Taşan-Kok & Erkut (2023). This era, as critically analyzed through Fig. 13, represents a radical change from the earlier trajectory. In contrast to the previously more decentralized authority, the post-2012 landscape witnessed the up scaling of governance processes. Tasks such as declaring regeneration zones, traditionally within the jurisdiction of local governments, were reassigned to higher tiers of authority, specifically metropolitan administrations, effectively centralizing control. This shift is captured in the right segment of Fig. 13, where the concentration of

power at the upper levels of government is made visible, ignoring (even eliminating sub-province municipalities) lower-level governmental institutions and non-state actors from the policymaking process. The figure delineates a clear intensification of authority at the higher scales, indicative of a state-centric approach that Swyngedouw (2005) identifies as symptomatic of new governance forms emerging in urban policy networks.

Due to the centralization and the narrowing authority of local governments, municipal administrations progressively lost their autonomy over regeneration policy. This period is underscored by the year 2012, recognized as a trajectory shift within the policy network narrative, as Fig. 13 elucidates. The government's creation of the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization, later expanded to include climate change concerns, symbolized a significant increase in the state's direct involvement in broad-scope planning within regeneration areas. Notably, Disaster Law No. 6306, enacted in 2012, granted TOKI and the Ministry extensive authority for urban regeneration in the case of natural disasters, framing such interventions as necessary for disaster risk preparedness. This law represents the transfer of urban regeneration authority to central state actors, effectively bypassing local administrations. Furthermore, Metropolitan Municipality Law No. 6360 exemplifies the centralizing trend by dissolving lower-level district municipalities and consolidating their powers into the higher-level metropolitan municipality. Together with the Renewal Law No. 5366, these regulations represent strategic steps to stimulate the property development sector for urban regeneration, reinforcing the central government's authoritarian role as depicted in the right segment of Fig. 13.

Despite the establishment of an over-regulated framework for urban transformation, the state has simultaneously introduced a degree of regulatory flexibilities, which, paradoxically, has led to inconsistencies and conflicts within the urban planning domain. In the past, particularly in the 1980s, urban regeneration, especially in squatter areas, was predominantly institutionalized by municipal authorities following populist policies. The only flexibility was provided by the politicians who visited these areas and gave promises to gain political power during election periods. Contrastingly, the present scenario reveals an increased level of flexibilities driven by projects and property development processes. This shift has engendered a landscape plagued with legal ambiguities and

institutional disputes. Regulators have now been granted the discretion to ignore property rights in areas deemed 'at risk' by directives from central government. However, the lack of defined limits to this flexibility challenges and complicate the process of managing and completing urban projects (Tarakçı & Türk, 2020).

Finally, alongside these narratives, the entrepreneurial state story, despite its authoritarian stance, strongly influences the sets of conditions defining the urban policy landscape. This narrative transcends the state's actions and is also evident in the responses of non-state actors adapting to these government strategies at different levels. In this respect, the previously discussed dichotomy between over-regulation and flexibility resonates in the domain of spatial planning, where urban legal systems are characterized by undefined levels of flexibility alongside a dense web of state-designed regulations aimed at guiding urban development. This presents a two-sided dynamic: on one hand, the flexibility creates legal and institutional conflicts; on the other hand, it gives room for local actors to re-politicize and reaffirm their place within the urban transformation narrative, involving themselves in policy networks and pursuing property rights through democratic channels.

The entrepreneurial governance of the state, characterized by a blend of over-regulation and flexibility, sets a distinct stage compared to other settings of urban transformation in Turkey, especially in Derbent. Here, upscale governing strategies meet local actions as residents capitalize on this entrepreneurial setup to get involved in the urban change of their living environment. Empowering grassroots initiatives in Derbent represents a larger trend in the changing landscape of civic engagement: the community is moving from non-institutionalized efforts of the 1980s to collective policy-engaged action, showcasing a remarkable transition in self-governance capacity. In this respect, the narrative of adaptation and resilience in the face of state-driven entrepreneurialism and subsequent regulatory challenges positions Derbent as a key example of effective local response.

4.4.2. Reflections on the self-governance capacity of Derbent residents

In analyzing the transformation of the Derbent neighborhood, it is imperative to distinguish between 'urban renewal' and 'squatter

redevelopment'. Both concepts are crucial for understanding the *gecekondu* regeneration process in Istanbul, which incorporates elements of both urban renewal and squatter redevelopment. Specifically, urban renewal often leads to the demolition and reconstruction of areas, while squatter redevelopment focuses on legalizing and upgrading informal settlements, including the formalization of land titles. This process results in the displacement of communities. These dynamics are particularly speculative in the Turkish context because areas initially developed as squatter settlements transform into high-value real estate, becoming targets for profit-driven redevelopment. Consequently, squatter owners face either eviction or relocation to government-provided mass housing (TOKI), typically located on the city's periphery.

The Derbent neighborhood is characterized by a strong community sense and place attachment among its residents. This deep-rooted connection through daily life and social interactions underscores the "*immaterial dimensions of the right to the city*". Residents demonstrate a strong sentimental bond to their locality. The emphasis on social relations, solidarity, and the residents' capability to influence their living conditions reflects the neighborhood's social composition, showcasing a community that prioritizes closeness, cooperation, and a collective vision for their future amid urban transformation processes (Aksümer & Yücel, 2018).

Building on the Derbent case, we go beyond describing the trajectories and collective responses, which were analyzed in a large body of literature, by unravelling the self-governance capacity of the case from this point on.

4.4.2.1. Institutionalized self-organization re-politicizing Derbent's residents

The social composition of Derbent is deeply interconnected with the neighborhood's long history of solidarity and collective resistance, with roots dating back to the 1930s and notable actions from the 1980s. The community have historically been engaged in various forms of politicization, initially sparked by efforts to address, and resist 'dispossession' and other forms of state and developmental pressures (Erbaş & Kızılay, 2015). In the contemporary context, the politicization of Derbent under the entrepreneurial governance framework is a response to the state's authoritarian stance and interventions in urban development. The re-politicization process in Derbent is not merely a reaction to

immediate threats but represents a broader contestation of urban policies and governance practices, underscoring a collective effort to reclaim and reassert the community's agency in shaping their urban environment, amidst growing pressures from profit-driven redevelopment projects and urban transformation initiatives that threaten their social fabric and living spaces.

In the re-politicization of Derbent, key actors play distinct roles. The Atatürk Building Society, established in 1986 as a cooperative, has significantly transformed the urban texture by building gated communities on purchased land. The Derbent Neighborhood Beautification and Solidarity Association, founded in 2005, also struggles for the representation of residents' interests and claims that their rights be recognized under the pressure of urban transformation processes. It is already implicated in negotiations and lawsuits, reflecting the collective struggle of the community. The Çamlıtepe Derbent Cooperative and the Sarıyer Neighborhoods Association are also key local organizations actively participating in the urban regeneration process within the community of Derbent. The Çamlıtepe Derbent Cooperative functions as a local neighborhood association, while the Sarıyer Neighborhoods Association operates at the district level. Both organizations are central to mobilizing community resources, advocating for residents' rights, and engaging with policy networks to influence urban policies. Their involvement underscores the power of institutionalized self- organization in navigating and shaping the urban transformation landscape, especially in the face of state-led development projects. Additionally, the roles of district-level local municipality, Sarıyer Municipality, and metropolitan-level local municipality, Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (IMM), in declaring urban transformation areas underpin the governmental influence on Derbent's redevelopment. These actors, from government bodies to local associations and private developers (Cemre Construction), delineate the complex network of interests driving the neighborhood's evolution, especially under such a strictly regulated yet flexible framework of laws and regulations.

Building upon the historical narrative of Derbent residents' re-politicization, we now turn to the practical manifestations of this phenomenon. How does self-organization in Derbent emerge and empower communities through institutionalization? In this section we investigate

established local networks of urban regeneration in Derbent and illustrate how they have been re-politicized through these well-organized self-organizing bodies. Through a critical investigation of the long-lasting development processes in the neighborhood and collective responses given by the residents in Derbent, we uncover this multidimensional and multi-actor process.

Derbent's history dates back to the 1950s, as with many neighborhoods in major metropolitan areas in Turkey. Large waves of people from rural areas came to the cities seeking work and migrated to Istanbul and established squatter areas (*gecekondu*) there. Derbent is an ideal choice due to its distance to various industrial units and the city center. By developing infrastructure with the efforts of the residents, the number of houses increased, and the neighborhood became a densely populated and compact area until the 1980s (see: the TUBITAK Project no: 110K404 report). Although Amnesty Laws passed in 1983 and 1984 (Nos. **2805** and **2981**) reflecting pledges from the government to legalize and upgrade squatter areas in Istanbul and other major metropolitan areas of Turkey, Derbent never acquired its legal rights (Gülöksüz,2002). When the *Atatürk Building Society,* which was a cooperative (*Atatürk Oto Sanatkarları Housing Cooperative)*, was founded in 1986, it purchased a significant portion of the land on which squatter housing was built. This purchase blocked the opportunity for squatter owners to become a legal resident in the area by switching the property status of the land from public to private (Aksümer & Yücel, 2018).

With the northward development of the CBD into Derbent in the 1990s, the area began to gain value. The neighborhood, however, still lacked any legal rights to land use or construction. In 2004, the AKP governed (*Sarıyer Municipality*) and declared the district as an urban transformation area. Meanwhile, the Atatürk Building Society continued to build gated communities called *'MESA Houses'*. The building society continued to build more luxurious housing on the land it owns (Hanisch & Inal-Çekiç, 2014), which made the rent pressure more perceptible for the squatter dwellers. In 2005, a self-organized neighborhood association (*Derbent Mahallesi Güzelleştirme ve Yardımlaşma Derneği*) was established to provide infrastructure to the squatter owners (Erbaş & Kızılay, 2015).

In 2005, the joint renewal plan was produced by the Sarıyer Municipality and the landowner (Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality - IMM). In response, the neighborhood association organized a protest in March 2006, the first activist response by the inhabitants against urban transformation. "*The protest in 2006 was not just about opposition; it was a clear message from the residents that their voices needed to be heard in the urban transformation process*." The disagreement between the neighborhood association and the Atatürk Building Society (which owns the land) was one of the main issues in Derbent. "*The conflict with the Atatürk Building Society highlighted the residents' concerns over losing their homes and their history*," (Ref. Interviewee #2, senior municipal official).

In 2009, a large private hospital (*Acıbadem Private Hospital*) was built on the land. "*The construction of the Acıbadem Hospital on our land was a turning point, signifying a shift towards commercialization at the expense of community spaces*," (Ref. Interviewee #17, an activist in Derbent). After the AKP lost the local elections in Sarıyer Municipality in 2009, the Derbent project was quickly cancelled. "*The cancellation of the Derbent project after the election loss was a victory for community activism, proving that political will is susceptible to public pressure*." In 2010, the area was further legitimized by the northern expansion of the metro line and the establishment of Darüşşafaka Metro Station. "*The expansion of the metro line and the new Darüşşafaka Metro Station legitimized our area, bringing in new opportunities and challenges for the community*," (Ref. Interviewee #5, a local official).

After all the investment in infrastructure, luxury housing, and other private sector investments, rumors about the third bridge over the Bosphorus began in 2010. This brought about further speculation of the land, where there was already huge rent pressure. By 2011, the Atatürk Building Society (construction cooperative) and Cemre Construction Agency (real-estate development company) agreed to work together to establish a luxury housing development in the Derbent neighborhood. As a result of Cemre Construction Agency's negotiations, 40 *gecekondu* households from Derbent agreed to move to the new residential units being built (Aksümer & Yücel, 2018).

To revisit what happened in Derbent after 2010 provides evidence of how the Turkish urban regeneration policy morphed into a strategy where the state implements its centralized policies, both eliminating and bypassing lower-level local authorities, by using the laws it invented after 2010. Derbent neighborhood was declared as a risky area within the scope of the Disaster Law (**6306**), with a Council of Ministers deciding in 2013, with no basis, that the building requirements would safeguard inhabitants from earthquakes. IMM and TOKI developed a new plan that would relocate some residents to social housing on-site and transform the remaining larger parcel of land for luxury houses. The project was promoted at the real estate fair in Cannes, France by the construction company Yorum Construction 'MIPIM'. With this, the central government and the metropolitan municipality were trying to attract international actors and networks to the urban rental playing field. The moves regarding the transformation of the area and decisions made by the higher-level authorities were responded to quickly and strongly by the inhabitants. They established a neighborhood association and a building cooperative with the support of diverse Chambers and NGOs, held public protests, and filed numerous lawsuits challenging the plan and the 'risk assessment' decision. In 2014, the 14th Department of the Council of State argued that the neighborhood's designation as a high- risk area was without foundation and that the decision should be reversed. The 'risk' classification for the neighborhood was removed in the following year by the High Administrative Court due to lack of scientific evidence in 2015. However, in the following year an amendment was made to the related regulation number **6306** Disaster Law. The definition of a risky area was expanded, and Derbent was declared as risky once again (Tarakçı & Türk, 2021). Although nothing has been confirmed as yet, there are persistent rumors that Derbent may see a new project develop (Kuyucu, 2022).

4.4.2.2. Entrepreneurialization through self-organization in Derbent

Bringing about '*governance learning from collective actions*' (Yazar et al., 2022), this long-lasting struggle in Derbent has witnessed countless regulatory and institutional reforms. Moreover, within such an entrepreneurial setting, it also allows residents to learn from the state by replicating the state's actions. Thus, throughout time and owing to learning and replication processes, squatter owners and local networks have become more aware of 'opportunities' and are more entrepreneurial. The Derbent case is a good example of how residents are learning to take advantage of the

entrepreneurial context thanks to their institutionalized self-organization capacity and calling-out authorities for more responsive strategies in spatial governance processes. Both the community's established and well-planned agenda (Fig. 14) and the responses from the municipality side reveal it. The evidence shows that a more entrepreneurial approach through negotiations is the subject now. It is obvious that this entrepreneurial environment not only provides opportunities for organizational processes by creating space for self- organized bodies, but it also makes the process itself and its actors entrepreneurial.

It has been challenging to track the suggestions of entrepreneurialism from the perspective of the residents and local actors, yet, both a critical scrutinization of the cooperative's agenda and interviews with the actors from diverse institutions establish this discussion. While the analysis of the cooperative's well-detailed program is actively carried out via its social media account, it unveils its structured and action- based agenda. The data obtained through in-depth interviews also shows the critical role of the mayor and mukhtar as local actors, in the self-organization of the residents.

The Mayor of Sarıyer Municipality is positioned strategically to contribute to the entrepreneurialization of self-organization in Derbent. Since he also comes from a squatter settlement, *Hisarüstü*, he has a deep understanding of how the squatter owners feel, and he knows how to activate them. This makes him a strong match to represent the interests of the residents in the neighborhood. However, it was not easy for him to be accepted by both the municipal bureaucracy and the IMM in his first election period between 2009 and 2014 (Ref. Interviewee #). "*At first, people were pretty skeptical about his approach, but his real dedication to helping the community eventually won everyone over*," (Ref. Interviewee #5, a local official). He came up with election promises highlighting 'the right to the city', supporting those who organized themselves for this 'right', sharing all the legal facilities of the municipality with those who helped him to win the election by a large margin of votes. "*What he promised was not just political rhetoric but a tangible vision for Derbent's transformation*," (Ref. Interviewee #2, a senior municipal official). This commitment is quite extraordinary compared to the state actors from a similar political stance. It seems like he also takes advantage of the entrepreneurial landscape and himself acts as an entrepreneur by taking initiatives (and risks) to support self-organization in Derbent. "*The mayor's entrepreneurial spirit has been a*

catalyst for change, encouraging people to see what's happening from a different perspective where they once saw obstacles," (Ref. Interviewee #3, an urban planner from solidarity networks).

As an election promise, Sarıyer Municipality allocated a position to hire an expert who will carry out the process of informing 15 neighborhoods about the policy of the Ministry in the urban transformation process, translating technical planning information to the inhabitants, and holding meetings with the residents in order to produce a common strategy. It was planned to be carried out within an association and cooperative from the very beginning and to make the municipality a party herein. All of this happened in 2010 where the power (authority) of Turkish local governments in urban transformation was restricted, and central policies were emphasized. And now we observe that this juncture has triggered Sarıyer Municipality and the Mayor himself to take initiatives, take risks, and act entrepreneurially.

The squatter neighborhoods in Sarıyer are high-populated areas with approximately 150,000 residents. "*Despite the vast population we serve, our team consisted of only three people, tasked with fostering a sense of community and self-organization among the residents*," (Ref. Interviewee #2, a senior municipal official). This limitation was due to the Sarıyer municipal council's budget constraints, which did not allow for a larger allocation of human resources. Since 2010, this small team has started to serve all associations and strengthen the organizations by holding meetings with them. "*Our approach was to empower the residents, giving them the tools and knowledge they needed to advocate for their rights*," (Ref. Interviewee #15, a planning official from the municipality).

Citizens who have had their rights violated re-politicize themselves through self-organization, activating democratic and institutional channels such as planners and academics, and even institutionalizing their self-organized networks to engage in policy networks. "*Through filing petitions for objections, opening lawsuits for the cancellation of plans, and maintaining constant communication with other neighborhood associations and NGOs like Bir Umut Organization, we've seen a dramatic empowerment within our community*," (Ref. Interviewee #3, an urban planner from solidarity networks). Moreover, the creation and active use of digital platforms such as Facebook and Twitter groups, alongside organizing regular events aligned

with their agenda, have been critical. This systematic information transfer, facilitated by academia, chambers, and NGOs, has also been instrumental for inhabitants to organize themselves and institutionalize their networks. "*The digital platforms, in particular, have offered an unprecedented avenue for our voices to be heard and for mobilizing collective action*," (Ref. Interviewee #10, an association leader), as illustrated in Fig. 14.

As this initiative spread among the neighborhoods, more people began joining the associations, regardless of their political affiliations, united by the common goal of securing property rights. "*We saw a remarkable shift in the community's mindset. Residents from diverse political backgrounds came together, driven by the shared aim of property rights, rather than being divided by differing ideologies*," (Ref. Interviewee # 7, an association leader). This empirical evidence shows how residents leveraged the entrepreneurial environment, engaging in self-organized bodies to achieve their goals. "*The pursuit of property rights transcended political divides, as people recognized the economic and social benefits of being organized and entrepreneurial in their approach*," (Ref. Interviewee #8, a community activist).

This is how self-organization was boosted in the period between 2009 and 2014 with a new configuration by a new mayor who skillfully provided a fresh mindset for the community. With this in the background, a new organizational unit with a budget provided was established to support squatter inhabitants. Furthermore, the local municipality provided technical (computers, software, etc.), social, and physical support, although the local municipal council composed of the representatives of different political parties required some explanation, making an already tough struggle even tougher. Another state intervention took place in the autumn of 2010. Many residents, including the mayor, were taken from their homes, and detained by the police. It was also when the Derbent neighborhood was declared as a risky area, putting law number **6306** (the Disaster Law) into action.

Further solid evidence can be seen in the entrepreneurial activities of local networks in Derbent and can be followed through the neighborhood's *mukhtar*. Mukhtars are representatives of neighborhoods and key administrative figures at the neighborhood level. This makes it important to critically analyze how they position themselves in such processes, specifically to grasp findings regarding the relationship between the

central government and local institutions. Derbent's experience in terms of mukhtar's positioning is also surprisingly distinctive. The *mukhtars* in speculative neighborhoods (squatter settlements, transformation areas etc.) act almost like real estate agents, especially in the state-led transformation initiatives (Aykaç, 2022). However, both the cooperative's agenda and the interviews show that *mukhtar* stands with the residents in the neighborhood, instead of acting as an agent of the state. Moreover, he provided space and support for the cooperative's meetings, produced virtual content to keep the residents updated, and showed solidarity that he was supporting the representatives of neighborhood associations and surrounding neighborhoods (see the activities in Fig. 14). He is a very active figure, empowers self-organization and he is highly visible in Derbent's urban struggle.

Fig. 14 below illustrates the complex and systematic efforts by the residents of Derbent, self-organized institutionally under the roof of the Camlıtepe Derbent Cooperative, in their quest for more responsive governance practices. It evidences their capacity for institutionalized self-organization and entrepreneurial engagement with the state. This map, systematically analyzing the cooperative's agenda, captures the essence of the community's transformation from traditional modes of self-organization to a more structured and entrepreneurial approach in governance.

The Derbent community's civic engagement, illustrated in Fig. 14, witnesses a shift from traditional self-organization to an institutionalized and entrepreneurial form of governance. The map provides empirical evidence of strategic community actions that reflect a move towards entrepreneurial governance tactics, particularly in the way the residents engage with legal and bureaucratic processes, such as in the Derbent Plan Cancellation case, showcasing their commitment to formal governance mechanisms.

Further analysis of the diagram reveals that initiatives such as policy advocacy and community visits are aligned with official channels, indicating a structured and systemic approach to advocacy within regulatory frameworks. This suggests a progression towards more sophisticated governance models. Some examples of entrepreneurial governance, such as public-private partnership dialogues mentioned above in Fig. 14, may actually leverage community engagement with the private sector to achieve public goals.

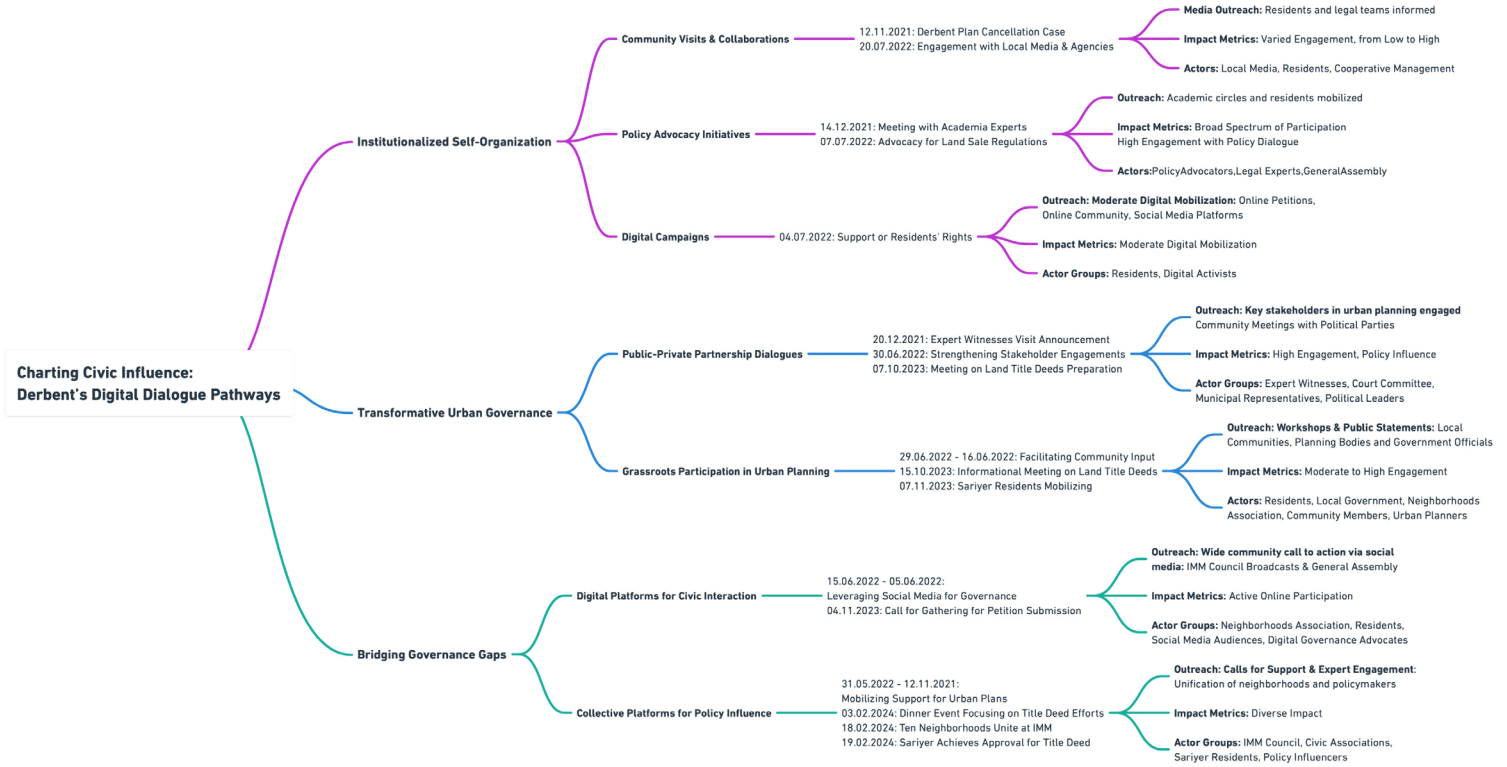

Figure 14. A data-driven diagram of community-led urban innovation in Derbent (prepared by the authors)

Evidence of an entrepreneurial approach to governance can be observed at the community level, where leverage and negotiation, such as advocating for land title deeds, play a key role. The use of digital platforms for civic interaction, as emphasized by the community, in strategic ways—such as modern communication tools that enhance the voice of the people, generate support, and rally engagement—demonstrates innovation in governance strategies that utilize digital technology. The map details the collective platforms for policy influence, such as participation in a general assembly. These are organized collective approaches that tap into the power of the collective for governance purposes.

This analysis, therefore, shows adaptability and innovativeness in the residents' actions, resulting in significant shifts in the governance landscape towards responsiveness, participation, and innovation. Additionally, media channels are being strategically used by the residents, such as Sarıyer Gazetesi and Simas Agency, to keeps the community updated and involved. The Facebook page 'Çamlıtepe Derbent Kooperatifi' and published flyers continue with a more comprehensive agenda and publicize the community's entrepreneurial actions. As a result, unanimous authorization has been received by IMM to allow for the sale of its land.

Thus, these data-driven charts illustrating the paths of civic influence show that the behavior of the community has indeed shifted the landscape of governance towards being more dynamic and open. Through this transition, enabled by a more entrepreneurial form of community self-organization, the residents of Derbent have become agents of change within their governance environment, effectively appropriating and exploiting the opportunities that such an entrepreneurial context has presented.

4.5. Conclusions

In this vein, research on institutionalized self-organization and its impacts on innovation via entrepreneurial spatial governance, particularly how it is shaped under the growth of authoritarian regimes, is a crucial scholarly endeavor. This article has displayed two significant facets of self-organization as witnessed in the case of Derbent. First, it has shown a transition from personal to institutionalized self-organization.

Residents' unstructured reflections about populist politics are turned into structured entities, contributing to neighborhood renewal. In this regard, the entrepreneurial aspect of institutionalized self-organization in Derbent represents a new dimension of self-organizing. Finally, these findings underline potential innovative strategies—in this case, within an authoritarian context—through the institutionalization of self-structured entities. Residents are able to become entrepreneurial citizens and negotiate with policy networks for 'the right to the city'.

Looking ahead, the entrepreneurial turn in local networks presents a challenging yet promising avenue for future research. Exploring the collective targets, plans, and action points of these networks is essential for a comprehensive understanding of their dynamics. This study employed a diverse approach, including analyses of written and online agendas, content analyses, and in-depth interviews with stakeholders from various institutions. While challenges were posed by the authoritarian context in scheduling meetings, initial pilot interviews played a mediating role, establishing connections for future engagements. Tokenism within closely interwoven networks was acknowledged, but the ongoing struggles in the neighborhood and the cooperative's proactive agenda provide strong evidence of sincere and passionate self- organization efforts.

In the realm of democratization in urban planning, the Derbent case adds a new layer by emphasizing the importance of understanding responsiveness in spatial governance to foster transformative practices. The institutionalized self-organization in Derbent, coupled with the subsequent re-politicization of networks, has not only guided other platforms, and struggles but has also paved the way for novel forms of governance with social justice at their core. As we move forward, future research should delve deeper into the intricacies of entrepreneurial turns in local networks, exploring how these dynamics can continue to shape and redefine urban planning practices, ultimately contributing to more inclusive and responsive governance structures.

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